

17
From the *Writer* 18.

85

A Paper on
TEMPERANCE

By *GEORGE GRIFFITHS.*

Read at the Meeting in Weston School, April 27th, 1896,
in conjunction with a
Series of Lantern Slides exhibiting
"Our Glorious Empire."

Shrewsbury:

L. WILDING, PRINTER AND STATIONER, 33 CASTLE STREET.



TEMPERANCE.

THESE Slides belong to the Primrose League and have been all over the country. They are a means to educate us up to our duties as Englishmen, and of these generally I conceive promotion of Temperance to be one. Abroad, Englishmen are looked upon with greater respect than any other race, and it is lamentable to think how many who boast the name at home earn our contempt too often by intemperance. True, some lives are so wretchedly placed, and have been from their cradle, that it is folly to hope for any improvement in their condition, and little in those unhappy children whom they have brought up, and some victims of intemperance are quite irresponsible for their actions, these claim our sincerest pity; but the power of good, and for good, often unseen, is enormous, and it is in this quiet village our duty to help forward the good cause of Temperance in every way we can, by Precept, by Education, and by Example. By Precept, that we may be able to say with Adam, the faithful servant of Orlando (Shakespearian character),

“Though I am old, yet am I strong and lusty,
For in my youth I never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood.”

By example, because chiefly to the young should we look to reward our efforts, and one can never tell how deeply may be burnt into the child's heart a good maxim taught in childhood's happy day.

As means to an end these Views may help, and particularly as it is now well-known that education by sight, or rather by pictures, is an enormous aid to memory. The Primrose League labours for political good in much the same way as the Temperance Society, and is chiefly successful when it avoids harangues or tactless pressure of its views in season and out of season.

Bishop Tillotson, writing 200 years ago, says,—“we may do much by good instruction, and under instruction I comprehend all the means of bringing men to the knowledge of their duty, and exciting them to the practice of it by instructing their ignorance, and removing their prejudices, and rectifying their mistakes by persuasions and proofs.”

I believe here, in this favoured district, we neglect opportunities we have of diffusing knowledge. What a quantity of excellent unread books of Kingsley and others we have locked up in our Reading Room. Night after night through the winter, these volumes should be in the homes of the poor, where parents and children may read wholesome reading, rather than the rubbish relating to murders and crime, and quack medicine, which comprise such a large part of the newspapers; scores of things which curiosity leads one to scan over, but after trash compared with the interesting reading to be found in Canon Kingsley's charming stories, or in the philosophy as well as ludicrous situations of people and things to be found in the ever-popular Dickens.

The Press and the power of the Press have much to answer for, and there would be no greater engine to repress crime and its satellite intemperance than the establishment of a Bureau of rigorous censorship of all printed books and papers, whether printed in, or imported into this country.

The adulteration of foods carried on is appalling, but is being tackled at last, however feebly, and drinks of all kind require the same inspection. There are cases and people whose health and callings require a certain amount of “liquor” whether it be of beer or spirits; and it is perfectly certain that the vile concoctions which disgrace the name of beer, and the nasty raw burning stuff sold in the gin-shops which are frequented by the poor, need to be more drastically dealt with.

With regard to the newspapers, an instance of the truth of Burn's lines—

Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursel' as ithers see us,
It wad frae mony a blunder free us
And foolish notion.

is given by Col. Bridgeman. He has a military friend, who recently was honoured by the Shah of Persia in being asked to visit him. He sat in a thronged Court by the side of the Shah for an hour-and-a-half daily, and they conversed through an

The Shah commented on the English newspaper. Interpreter. He should not allow such things to happen in his country, as he saw reported in large type in the English paper, “Why,” he said, “you have a murder every day!”

Women may do great things for Temperance. When I was at school at Chester, Canon Kingsley preached in our Chapel sometimes. He was the delight of the King's School boys, when every Saturday afternoon he took them for rambles along the lanes, or the canal side, and taught the jumping frolicking lads object lessons in nature which they will never forget. He says of Education of Women, “The education which I set before you is not to be got by mere hearing lectures or reading books, for it is an education of your whole character, self-education. Hearing lectures is good, for it will teach you how much there is to be known, and how little you know. Reading books is good, for it will give you habits of diligent study. Lectures and books are good, mainly as they furnish matter for reflection, whilst the desire and ability to reflect must come from above.

