



Miss Agnes Weston.

(From the 'Daily Chronicle,' London.)

Miss Agnes Weston is a specialist among philanthropists. She is a temperance reformer, it is true; but hers is applied temperance; and applied in a highly specialized form to the seamen of Her Majesty's navy. For thirty years she has preached with voice and pen Christianity and temperance to the British blue-jacket. But she has done more than preach and teach. She has by her efforts provided them with homes on shore which make the way of total abstinence easy—bright, cheery, almost luxurious buildings, to which Jack steers, as to a port—and she has stood their friend whenever and wherever they needed one, and were willing to accept her help. She has indeed earned the title by which the sailors have learned to know her, that of "The Blue-jackets' Mother."

The personality of the worker explains the success of her work. A generous, expansive, motherly face, with a smile never far from eye or lip, a generous allowance of the sense which is called common, a God-given sense of humor, without which work among blue-jackets at any rate could never succeed, tact amounting to genius for saying the right thing to the right person, an enthusiasm for total abstinence, and a firm belief in the God of the bible—these are the qualities which have made Miss Weston's name a household word in the navy, and have made it honored wherever it is known.

Her interest in all who go down to the sea in ships, whether belonging to the navy, the marines or the coastguard, is the more curious, as she was born in London, the daughter of a barrister, and lived the greater part of her early life in Bath. It was while there, indeed, that she began her life's work by a letter written to a soldier on a troopship going to India, whom she had befriended in the Bath Hospital. The soldier, by chance, as it seemed, showed that letter to a seaman, who expressed a wish for a letter, too. One letter grew to many hundreds, and outran the limits of a pen, and to-day, these letters, called by the men 'blue-backs,' form an important feature of Miss Weston's work and circulate to the number of over half a million a year.

Another apparent chance led her to visit friends at Devonport, where the sight of so many boys from the training ships, and seamen from vessels lying in harbor, wandering about with no apparent place to rest and recreate free from temptations to drink, led her to consider what could be done to provide them, in the words of a sailor himself, with a public-house without the drink. Eventually, on the most ideally favorable site, close to the dockyard gates, a 'Sailors' Rest' was an accomplished fact. And each year since it has become a more and more substantial fact, until now it is a large and imposing building, with another like unto it at Portsmouth. The motto of the Rests, as well as of their founder's life, is, 'for the glory of God and the good of the service.'

The Rests, in addition to the highly successful restaurant, contain hundreds of cabin bedrooms for Jack's use on shore, many, indeed most of them, given by different donors, the memorial brasses bearing the names of the givers. One cabin, whose brass bears the inscription, 'Given by Queen Victoria, 1895,' is a room all seamen are proud to oc-

cupy. Another useful feature of the Rests is the lockers, rented at so much a month, for the storing of a sailor's treasures, and last, but not least, the baths, each in their cubicles and all continually in request. Perhaps the success of the building and the catering, as well as of Miss Weston's speeches, which she prefers to call 'talks,' lies in her intuitive appreciation of what her audience and those for whom she is catering in a material way will like. Everything is bright, cheery and pretty. But its daintiness and orderliness are the only feminine suggestions about the Homes, except the motherly touch when Jack is ill or in trouble. There is no charity and nothing to suggest it. When Jack enters the rest and orders his plate of 'sausages and mash' (mashed potatoes), or a 'fid of plum duff' (fid is nautical for piece), he is not oppressed by the feeling that he is there because he and his fellows are being reformed. He goes because he likes it, and because he gets what he wants, and gets good value for his money. In fact, the place is run on sound commercial lines, and neither temperance nor gospel is served out with the coffee.

And how popular that is may be judged from a week's housekeeping account at Devonport. In one week was consumed and paid for, one whole pig—to say nothing of beef and mutton—1,200 eggs, 150 dozen rolls, 1,100 sausages (all made on the premises), nine hams, thirty gallons of tea and coffee, while £100 was taken over the counter in small sums. The fact that the Sailors' Rests are made to yield each year a clear profit of £2,000, which is devoted to carrying forward the flag of temperance and godliness still further afield, is due to the business enterprise of Miss Wintz, Miss Weston's friend and co-worker, whose life is also given up to this work. To her also is due the success of 'Ashore and Afloat,' the monthly magazine, which circulates to the number of 400,000 a year on all Her Majesty's ships, in lonely coastguard stations, among deep-sea fishing fleets, and, by request of the American naval authorities, on board the ships flying the Stars and Stripes.

