

Beer, Bigamy and the Boycott.

In our last issue we referred to a remarkable instance (says the *Licensed Victuallers' Gazette*, Dunedin) of the practice of the boycott by Mr. David Gain, the Wellington manager of the New Zealand Express Company. Mr. Gain refused to have certain beer, which had been consigned to Wellington from Auckland, carted by the Company, on the score that it was against his principles to have beer carted. It does not lie within our province to comment upon the action of a manager who by such action inflicts a loss upon the Company he represents; no doubt his principals may have something to say on the subject; but we do think that public interest, apart from the Trade which we specially represent, demands the publication of a few facts in connection with the life of this singular individual who poses at once as an earnest Christian, a temperance reformer, a bigamist, and a boycotter.

Mr. Gain, in a pamphlet published in Dunedin in 1891, tells the story of his life from 1872; it is a romance which could easily be enlarged into a three volume novel of the "Zola" type. He stated that when quite a young man he married a woman whose antecedents would not bear investigation, hoping to reform her. Several times she left him to pursue her previous mode of life; he took her back again and again; but finally he left her and came to New Zealand. In 1893 he married again, his first wife being still alive, having, however, first informed his second wife, previous to the ceremony, of his past life, not deceiving her or her family at all, so he says. While living in Dunedin, Mr. Gain appears to have been a very active member of the Baptist Church, to have taken charge of the Band of Hope, and conducted its prayer meetings. He further states, "there has been no temperance meeting since Mr. Glover came to Dunedin in which I have not had a large share of the work and responsibility;" and he is now president of the Wellington Temperance Society.

He states that he was found out through the deserted wife's advertisement in Lloyd's *Weekly News* having come under the notice of the officers of his church, and his name was removed from the church roll.

The whole story is told us with so singular an air of self-appreciation and satisfaction that it is probably unique as an illustration of erratic development. We are not Mr. David Gain's judges; we have no mission to determine where or when he went wrong. Our only object in referring to the story is to point out that as a moralist Mr. Gain is certainly one of those who

"Compound for sins they are inclined to
By damning those they have no mind to,"

since he can excuse committing bigamy, but cannot cart beer. While we read the annals of this jejune piety, and mark the self-complacent smirk with which he deals with those who were judging him, the whole world of morals seems turned upside down. We can find it in our hearts to explain the curious laxity of moral fibre exhibited when he took the woman back, or when he grudged the cost of a divorce which would have left him a free man. We can half pardon him for finding another woman to share his lonely home. What we cannot understand is that with his crime on his mind he should have proceeded to teach Sunday schools and to lecture prayer meetings, and guide the Band of Hope into the paths of temperance.

Are there many more such men about, who think abstinence the end, as well as the beginning, of all morality, and forgetting all about temperance and chastity while idealising sobriety? The truth is, this class of ascetics are a law unto themselves; they do not abide by the law of the land at all, and this is what makes them such dangerous members of a community. It seems in the modern Good Templar bible that the whole decalogue is made to be broken, so long as the one self-imposed law is obeyed—"YOU SHALL NOT CART BEER."

The following, from a Captain White's account (in *London Globe*), of the Matabele campaign, reads like an extract from King Solomon's Mines, "It was very curious to see the effect of the seven-pounder and Hotchkiss shells upon the Matabele when they were retreating. On the shell bursting among them we could see, through our glasses, the Matabele turn round and fire at the place where the shell had burst, thinking it was some diabolical agency of the white man. From information we received after this fight we learnt that the enemy had intended attacking us at ten o'clock the previous night, but owing to the rocket having been sent up to recall Captain Borrow they were afraid to do so, thinking that we were holding communion with our gods by shouting at the stars and bringing them down.' Poor devils!

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