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THE IMPORTANCE OF VISITATIONS

CHRISTMAS WORK!

We are on the heels of Christmas. What should teetotalers be doing at this season?—always a season of drinking and revelry, instead of a season of thankfulness and joyful sobriety. In the first place, we must, if possible, be more and more devoted to the spread of our principles, and more and more devoted to the best efforts we can devise for preventing our friends and fellow-creatures from taking drink at this dangerous time. It is not taking “too much,” as most mistaken persons talk about, but it is *against taking any* that we must warn all with whom we have any influence. There is “death in the pot;” there is poison in all our popular drinks. Poverty, idleness, crime, sin, wickedness, and neglect of every good duty springs from this liquor; its *effects* prove its perniciousness if we had no other proofs. Let us do all we can to make this *Christmas* more Christ-like than what we have generally had the mortification to witness. We may do a good deal yet; we may visit a great number of those known to be drinkers, and, talking to them kindly and affectionately, who knows but this word in time may help them over the temptations of our traditional folly in providing at this holy season the very seeds of wickedness! Our ministers, we hope, will preach against *drink* and *drinking*, and not merely against drunkenness as all are ready to do, and will also set a good example of *thorough abstinence*, not allowing the unclean thing under their roofs. Besides this, they will seize an opportunity of visiting the drinkers and the drinker’s houses they happen to know or can be informed about, and warn them against the danger of private-house as well as public-house “cheer.” Happy they who have shaken off the yoke of social slavery, who have learned to say “No” with veteran firmness when asked to drink; and happy they who have learnt so much of the mischievous nature of alcoholics, as to be convinced that good health, natural length of life, prosperity, and happiness are the genuine fruits of entire abstinence! Many drinkers (and they are all to be pitied) point to the *new year* as the time when they intend to commence teetotalism. Just now the subject is revolving in thousands of minds, and conscience is doing its work to strengthen the good resolution. This then is a strong reason for our making the next week one of the utmost activity. And joyful indeed is our anticipation that the humble labours of our friends will be the means of rescuing some of our drinking fellow-beings from the jaws of death, and bringing comfort and peace and happiness into many families ruined and almost destroyed by strong drink.

The Death Rate in different counties is given by the Registrar General, and copied into many of our newspapers. It is very remarkable that while editors try to account for the high rate of mortality, they almost invariably pass over in perfect silence the drinking habits of the people. Half a column appears in one of the Manchester papers to show how unfavourably Lancashire compares with other counties, but not a word about drink or drinking occurs in the article. The writer concludes the article with “there remains an immense amount of arrears of *sanitary* work to be recovered in this county.” *Sanitary!* yes all *sanitary*, no excessive mortality from drinking. Oh no; it is bad *air*, not bad *drink* that kills so many.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF VISITATIONS.

It is painful to know that the important duty of *visiting* the drinkers is much neglected by the temperance people. The prosperity of our Societies depends more upon this than most of our friends are aware. We read nearly all our periodicals, but rarely do we find any record of *this work* or articles urging its performance. The annual reports issued by our large organizations or subordinate societies scarcely ever advert to the duty of visitation. Of late we have had a number of conferences and sermons in connection with them. At these much time has been taken up in expounding and describing the evils of intemperance, and exciting hatred of the drinking system, but the duty and curative influences of extensive visitations seem to have been entirely overlooked. Judging from these speeches and sermons, many would think that a great deal of important temperance work was being done; but if we come carefully to investigate the matter, and especially if we judge by the condition of the masses, we arrive at a much more unfavourable conclusion. Let us take our large towns, and by enquiry we shall find that in nearly all our back streets the voice of temperance is scarcely heard—that the drinkers are not visited or admonished—that nearly all, especially the females, are as ignorant upon the subject as they were 40 years ago, that, in fact, the people are like sheep without a shepherd. Adverting to the condition of the masses and to the neglect of those above them, the Rev. Wm. Arnot says “The Christian Church has been basking itself in the sunshine over an appalling mass of moral and spiritual degradation. The surface of it has yet barely been scratched. Women and children are being slowly and surely murdered within sound of our hymn-singing.” Speaking of the great gulf existing betwixt the Church and the masses of the common people he says they might as well be living in “another planet.” The fact is the greatest number of those who are ruining themselves by drink and sunk in wickedness will not come to us, and therefore *we must go to them*. There ought not to be, and there need not be, a drinking man untaught nor a drinker’s house unvisited. If the ministers of religion would determine upon this and take the lead, in every congregation there is a number who would be glad to engage in the work. We should do well to remember the unceasing self-denying labours of the Apostles and first Christians. If ever we expect to make this country sober, there must be fifty times more labour than at present, directed in a right way, and to the RIGHT PLACES. We go on year after year in a formal manner, depending upon central meetings, large and imposing organizations, and praying for parliamentary relief; instead of every one individually putting his own shoulder to the work. We are in danger of being deceived by the glowing accounts given at some of our meetings as to the work which is being done by some sections of the Christian Church. There is ONE man, and but one, who can tell us the exact truth as to this, and that is the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The figures in his annual balance sheet contain the only reliable statement as to the progress of temperance!

