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TEMPERANCE TALK.

Drink a Hindrance to the Working
Man.

By John F. Cunneen.

The old days when employers had few employees, and in most instances knew them all, are gone. Vast combinations of capital have placed the employer and employed far apart. The employer no longer deals directly with his employees, but treats with them through agents. It is the chief duty of the agent to pay dividends upon the capital stock. Failure to do so means dismissal and installing another in his place who will do better.

The agent of the employer must leave sympathy outside of the business. He must drive the workmen to the utmost limit, that greater profits may be made. The most modern machinery, no matter how dangerous to life and limb, must be installed, that work may be got out at greater speed.

The tremendous speed of work of the present day whether it be in the office, mill, factory, building, railroad or outdoor work, places the drinking man at a disadvantage. Among labor saving machinery he is a dangerous man to both himself and to others. Drink tells upon the physique, and when the drinking man fails to keep up the rate required he is let out to make way for another, whom drink has not incapacitated.

Then again great combinations of capital are opposed by great combinations of labor, and often strikes of working-men result. Oftentimes the working-man, who through long years of service becomes an adept at his particular line of work, would have a life-time position but a strike forces him out to seek another situation.

The working-man who is seeking a situation is placed at a disadvantage if he drinks. The application blanks for those seeking employment nearly all contain the question, "Do you drink intoxicating liquors?" An unfavorable answer militates against his receiving a situation. When the workman seeking a situation applies to the agent of the employer it is important that his appearance makes a favorable impression. If he appears to be a drinking man, or if drink has made him seem older than he really is, the chances are against him. The agent of the employer may not be a total abstainer himself; he may sympathize with the man who drinks, but he knows that he must pay dividends upon the capital stock of his employers and he must hire only expert workmen or he will have to make way for some one else who will. The man who does not drink, who looks younger than his years, whose physique is at its best, is the man who stands the best chance of receiving employment.

There is no prospect of a slower rate in the future. On the contrary, the indications point to greater speed. Capitalists are striving more and more for money and power. Working-men are seeking advance in wages. People are not satisfied to travel slowly. Railroad and electric cars and automobiles must travel at lightning speed. The demand for speed will keep forcing the drinking man to the rear. The sooner a drinking man becomes a total abstainer the better for his future career. The young man not addicted to the liquor habit who remains faithful to his principle will have a good chance of winning in the modern swift race of life.

Kipling's Views on Beer Gardens.

Rudyard Kipling, whose stories and poems are read by all the English-speaking world, tells in his American Notes of a sad incident that came under his observation in this country. Mr. Kipling has not been a total abstainer, nor have his writings always commended temperance, but of that scene he writes:

In the heart of Buffalo there stands a magnificent building, which the population do innocently style a music hall. Everybody comes here of an evening to sit around the little tables and listen to a first-class orchestra. Here I went with a friend—poor or poor is the man who cannot pick up a friend for a season in America—and here were shown the really smart folk of the city.

One sight of the evening was a horror. The little tragedy played itself out at a neighboring table where two very young men and two very young women were seated. It did not strike me until far into the evening that the young reprobates were making the girls drunk. They gave them red wine and then white, and their voices rose with the maiden cheeks' flushes. I watched, and the youths drank till their speech thickened and their eyeballs grew watery. It was sickening to see, because I knew what was going to happen. My friend eyed the group and said:

"Maybe they're children of respectable people. I hardly think that, though, or they wouldn't be allowed out with no better escort than those boys. And yet the place is one where everybody comes, as you see. There may be little immoralities, but in that case they wouldn't be so hopelessly overcome with two or three glasses of wine. They may be—"

But whatever they were, they got intolerably drunk—there in that lovely hall, surrounded by the best of Buffalo society. One could do nothing except invoke the judgment of heaven on those two boys, themselves half sick with liquor.

At the close of the musical performance, the quieter maiden laughed vacantly and protested she could not keep her feet. The four, linked arms and staggering, flickered out into the street—drunk, gentlemen and ladies, as Davy's swine—drunk as lords. They disappeared down a side avenue, but I could hear their laughter until long after they were out of sight. And they were all children of sixteen and seventeen.

