

Selected Articles

TEMPERANCE TEACHING

By PROF. MORGAN, in Normal Instructor

But the fundamental weakness in all our temperance teaching goes beyond all these. The fact is that the ability to abstain from liquor or tobacco is, with the boy at least, largely a question of moral courage. Boys do not drink, and certainly they do not smoke, because they have any natural taste or liking for it. On the contrary, they must endure several unpleasant experiences of sickness, dizziness, and general misery before either taste can be indulged with satisfaction. They do so chiefly because they lack the moral courage to refuse when it is offered them. Older fellows smoke and drink, and the boy feels he must do what the gang does. That boy of yours, that you have instructed so carefully as to the effects of alcohol, goes off to the next town to see the ball team play. While he is there, someone in the crowd suggests taking a drink. Does he decline on the ground that alcohol hardens the arteries, and so on? On the contrary, he immediately consents, lest he should be thought a coward and a weakling. In the same way your boy, who has just finished his lesson on narcotics and explained in detail about the nicotine on the cat's tongue, goes out to join his gang at the swimming hole, or up the alley, or around the livery stable, or wherever the boys have their hangout. Some one produces cigarettes, and the box circulates until it comes to him. In theory, he should say, "No, sir, I know tobacco is bad for me, and I'm going to cut it out." Incidentally, all the other boys have been trained in the same school, and they should all feel the same way. But they don't, and so he is too afraid of the scorn and ridicule of his companions to decline. "Aw, Bill dassent to smoke for fear his folks'll

catch him," says someone, and Bill hastens to disprove the insinuation.

This, to my mind, is the crux of the whole matter. Fear of ridicule, dread of being jeered at, and an even greater dread of being thought effeminate,—these are the chief reasons why our boys continue to drink. It is not too much to say that mere knowledge of the physiological ill-effects of liquor will never in itself be enough to deter boys from using it. In addition, we must strive to build up a moral courage which will enable them to hold out against the taunts and jeers of their companions. We must try to show them that the fellow who drinks to show he isn't afraid is the real coward, after all. We must draw their attention to the fact that boys who think smoking is a manly act generally hide away up an alley to do it. We must make them see the courage and the manliness of taking the unpopular side. We must make them feel that

"They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three!"

One other thing we need to do, and that is to enlist our pupils in an active fight against the liquor traffic. In temperance reform, as in a great many other things, there is too much telling and not enough doing. One class I know has a bulletin board outside the school, and posts on it each week a poster dealing with the liquor problem. Another held a contest at writing posters, looking up telling quotations, and so on. Put your pupils to work, let them have some part in the fight, and they will feel a personal interest and concern which will be worth much to them. Poster material of this kind can be obtained from any Anti-Saloon league, or from the Temperance Board of any of the churches. Teachers