“Let me ask women to educate themselves not for their own sakes merely, but for the sake of others.”

“For whether they will or not they must educate others. I do not speak of those engaged in direct teaching. I speak of those, and in so doing I speak of every woman, young and old, who exercises as wife, as mother, as aunt, as sister, or as friend influence, indirect it may be, and unconscious, but still potent and practical on the minds and characters about them, especially of men. How practical and potent that influence is, those know best who know most of the world. I ply the ignorance and conceit of the man who fancies he has nothing to learn from cultivated women.”

Mrs. John Bridgeman once said,—I think it was after looking at my Aquarium, in which I had kept successfully fish and aquatic plants for some months without changing the water,—she was “always learning, and never tired of it.” That phrase remained on my mind.

So far then about Precept and Education. As to Example, we never know how far its effect reaches.

Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime;
And departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

Footprints let them be, such as could be proudly indented on a rock, and for all time, rather than the shifting, fleeting, insipid marks, which may hold us up to temporary admiration in the passing hour.

Legislation has been referred to before. Another way in which legislation should help temperance more, would be to enforce rigorously the laws against persons drunk. The publicans themselves, are in my opinion, not so much to blame as some people think. They are engaged in a trade, out of which this country makes an enormous revenue, and their calling is acquired in by the State. For the life of me, I never could see why, when the Conservative Government proposed to devote an annual sum to buy up public houses, the Radicals opposed it through thick and thin, and the Measure was lost. Then, the latter assisted by the Dissenters placed one of the greatest stumbling blocks in the way to the success of the Temperance Cause. The publicans have not got 'Rontgen photorays' to see the inside of a man, and their houses are a convenience, nay more, a necessity for the travelling and commercial public, and in country places there is little room for their reduction in number. But in large towns there are a great many too many, notably in London; but even in Shire and small country towns, at least half should be closed, and the rest should be superintended. It should be compulsory to sell only wholesome drinks, and the non-intoxicating should be as accessible as the others. Coffee and tea too should be always available. In Railway Refreshment Rooms there is great need of reform. Beer is available at 2d. a glass, while tea costs 1d. a cup, which is monstrous.

One of the greatest puzzles to all deep thinkers and the greatest silent worker against temperance and other good causes, is the success which attends those people who take the more sinful line in life, while many whose example and whose conduct is all that could be desired, meet with absolutely no reward visible. Still the right minded man, and woman too, is always rewarded by the blessing of a sound conscience. Lady Newport's family motto is, "A sound conscience is a brazen wall," *i.e.* to withstand all attacks, and be a sure defence.

How much women, young ladies, and young girls have done of late, and are doing, in, to use a vulgar expression, "sitting on" intoxication! A sweetheart who makes an ass of himself in that way, can be promptly snubbed to such an extent as to make an impression on him for life. It is a wholesome sign of the times

too at theatres, to find that when characters are represented in a drunken state how soon the ladies show their dissatisfaction, and the piece has a poor run. In this way the taste of the people is being elevated, and great results may be expected in the cause of morality. Foul language seems greatly on the increase, and the revolting words uttered by schoolboys, is a disgrace to our age.

Much has been done in education, but I fear the education of the mind and the manners of the youngsters is terribly overlooked in the hurry of masters to cram pupils with as much learning as possible. Some marks for bearing and manners should be given by Inspectors.

I will now conclude this paper by quoting a few lines composed by a poor Indian convert who once brought it to a missionary, with great pride, as an English poem on Perseverance—

Go on, go on, go on, go on,
 Go on, go on, go on,
 Go on, go on, go on, go on,
 Go on, go on, go on.

I hope you will make it your Temperance motto, and commit it to memory. Then, when the grey hairs of time shall bid you reflect on the past, and contemplate the future, you may, like the hero Gordon, with a cheerful heart,

Yield your pure soul unto your Captain Christ,
 Under whose colours you have fought so long.

G. G.

