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Temperance—Ideals and Methods.[1]

IT is well to build castles, even if we sometimes erect them in the air; to have visions, which, although we may not be permitted to see them materialize, those who come after us most certainly will, when those who sow—if I may be permitted to mix my metaphors—and those who reap will rejoice together.

What, then, is our ideal?

It is, I venture to think, that a great conviction will possess the world that temperance and efficiency are inseparably bound up. We are beginning to see signs that this is already happening. We are understanding, as never before, that no loud singing of war-songs, excellent as they are, no artificial patriotism or worked-up enthusiasm, can take the place of restraint, control, and the sterling character which goes to make a nation great and strong. As long as there is an enormous drink bill there cannot be efficient national service. As long as intemperance lives amongst us, and the temptations thereto go unchecked, so long will the nation fail to achieve her purpose—the welfare of the people, the justice, the freedom, and the brotherhood of mankind.

But our ideal soars higher yet, and we are encouraged to think that we are very near its realization, when all the Christian forces of the world shall sink the differences which separate them, and shall combine on a common front and attack this evil, which reaches deep down into the foundations of the social, moral, and religious life of the people. The temperance crusade has been an unifying influence in the past, it has been no uncommon sight to see the leaders of reform and the heads of the Churches working together as an allied force to crush this—as we have been so often reminded lately—the greatest enemy of England and of her Allies to-day. That this unity of purpose will be more manifest in the future is seen in the recently formed "Temperance Council of the Christian Churches"—a United Council, which represents the Temper-

[1] The substance of a paper read before the Gateshead Temperance Council.

ance organizations of our own Church, the Nonconformists, the Roman Catholics, and the Salvation Army, and which has for its object the much-needed legislative and other reforms in connection with the liquor traffic. This movement is in the direction of our ideal. It is fraught with great possibilities, and we look with confidence to great results from this union of forces. We are appreciating as never before that Unity is Strength, and that it is as possible as it is practicable to sink all pet theories and selfish idiosyncrasies, and to join in a common purpose to fight a common foe, and therein to gain a decisive and lasting victory. Certainly a tremendous responsibility will rest on any who allow party spirit to delay such a much-desired universal and final accomplishment.

Yet further still does our ideal soar, even till Temperance becomes an imperial claim. There are millions of people over whom the British flag flies who lie outside the range of our present work. Ships which carry missionaries still carry gin. We cannot leave these native races without our help. The temperance problem has become vital to them, and we can never rest satisfied till we have undone this evil. We are seeing how it has hindered civilization as well as religion, and we can no longer hold aloof, or be indifferent to an effective warfare against the evil, till—at least wherever the British flag flies—it shall fly over people unhampered by alcoholic drink.

Such, then, are some of our ideals. No doubt some may think—at least, a few years ago they may have thought—that their attainment is impossible; but surely the most blinded pessimist must see that when our greatest statesmen, scientists, leaders, and teachers are giving their best of time and thought to find a way to their realization, that we are not far from the kingdom where we would be.

Now, for a moment or two, what are some of the methods whereby we, in our smaller spheres of activity, can contribute to their end? First and foremost, I think we must thoroughly inform ourselves, going deeper into the study of the temperance problem than ever before. Most of us can remember the old

methods of temperance advocacy, and whilst our principles have not changed, our mode of presenting them has. Many of us no longer declaim against drunkenness, but against the cause of drunkenness. It is against alcohol that our efforts are directed. The old style of meeting and its address, with its pathetic pictures, its miles of public-houses placed side by side, its fierce denunciation, and its statistical gymnastics, undoubtedly did their work; they served to call attention to the evil as perhaps no other methods would have done so effectively; but with our higher ideal and enlarged purpose, we need new methods for our new tasks.

We need in these advanced and more enlightened days a deeper knowledge, a sounder ground of scientific information, combined with the old enthusiasm and spirit of self-sacrifice, if we are to reach our ideal and to win the world to temperance principles. We must not only know the nature and effects of alcoholic drinks in connection with physiology and hygiene, but also its bearing upon the problems usually associated with it. The housing of the masses, the teaching of the children, the relief of the poor, the recovery of the fallen, and in these days of national distress the filling up of the ranks and the piling up of munitions—all these subjects are so intertwined, sometimes as cause, sometimes as effect, that we should be thoroughly informed ourselves in order that we may meet all criticisms and silence all attacks in the furtherance of our ideal. The materials for doing this are in abundance, and a serious obligation rests in the minds of all temperance workers who neglect to thoroughly equip themselves for the successful accomplishment of their sacred purpose.

Information is the first method and legislation is the second. We cannot effectively have the second without the first. It is no good coercing people against their will, and a great deal remains to be done before they are prepared for any drastic measure of temperance reform. It is here, I think, our work comes in; not so heroic, perhaps, as that of the legislator, attracting to himself the attention of the world, but certainly

equally essential in preparing the way for him, and possibly in saving him from defeat, as evidenced in the recent attempts to buy out the brewers and distillers and the failure to totally prohibit the sale of intoxicants for the period of the war. The legislation we ask for is on behalf of the people; and until their voice is heard—heard loud and long—it will not be heeded; and, judging from my experience in our open-air campaign at Elswick this summer, they are not yet ready to make it heard. Their present mood is to resent any form of legislation as a curtailment of their liberties. I know it may be argued that the best way to make them realize the seriousness of the problem is to take drastic measures and to close all public-houses at once for the duration of the war; but I very much doubt whether it would not be a cure worse than the disease, and that our better plan is precept and example—to do all that we can, personally and with individuals, at meetings, and especially in the open-air, where we come in contact with people who will not attend indoor meetings, and who resent the direct personal appeal, to influence them in such a way that, realizing its danger, they shall refuse to have the temptation placed in their midst. It is for us to create a great patriotic and religious spirit among the people. We can do little without this; appeals to selfish interests, arguments about thrift and economy, warnings about crime and immorality, insanity and pauperism, will do little, compared with appeals to the larger interests of the welfare of the country and the love of God. When once it is realized that civilization is helpless and religion is powerless without Godliness, and that both of these are hampered and rendered almost useless by intemperance, we shall be able to legislate on satisfactory, just, and lasting lines. Every encouragement is ours now to do this; the old saw, "You can't make people sober by Act of Parliament" is losing its edge. The most favourable results are undoubtedly following the regulation of the hours of drinking and the suppression of credit and treating, it is forming new habits among the people, leading to a marked decrease in the convictions for drunkenness, and

is promoting the moral welfare of the community. With such incentives we may well persevere in our crusade, and demand what I think may be the right solution — a government monopoly of the trade, or any other form of legislation which shall make the ideal for which we aim an accomplished fact.

If ever there was a time when we should strive might and main to attain this, it is the present. Those of us who work in munition areas and in parishes from which large numbers of men have enlisted know as never before the disastrous effect of excessive drinking on the characters and the capabilities of the men and women, as well as its demoralizing influence on the wives and mothers of the soldiers and on their homes and little ones. I need not labour the point, but I do ask, in all the earnestness which I can command, that we should all do our utmost to carry on our temperance campaign with something of the same vigour and self-sacrifice as the nation is waging its war. The disaster would be too terrible if our victorious army should return and find our country overrun with the drink evil. It will take all our energy to prevent it; but with the help of Almighty God and the determined effort of every one of us we shall emerge, as our nation will emerge from her conflict, victorious, having achieved our ideals and ushered in a new era, wherein will permanently dwell temperance and efficiency, peace and goodwill.

HENRY EDWARDS.