

THE WESTERN HOME MONTHLY.

Vol. XI, No. 1.

WINNIPEG, CANADA.

JANUARY, 1910.

The Curse of the Ages.

It has been said that every man should go through the world with both ears open—one to catch the sounds of joy, the other to hear the sounds of woe. Those who are fortunate enough to live in the Last West must surely be attentive if they are to enjoy all the music that the prairies and the mountains provide. From the unbroken regions come the whispering of the reeds, the noisy but musical call of the myriad wild fowl, the ceaseless chatter of the woodland songsters; and from the forests comes the majestic murmur of the pines, the roar of the mighty cataracts and the ripple of the singing brooks. And where man has placed his habitation new voices take up the theme of praise. The waving fields of grain whisper their adoration to the rising sun, and the cattle on a thousand hills join in the proclamation that "All is good." Above all, where men and women congregate there is heard the sweet music of speech—the sobered tones of age, the lusty accents of youth and the innocent prattle of childhood. The ear of man is charmed with the wealth of sound. Nature and art, country and town, fireside and market-place vie with each other in the effort to make all life rich in its harmonies. He who wishes may listen, and if his heart so impel him he may join in the ceaseless anthem of praise.

Sounds of Woe.

Yet as one turns his head he can hear other sounds,—sighs and groans, and bitter curses. Above the cries of physical suffering caused by pain and hunger and disease, are heard the half-articulate moanings of those who have secret burdens to bear—whose hearts are breaking because hope has died, or because faith and love have ceased to be verities. These minor chords of woe! After all we find them dominant at times and we endeavor to console ourselves with the reflection that it is well they should be so. No life is perfect without sorrow. The capacity to enjoy is measured ever by capacity to suffer.

The Cry of the City.

Have you listened to the sounds of woe in a great city? How varied! How ceaseless!—Children weeping ere the sorrow comes with years, youths and maidens in their revelry converting peace and rest into discord and unseemly commotion, mothers moaning as they face the cold and hunger and the loveless future; yes, and worse than all, the incoherent mutterings of those whose rolling eyes and uncertain ways pronounce them to have lost their reason. It is not pleasant music this, that is given out by suffering humanity. Discord and broken melodies are never any too pleasant. Yet these unwelcome strains will go on forever unless the hearts of men can be brought into unison. And this unison will not be possible so long as in our fair land that greatest damning power among the sons of men is permitted to exert itself—the damning power of drink.

The Toll of Misery.

Our asylums and reformatories are peopled by its victims; our jails and prisons are crowded with its slaves; the haunts of vice and crime are all too familiar with its votaries; the calendar of crimes is a record of its ghastly triumphs—not a family but has some tale of horror to relate, not a field of activity but can illustrate the effect of its ravages. It is the mother of rapine and murder

and lust; it is the partner of vice and hatred and crime. It spares neither rich nor poor, it respects not age, nor sex, nor condition. It is the arch-enemy of peace and happiness and prosperity; it is the one great stimulant to all that is bestial and low and degrading. Beauty of form and beauty of character disappear in its presence; under its influence, man who was made a little lower than the angels sinks until he is lower than the brute.

Yet we permit the traffic to go on. We sacrifice all that is purest and best in thought and feeling,

THE OLD YEAR.

Shall we let the Old Year go
Without a tear, without a sigh,
Like a beggar in the snow
We would shun and hasten by?
Are we blind we do not see
He was our good company
When the days were young, not old
And cold?

Ought we rather not to stay
Half-regretful by his side;
Clasp his hand while yet we may,
Ere swept onward by that tide
Which heeds not a broken heart,
Rudely forces friends apart;
Listening not while they in vain
Complain?

Shall we pass our old friend o'er
For this young and stranger guide,
Knowing not what is in store
While he sojourns at our side?
Heeding not that he may show
But the paths to want and woe,
Set for us, all unaware,
Death's snare?

Should we rather not recall
Those dear days which now are dead;
Love and laughter, hope and all
Those bright paths which ever led
To the fields of light and sun,
To some hearts desire won?
They are gone with the dear
Old Year.

Then my grateful thanks to thee,
As thou diest now, Old Year,
Sad at heart because I see
Thy last day is drawing near
True to me thou wast always
In the dear departed days,
So here's peace in this the end,
Old friend.

Orchard Fearon.

all that is sweetest and best in companionship, all that is most comely and graceful in person, to this is a Latin inscription which bears the beautiful interpretation, "If you would see my monument, look monster whose appetite is never satisfied, and whose power for evil has no limit. The story of its work is too horrible to be repeated. The pictures of blighted homes, of ruined hopes of hopeless agony are too awful to be depicted. Nor do they require to be pictured to those who can look around. On the tomb of Sir Christopher Wren, in St. Paul's, there around," In a malign satanic way, this great evil of drink can point to decrepitude, and sin and misery on every hand and say "If you would see my work, just look around."

The Cure.

What are we to do with an evil of this kind? Need there be a moment's indecision? Why should we voluntarily harbor in our midst an enemy that robs us of wealth and honor and self-respect? Just nineteen hundred years ago the sons of men wild in their rage and envy, chose Barabbas and rejected the Anointed One. Can we not after so many years, when we have learned the wisdom of His teaching, reverse the cry of that day and pointing not to Him but to the vile product of Satanic invention cry, Away with it! Away with it!

There is nothing else to do. We owe it to ourselves and to our children, we owe it to truth and honor and prosperity, to cast out this modern Ishmael. The son of the bondwoman can have no partnership with the son of the promise. Why should we delay? Is it a matter of money? Then reckon how much we are adding to our riches each week by pouring down our throats three million dollars. Where is the return? Tell us again, where is the return? Truly in all commerce we expect something. Even in the Congo district the brutal agent of a brutal king gives something for the labor of those whom he has coerced into unwilling subjection, but King Alcohol robs us of health and wealth, and honor, peace and purity, and gives less than nothing in return.

The Opposition.

What is in the way of suppression of the traffic? In the last analysis we find that it is the organized opposition to those who are making money out of the trade. Let us then face the problem as we face all others that have a national bearing. No man in a community of men can claim unrestricted freedom. His action does not pertain to himself alone, but to everyone in the society of which he is a member. Since the trade in drink is a menace to national safety, the cry of private interest and vested rights must not be allowed to prevail.

Local option? Yes, but only as a weak preparation for that final action which will render the manufacture of the cursed stuff an impossibility, and its distribution a crime. All temporizing expedients are comparatively useless. All compromises only aggravate evil conditions. We have reached the time for heroic action. On physical, financial and moral grounds there is every reason for the enactment of a prohibitory liquor law that will apply to the whole of Canada. We are ready for it, and if we can rise above party littleness we shall have it. And as we rise to our privilege we shall perhaps hear those words of the Master, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these disciples ye have done it unto me."

The One and the Many.

Yet it will be said that to prohibit the manufacture and the sale of liquor is to interfere with individual liberty. Men should be allowed to indulge themselves if they please. No argument is so shallow as this. Man may have the fullest liberty provided it does not interfere with the liberty of others. When a man does that which interferes with the happiness of his wife, the permanent welfare of his children, and the peace of society, surely it is time that the community asserted that the will of the many must prevail over the wish of the individual.