

Semi-Teetotalism.

There has been considerable interest taken in the enrollment semi-teetotalers at All Soul's Church, Langham Place, London. The idea of the rector, Rev. F. S. Webster, was, that, so enormous were the evils of drink, much good might be done by calling upon those who did not see their way to signing the pledge to enter into a solemn undertaking never to take intoxicants except at the midday and evening meals.

Forthwith, certain London papers gave an exaggerated importance to the effort, and one of them printed day by day "a chorus of approval to the meal-time pledge." From the first day Mr. Webster was careful to say that he was an absolute total abstainer himself, and had been so for twenty-eight years, and that he regarded the semi-teetotal pledge as

A Preventive and Not a Cure.

"It would, I fear," he said, "be quite useless in the case of a man who has ever taken to drink." He had no idea, he confessed, when he dropped the casual suggestion how much interest it would arouse. He had his own duties to attend to, and he feels that his proper work lies with his own temperance society.

On Sunday week Mr. Webster read the following statement to his congregation: "The letter I had addressed to you a few days ago has had an unexpected and not wholly satisfactory result. In it I expressed the opinion that for some people, 'a solemn obligation to abstain from all intoxicating drinks except at the midday and evening meals' would be a step in the right direction. This statement caught the attention of some of the leading daily papers. It seemed to them to be a new valuable suggestion, and they have persisted in representing me as having started a new temperance movement. I need hardly tell you that this is not the case. Our mission was on the old lines, for the promotion of Christian Total Abstinence. The result so far is that about 150 people have signed the total abstinence pledge, while

Three have Signed the 'Semi-Teetotal' Pledge.

Seven others have applied to me by letter, mostly from a distance, for this 'semi-teetotal' pledge. The fact that only three of those who came within the influence of our mission have adopted the 'no drinks between meals' pledge (which the C.E.T.S. have been using for many years) shows, I think, that the arguments for total abstinence are from the Christian standpoint, unanswerable.

"Total abstinence is the only safe course for the drunkard, and the only really kind policy for those who wish to befriend the drunkard. The ideal Christian, the one who desires in the name of Christ to bring the highest glory to God by rendering the finest service to mankind, will under normal circumstances regard it as a duty and a privilege to abstain not only from all alcoholic drinks, but from all obnoxious drugs, including, I think, tobacco.

"Those who do not prefer to be actuated by the highest motives, or those who are persuaded that the exercise of their right to drink in moderation is not likely to cause others to stumble, will be taking a step in the right direction if they sign the semi-teetotal pledge, but this is only a second best drunkard. It may take the popular policy and a very dangerous one for the fancy, and more good than we can measure would result if, through the advocacy of this course in the daily papers, public-house drinking and all drinking between meals came to an end, but this result is more likely to be brought about if we at All Soul's (in this as in every other matter) adhere to that which we know to be

The Best Policy of All

whether fashionable or not, the policy of Total Abstinence."

As Canon Barker, who had been assisting in Mr. Webster's Gospel Temperance Mission, says: "Semi-teetotalism is something like a man promising to be honest to the extent of not stealing anything more than three-penny-bits." Thus again is the superiority of the Total Abstinence pledge vindicated against all half-measures.

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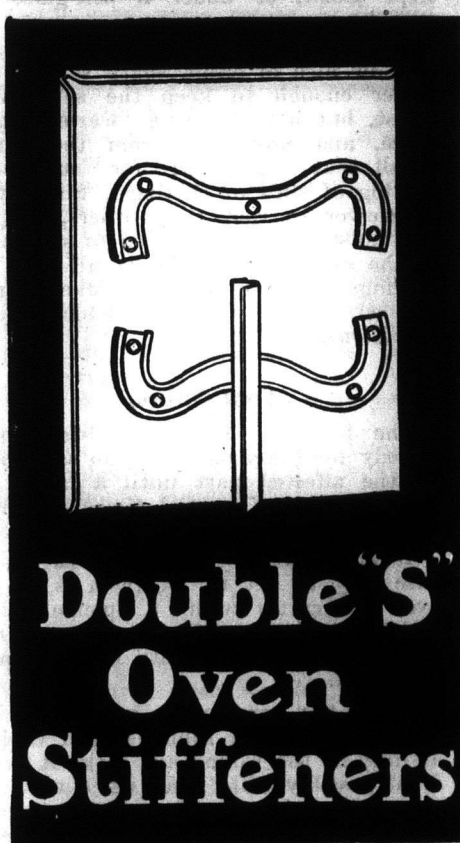
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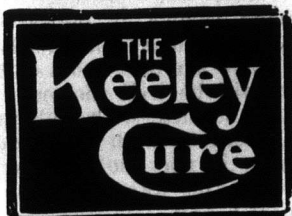
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