There is no temperance work carried on on broader lines than Miss Weston's. She aims at being the sailor's best friend, even when he is most drunk, and any man who has sufficient sense to so much as fling himself against the swinging doors of the Rest, finds that Miss Weston's staff within are ready to help even him. No one who has not seen it can imagine the scene at either of the Rests on a Sunday, say, when the Channel Squadron is in the harbor. All the afternoon and evening the halls, the reading-room, and the bar are crowded with men, but when night comes they literally pour in, and then the difficulties begin. The manager has filled all the cubicles and the dormitories, and still there are more who imperiously insist that they must be taken in at 'Mother Weston's.' The sight is one to be remembered when the hall is filled with guests at a naval sociable, or for the Saturday night concerts, or with the hundreds of sailors' wives who belong to mothers' meetings—for the organizations for the home rulers are many—or with the boys from the training ships. These things tell more emphatically than figures of the fine work of Miss Weston.

The Temperance Question.

(The Rev. E. L. Hicks, M.A., Canon of Manchester.)

Many causes are assigned for intemperance, and they are all in their measure true. But my experience leads me to regard the drink mainly as a matter of temptation.

'When I don't see it, I don't want it,' is what men constantly say to me. But, given the temptation—then the exciting causes of intemperance are as many and varied as the moods and conditions of humanity. We might even adapt the lines of Coleridge, and say:—

'All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are the ministers of drink,
And feed his hellish flame.'

But first, what is intemperance? Whatever degree of success, however small, impairs the physical health, relaxes the self-control, and makes a man the worse in body or mind—that is what you and I mean by intemperance.

But intemperance, as understood in the law courts, is quite a different matter. I find no legal definition of it. I believe the police hold no one to be technically drunk as long as he can stand up. At home the drunkard (husband or wife) may make the house a hell, but the law pays no regard. And in practice every publican in the kingdom can serve any one over sixteen with any amount of liquor, provided the victim be able somehow to stagger home.

Let us remember that the drink crave is one of the most incurable and calamitous of diseases. It is a physical and moral ailment in one—an ailment to which our people are specially prone, through heredity, climate, and the conditions of modern life.

Now we license 168,000 liquor shops virtually to propagate this disease; for the colossal gains of the traffickers depend on the success with which they can spread the love of drink. It is the inebriates who (though they may never be legally drunk) are their regular customers. With an inhuman indifference to consequences, and with a sole view of profit, the temptation is placed precisely where our brothers and sisters are most easily tempted—where they most require protection—near great works; near holiday resorts; in crowded alleys of the slums. I am aware that I shall be told that business is business. But there are different kinds of business, and we meet here, not as crimps, but as Christians. The words of a great brewer are as true to-day as when he wrote them: 'The struggle of the school, the library and the Church united, against the beer-house and the gin-palace, is but one development of the war between heaven and hell.'

The remedies suggested have been substantially two:—

1. To keep the people from the drink:
2. To keep the drink from the people.

Most of us are agreed about the first; there is more doubt as to the second; but the two must always go together. Prohibition without moral education would be a failure; moral suasion without legislation is futile.—'Hand and Heart.'

Mr. G. A. Spink, school board attendance officer, at Halifax, England, giving evidence before the Royal Commission, said his investigations as to non-attendance at school proved that at least seventy-five percent of such cases were attributable to indulgence in drink on the part of mother or father, or both parents. A high proportion of irregularity and drunkenness was found in localities where the facilities for obtaining drink were the greatest. In Halifax, as elsewhere, there was a congestion of public-houses in the poorer districts. The effect of sending children to licensed houses for drink was bad. He had seen a child coming from the grocer's shop drinking out of the bottle. He would recommend the abolition of grocers' licenses.