Without doing less in other departments, what we would urge is, A FAR GREATER AMOUNT OF VISITATION. Most of the drinkers can be reached by no other means, and the young converts require to be often visited. Ministers and others ought not to think of doing this by deputies. Every one who has the “care of souls” should visit the drinkers of his charge just as the good shepherd did his one lost sheep out of the hundred. Some of our teetotalers may visit on the week day evenings; some on Sunday afternoons, but taking other things into account, we always found Sunday forenoons the best. Visitors may go singly or two and two, and it is very encouraging to have a central place to start from, where the visitors can see and encourage each other. If only as many as two from each place of worship would spend two hours every Sunday forenoon, an untold amount of good would be sure to follow.

CAN'T WE REVIVE THE GOOD OLD CAUSE ?

With the first number of the GUIDE, the following note was sent to a number of devoted friends of temperance :—

"Dear Sir,—I am most anxious to see a revival of the good old temperance cause, and to give all the help I can to bring it about. Among other steps, I am bringing out this little GUIDE every Saturday morning, in the hope that, with *extensive visitations, numerous meetings in the worst parts of the town, and greater efforts in our general work*, we may yet confer upon our population the blessings of real sobriety. I send this, with the enclosed specimens, hoping that you may be able to issue, or assist in issuing, *a similar paper for your district*, either weekly or monthly as you may think best. The feeling of the country is much more in our favour than formerly, and I do trust that we shall all do our best to secure a real revival.—I am, your old friend, J. LIVESEY."

We trust that this effort, humble though it be, may tend to rouse the energies of many who are now doing little, except bewailing the sad drunken condition of our country. We must work *far harder* (and in the right way) than we have been doing for a long time back; we must get to the places and to the persons where the worst features of the drinking system abound. The street, the workshop, the drinker's cottages should never cease to be the mission ground for teetotalers, and in our towns the *slums*, above all other places, should be constantly visited. *We must get amongst the drinkers*, and fearlessly as well as affectionately try to get hold of the multitudes who are now being ruined by strong drink. More than ever are we convinced that the primitive plan of agitation is the best—to visit all the back streets; to teach and preach abstinence in every nook and corner of the land; to hold numerous meetings, though small; to leave no drinker or drinker's house unvisited. Nothing less than this will do. Our conferences are of little value if they do not result in real active exertions to convert the masses to the practice of abstinence. The formation of temperance societies, with patrons, presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries and funds, is little else than mere show if they aim at less than this. The holding of great meetings is only useful if they stimulate us to be more zealous in working in a proper way for the good of the cause. With a system so good, principles so sound, a truth overflowing with blessings, and proofs on every hand of its efficacy to save the wretched slaves of strong drink, we cannot, *we must not* remain in our present formal easy-going condition. We shall succeed when we deserve to succeed—when we set about our work in real good earnest. The second great commandment is—"Thou shall love *thy neighbour* as thyself." There is no want of *self love* with most people, but if our "neighbour" includes the poor, the degraded, the suffering, the lost, the wicked, where are the proofs of our love for *such*? Where are our self-sacrifices for their good? It is the neglect of this great commandment—the want of sympathy towards the masses—that the present low ebb of the Temperance Societies is to be attributed. Faithful scavengers don't spend their time in sweeping only in clean places; they labour hardest where the greatest amount of dirt is to be found. Doctors don't cure epidemics by sitting in their studies; they go promptly to the places where disease is most virulent and *visit and re-visit* until it is cured. This is what the temperance people must do, or they may continue as at present lamenting over the increase of drinking, without effect. We want more heart in the cause; we want a deeper feeling; more sympathy for our fellow-creatures. Religion of form and fashion is prevalent enough, but we want something less showy and more like that which distinguished the good Samaritan. Animated by this spirit, we should visit the slums and back streets, where—so to speak—men are stripped, wounded, and half dead. The drinkers are really in a pitiful condition, and the fault, if traced, is not entirely their own, but often attributable to the want of being visited and properly taught—to the want of good advice and good examples. The drinkers in a neighbourhood are left to corrupt and ruin one another; scarcely noticed till some outrageous act is committed, perhaps the murder of a wife, the result of drinking. When the criminal is doomed to be hanged, the minister can then attend to him night and day, though the poor fellow was never visited before.

