

as a thing sacred and socially tapu against unfriendly touch. But the English-speaking public—or at least the part of it that has done most to form and guide public opinion—has shed its skin many a time and oft. It took, for instance, a long time to rid the British Isles of the custom of duelling, which was deemed to be more impregnably established there at the time than even in Germany or Italy or France. And yet it was killed off—ripped and battered by the pulpit, cudgelled by the press, and damned with withering ridicule by the stage. And so complete and effective has the work been, that we of the present day can scarcely realise that less than a century ago Englishmen and Scotsmen and Irishmen outside the padded cells of a lunatic asylum settled trifling differences of opinion and revenged real or imaginary slights with the points of rapiers or the deadly muzzles of hair-triggered duelling pistols. And our drinking habits, have we not changed them too? What, for instance, has become of the Earls of Portansherly and their kind? or of the rollicking, fox-hunting, duelling, hard-drinking Irish squire and his English counterpart? They are as extinct as the dodo or the moa. Even our toasting customs have materially altered. The interminable lists of a century ago are no longer in vogue; there is no compulsion—nor is it the custom—to honor them, as in the former way, by draining deep bumpers to the dregs; even sips of water, or harmless make-believe, pass muster, and tend to surround the modern set dinner or banquet with a decorum that was unknown in the swilling days of old. We shall probably never again hear of a ‘proper’ gentleman writing—as HALIDAY wrote to Lord CHARLEMONT in 1788—that he ‘actually drank 60 bumpers’ at a public banquet, after having ridden 40 miles on a hot summer day, and afterwards ‘walked steadily home’ to his ‘hovel.’ They had hard heads—and, possibly, honester drink—in those times. And those of us who are at life’s dawn may live to see the treating habit going the way of duelling and long-tailed toast-lists and prize-fighting and other barbarous customs that have from time to time grown like cancers on our civilisation.

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There is, in all reason, ample scope among us for the operations of a vigorous non-treating league. We have more than once advocated it in these columns. Some 12 months ago, in dealing editorially with the subject, we instanced the marked success which was achieved in a short time by an anti-treating league founded some years ago in Chicago. We at the same time announced the approaching establishment of a similar organisation, under episcopal sanction and patronage, in the diocese of Ferns (Wexford county), Ireland. Since that time we have had an opportunity of witnessing its effects upon the daily life of large numbers of people, and our observations have given us the conviction that the movement is a well-considered one; that it fills a crying need of the day; that it marks an important phase of the crusade against intemperance; that, in its general outlines, it is well suited to the conditions prevailing in these new countries; that, given judicious management, it has come to stay, and to effect a notable measure of good among the people who will be brought within the sphere of its influence. A brief outline of its principles and practice cannot fail to be of interest to all who are interested in promoting the cause of temperance.

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The League—known as ‘St. Patrick’s Anti-treating League’—is placed under the patronage of Ireland’s national apostle, because (as its rules explain) ‘it rests on the double foundation of religion and patriotism.’ ‘The anti-treating principle’—it is further explained—‘is not intended to interfere in the least with the total abstinence pledge; on the contrary, the League is in full sympathy with every effort to promote temperance in Ireland; it admits “teetotalers” and “non-teetotalers” alike. Its primary object is to combat one special and very grave drinking abuse. ‘Treating in public-houses,’ says the League circular, ‘is now justly held to be the chief cause of drunkenness in this country, and it follows our young countrymen like a curse in other lands.’ ‘Treating,’ in the purview of the League, is defined as follows: ‘To pay for intoxicants for another to drink in a place where drink is sold.’ Two important provisos are here added, the one relating to the publican, the other to private individuals. ‘Persons who sell drink,’ says the first proviso, ‘will also be considered to “treat” if they give free drinks to customers

or others in the shop or in the room used by the public for drinking purposes; but if they offer drink to visitors or personal friends in their (the publicans’) private rooms, this is regarded as on a par with giving drink in a private house, and is not contrary to the rules of the League.’ Again: ‘The anti-treating pledge puts no undue restraint on a member’s liberty as to the use of drink. It does not hinder him from offering drink to friends in his own house, nor from taking drink in moderation in the house of a friend. It does not prevent him entering a public-house and buying a drink for himself, and then leaving.’

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The organisation is parochial, and is open to both sexes. There is a special branch for young persons who ‘have kept or renewed the Confirmation pledge; they have special meetings, and wear a special badge. They take the pledge against treating as well as the total abstinence pledge.’ Each member pledges himself (1) ‘not to take a treat from another, nor to give one himself in a place where drink is sold’; (2) not to be himself guilty of the sin of intemperance, and to strongly discourage, at all times, intemperance in others. This pledge may be taken for any period not less than one year, and is publicly renewed on the feasts of St. Patrick and All Saints. Members have their names entered in a register. They wear a small, but handsome badge—a small enameled shamrock bearing on its triple leaf the letters, in Irish characters, C.N.P.—which, being interpreted, mean *Connrad Noomh Padraig* (St. Patrick’s League). ‘Should any member violate the pledge of the League, he shall immediately take off the badge and not wear it again until he has first renewed his pledge with a priest.’ ‘Persons who are habitually intemperate, and who cannot take drink without going to excess, require the total abstinence pledge, and should take it as a condition of being admitted into the Anti-treating League.’ ‘Not only religious confraternities, but social and athletic clubs, young men’s societies, nationalist and other patriotic bodies,’ are all exhorted to join in the good work. And, finally, remembering that man may plant and water, but God alone can give the increase, certain appropriate prayers are recommended for recitation day by day by members of the League.

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During the brief period of its existence the Anti-treating League has spread in every parish in the diocese of Ferns; it has received the warm commendation of the learned and distinguished Prelate who wears the archiepiscopal mitre of the See of Dublin, and of other members of the Irish hierarchy; and its principles have been adopted and put into active operation in various parts of the Green Isle. With little or no alteration except in minor details it is as well suited to the needs of the new countries under the Southern Cross as it is to those of the older lands that lie under Charles’ Wain. Its general adoption would supply a direct and ready remedy to a great social abuse and a valuable aid to existing temperance effort.

Notes

Anthrax.

The reported outbreak of anthrax at Woodlands, a district about 12 miles north of Invercargill, is very properly regarded as a most serious thing by the agricultural community. Not only does it concern those who have directly to do with stock of various kinds, for this virulent disease attacks animals of all kinds, and even communicates itself to human beings with fatal results. If it should now be found that anthrax has established itself in the extreme south as well as the north end of the Colony, the best that may be hoped is that its effects may be minimised, for even the most sanguine may despair of eradicating a disease whose germs are so insidious and tenacious of life. It is this characteristic of latency that makes anthrax so dangerous. A farmer, let us suppose, has the misfortune to lose an animal by its means. Fully alive to the danger of infection, yet not sufficiently informed of the means of preventing it, he buries the carcass in a secluded spot. But in a few years that spot is ploughed, and the germs, liberated by the sunshine, enter upon their deadly work, when probably the source of their origin has