Then, recanting previous opinions, I became a Prohibitionist. Better it is that a man should go without his beer in public places and content himself with swearing at the narrow-mindedness of the majority; better it is to poison the inside with very vile temperance drinks, and to buy lager furiously at back doors, than to bring temptation to the lips of young fools, such as the four I had seen. I understand now why the preachers rage against drink. I have said, "There is no harm in it, taken moderately," and yet, my own demand for beer helped directly to send these two girls reeling down the dark street to—God alone knows what end. If liquor is worth drinking, it is worth taking a little trouble to come at—such trouble as a man will undergo to compass his own desires. It is not good that we shall let it lie before the eyes of children, and I have been a fool in writing to the contrary.

Stop the Drunk Habit.

Probably no subject is as widely discussed, and as generally misunderstood as drunkenness. Statesmen, philanthropists and financiers would like to put a stop to it. But most measures lack some vital quality which would render it effective. Legislation requires a majority of the voting power. Philanthropy helps the suffering caused by drink, but does not reach its cause. Business requirements bar the drunkard from employment, but they do not help him to conquer his addiction; they do not prevent other men from becoming drunkards.

There is too much half-hearted temperance work, too much misdirected effort, too much pulling in different directions by people who honestly desire to accomplish the same purpose.

It is time that every one should utilize all methods to stem the tide of intemperance. Preventive work is important. It reaches the young. Reform work is important. It reaches the victims. But what an army of men are going to destruction through drink who cannot be reached by either of these methods.

The drunkard is a man who has become diseased through the poison of alcohol, and this is true whether he is a moral or an immoral man. He may be greatly in need of reform measures, but the first step in his reformation should be to destroy his diseased craving for drink.

Formerly churches and temperance organizations stood alone in their efforts to promote the cause of temperance. They were hampered by ignorance of the nature of inebriety, and hindered by the tolerance it received. But an age that has wrought miracles in industrial devices has brought changes in the rules governing the drinking man. The chief factors in the improved conditions have been business requirements and the Keeley cure. The first makes it necessary for a man to stop drinking, and the latter makes it possible for him to do so.

Nansen on Intoxicants.

Dr. Nansen, the great Arctic explorer and scientist, has said: "My experience leads me to take a decided stand against the use of alcoholic drinks. It is often supposed that, even though the spirits are not intended for daily use, they ought to be taken upon an expedition for medicinal purposes. I would readily acknowledge this if any one could show me a single case in which such a remedy is necessary, but till this is done I shall maintain that this pretext is not sufficient, and that the best course is to banish alcoholic drinks from the list of necessities for an Arctic expedition."

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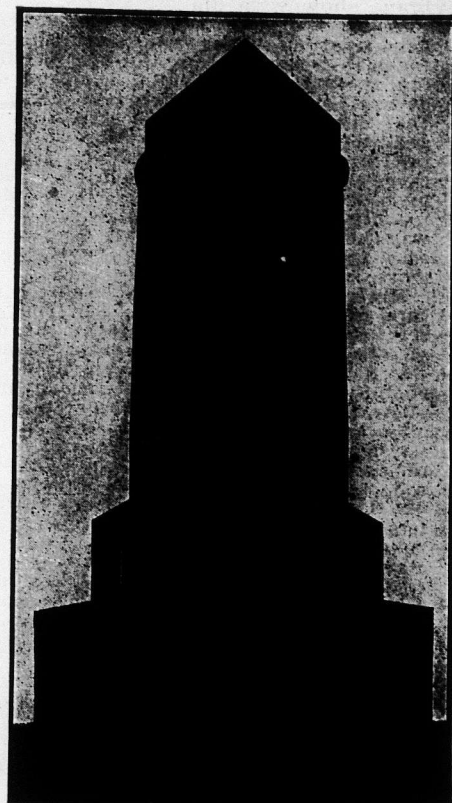
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