Both on the ground of humanity and religion we would hope that all religious people would be deeply impressed with the sufferings to be seen on every hand, brought on by drinking, and will not only sympathise with the sufferers, but eagerly adopt every course of action, though ever so self-denying, calculated to do them good. The example of Christ stands out in bold relief. The poor, the distressed, the fallen, the lost—He ever sought after. Publicans and harlots and great sinners were those He was found among, always teaching them, doing them good, showing compassion and forbearance to the vilest sinners. If we would follow His steps, it is impossible we can sit and enjoy our ease at home, while our fellow-creatures, close by, are going to ruin. Looking at the number and power of the agencies in favour of the drinking system, and at the prevailing ignorance, appetite, fashion,

and interest, it is obvious that our present poor labours are but as a drop in the bucket towards quenching this relentless fire. We do hope that the present winter will be the beginning of better times for our cause. All parties seem to be moving, and all we wish is that they may move in the right direction in favour of real abstinence; and that this may be done so as to reach the very lowest stratum of society.

A good hint.—It is not every day that we can kill two birds with one stone. But here is a chance. Instead of ordering a gallon of rum for Christmas, or a case of wine, remit the amount to the Ladies' Committee at Manchester, for the relief for the sick and wounded and the refugees in Servia, Bulgaria, &c. The address of the Committee is 56, Peter Street.

An old clergyman, who thinks common sense, without any critical knowledge of languages, is sufficient to guide us in deciding against wine drinking, writes:—"I read my bible now as I did fifty years ago; never stopping to inquire whether the wine was black or blue, as mild as milk, or as strong as brandy. I know what the wines of our day are, and it is with those I have to deal with, and not with those drunk two or three thousand years ago."

Drink at Railway Stations.—The Bishop of Manchester lately drew attention to the fact that at every railway station a glass of beer could be obtained for two-pence or three-pence, whilst a cup of tea or coffee could not be got under sixpence. It is quite time the sober public should speak out on this point. Besides paying double for tea, we often find that the drink customer is served first, and the tea drinker has to stand waiting to the last. Railway Companies should be reminded of these objectionable arrangements.

The People's Cafe.—Such has been the success of the accommodations of the House opened a few months ago, in Farrington Street, London, that it is found impossible to meet the demands of the patrons, though the premises are large. The proprietor is therefore opening, in addition, larger premises on the north side of St. Paul's Churchyard. In these new premises four hundred persons can dine most comfortably at one time. There is also a ladies' room most conveniently arranged.

"I took the pledge," said an old man, "at the foot of the gallows, when I saw a young man hung. The sheriff took out his watch and said "If you have anything to say, speak now, for you have only five minutes to live." The young man burst into tears and said, "I had only one little brother; he had beautiful blue eyes and flaxen hair, and I loved him. But one day I got drunk, and, coming home, found him gathering berries in the garden, and became angry without a cause, and killed him with a rake. Whiskey has done it—it has ruined me. I have but one more word, to say—never! never! NEVER! touch anything that can intoxicate!"

Drink and Crime.—"I go on an expedition through the goals of this country. The warders show me, in a cell, a youth of twenty-four, whose delicate fingers are bleeding at his work. I ask what brought him here. They answer—He took to drink, joined a gang of burglars, and has got five years. I see a woman who, they say, weeps and starves. "She is a woman we can do nothing with," remarks the warder; "she will die long before her time is out." "What is her offence?" "In a drunken fit she killed her child, and threw it into the fire." And in every prison as I proceed some similar evidences upon evidences of such effects of drink are exhibited."

THE DRUNKARD'S WIFE.

Before the altar stood
The bridegroom and the bride,
With willing hands and blended hearts,
The holy knot was tied;
And when he spake the words,
So welcome and so dear,
There glistened in her mild blue eye
That test of love—a tear!
And thus they liv'd and lov'd—
The hours were never dull,
And heaven crown'd their happy love,
With pledges beautiful;
And as her charge increased,
With each succeeding year,
The mother's heart rushed to her eye,
Which trembled with a tear.
But year has followed year—
As wave succeeding wave—
The once-loved wife is joyless now,
And he a drinking slave;
Vice o'er him holds her sway,
And from his dark career
She tries to win him, and her eye—
Her dimm'd eye drops a tear.

Her kindness pleads in vain—
His heart is scared and hard,
And tauntings loud, and cruel blows,
Are that fond wife's reward!
He spurns her from his side,
With looks and words severe,
Yet, for that ruffian's sake, her eye
Is gushing with a tear!

Upon his dying couch,
Fear wraps his soul in gloom,
When common friendship hides her head,
She never leaves the room;
She kneels, and if faith can
Compel the Lord to hear,
She opens mercy's gate and melts
The sinner with a tear.

That wife's a widow now;
The star of hope shall rise
No more for her; her bosom lord
Died as the drunkard dies!
God help this bruised reed,
Her load of woe to bear!
For none but Thou can rest her soul,
Who cannot shed a tear.—H. ANDERTON.