

A TEMPERANCE TALK*

When first asked to write a temperance address I must admit that the request seemed to me preposterous. On a theme so universally and exhaustively treated—so hackneyed, I had almost said, what original thought could I bring you or what hope had I of presenting old ones in a new light? Wide as was the subject, far reaching as its effects and unmeasurable its consequences there appeared no point which had not been already so ably handled that any word of mine seemed vain. Having been reminded, however, that so long as there is aught to call it forth no earnest word can be altogether vain, I am with you humbly trusting that my message may not be entirely for naught. I am come, however, with only an informal address or "Temperance Talk," not to deliver a lecture, which I could not do if I would; and one privilege I claim on this ground is that of following no direct line of thought or argument—choosing rather to touch here and there at different points of our prolific theme and to dwell longest perhaps where the lecturer touches briefly. With the evils of intemperance we are, alas, too familiar, and it is not my object to dwell upon them but rather to see if there be anything *we* can do toward their abolishment. And something there must be in every reformatory movement for everyone to do. I am afraid we are too prone to measure the progress of these great questions or movements from the outside. We regard them as monuments of social or political interest, not as individual or personal concerns. As Senator Platt, I think it was, said in his magnificent address at Woodstock, Conn.: "We shrink individual responsibility too much and erect moral standards for other people too much. We put blame on classes; we work, we legislate for the benefit or reformation of classes of men."

We forget the interests of the individual in our efforts to benefit and uplift the class." I am afraid the charge is too well founded. Working in numbers and for the numbers, individual or personal responsibility slips easily out of sight. It behooves us to remember that it was the cup of cold water to one of these which Christ specially enjoined upon his disciples. Far be it from me to withhold the homage due such organizations as this grand W. C. T. U. As women we are justly proud of it, as men we honor it, and as followers of Him who went about doing good we cry: "God speed, and His blessing continue with you! Nor would I seem for one moment to under-rate the efficacy of co operation in every reformatory movement. We cannot have too much of mutual helpfulness, but we must never forget that the strength of union is dependant upon and proportionate to the individual responsibility of its members. Moreover, as regards the question in hand there should not be here a woman, whether directly identified with the W. C. T. U. or not, who should not be proud that she is a woman, a christian, and a temperance worker. There is such a glorious mission of helpfulness for every one in the world. And no true woman should forget that a worker on one side or the other she is bound to be. There are no drones in God's hive, however many idlers or heedless workers there may be. To remain neutral in questions of world wide significance is a moral impossibility. We have some degree of influence—every one of us, and are lending it for or against every vital question of the day. We are working whether we will or no, and as often silently as with word or deed. Did you ever think of that, dear young friends, who perhaps, like myself, have thought that nothing was required at your hands—that you were simply on-lookers? Has it ever occurred to you that you are just as certainly lending your influence to one side or the other as are these ladies who are prominent

* Address read by L. S. at a meeting of the W. C. T. U. at Ingersoll, Ont.