

INTEMPERANCE

BY BOLTON HALL

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The Scripture says:

"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish. . . . Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more."

The wise man puts his finger upon the main cause of intemperance, not upon the cause, but upon the chief cause. Probably no one desires to minimize the evil of drink. We cannot but respect at least the hearts of those who, seeing this great evil, are anxiously doing something to remedy it, and who are neither discouraged by fifty years of

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failure nor taught by fifty years of experience.

But if you and I would remedy the diseases of the body politic or cure the evils of the social organism, we must first find out the causes of the evils. What should we think of a Messiah, or even of a clergyman, who pursued the methods of Anthony Comstock, simply catching a few of the many in wrong doing, and by destroying the implements of vice, trying to stop its commission? We all recognize that the true way is, not to cut off this or that vice, not to suppress this or that symptom, but to teach and educate men so that they will know better and abhor such lusts.

So must we do with the terrible

drink disease. We must find out, in order that we may cure them, what are the conditions which produce and breed intemperance--the conditions that create the idleness of wealth and the idleness of poverty. Is not the main factor monopoly of land?

Did you ever stop to ask why it is that, whilst intemperance is by no means absent among the well-to-do, its great ravages are made among the laboring poor? As the idle rich drink to remember their misery no more, so the idle poor drink to forget their poverty.

It will not do to say that it is intemperance which makes people poor. Look at the statistics in the leading and the latest authority on

the state of the poor, Dr. Edward T. Devine's "Misery, and Its Causes." He reports a careful study of five thousand cases of poverty which confirm the statistics of the Charity Societies, that the "chief cause of need," as the International Conference of Charities calls it, is unemployment (69 per cent). Intemperance accounts for less than 17 per cent. of the causes of poverty on which Dr. Devine reported.

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