



## THE NEXT PUBLIC-HOUSE.

**L**ET us take a look inside two or three of the public-houses, taverns, "gin-palaces," which are to be found "at every hand's turn" to allure the working man, the idle man, the unemployed, the over-worked, the cadger, the tippler, the confirmed drunkard. Look! there is a wretch going for "a gin-crawl," a horrible but emphatic phrase to denote the fatal habit of repeated dram-drinking at two or three different gin-shops in a particular neighbourhood.

It is a terribly significant fact that those who are addicted to this form of intemperance are mostly people who, to use the common expression, have seen better days. The poor, ruined creature who is shambling round the corner, with a furtive glance to see whether he is observed, was once "respectable." The shiny, threadbare black coat, fastened up to his collarless neck with alternate pin and button; the patched, dusty boots; the crumpled, limp, greasy hat, distinguish him altogether from the costermongers, the roughs, the street hawkers and hucksters, who are talking and swearing in the larger "public bar," just as the faded shawl, the ragged, dingy gown, and the weedy bonnet distinguish the woman who has just come out, and is now hurrying away—as though she tried to pretend to herself that she had not been inside that fatal door—from the loud, red-faced, bare-armed viragos who are laughing and chattering in a knot round the barrel which, in the absence of a seat, is perhaps provided for customers to lean against.

These latter people make no secret of their drinking. With them, unhappily, the public-house or the gin-shop is an institution where they spend an enormous proportion of every shilling which they earn so hard. The women know where to send their children to "find father." The man going home and finding the "missis" out, goes to look for her, probably not in the best of tempers, and, unless he is easily mollified, there is a quarrel, which, having been inflamed by previous potations, is perhaps only

allayed by the intervention of friends, and another "quartern" and "three outs"—that is to say, a quarter of a pint of gin or rum, and three glasses, each of which holds precisely a third, and so includes the pacificator in the amicable arrangement. Is it any wonder that the neighbourhood where these people live should be often disturbed by screams and oaths; by the sound of blows; and sometimes by the sudden summoning of the police; by the breaking open of a door; the sight of scared faces of children, the spectacle of a man standing half frenzied, of a woman lying a mere senseless heap in a corner, or upon the stairs, where she has been murderously stricken down?

These people are altogether different to the silent, shrinking, blue-skinned, blear-eyed creature who slinks in at the quiet entrance round the corner, leading to the private bar, and holds the door so that it may shut gently, and not attract attention. There is a deferential manner in his asking for "two-penn'orth," with a deprecating motion of the head, as though he would say, "Appearances are against me; I am rather above this sort of thing in general, so don't be hard upon me." The barmaid knows him well enough. Probably, he has but just come from the tavern on the other side of the road, where he has been through the same performance, and this is his third or fourth glass of raw spirits since breakfast-time—if he has had any breakfast, which is a doubtful matter. He was a decent clerk once, most likely, or an employé in some place of trust, or he may have been a small tradesman who failed in business, or a lawyer's clerk; who can tell?

The few people who know him, or have contrived to lead him into conversation, speak of him as a remarkably well-informed man, "when he's all right;" and probably they will at once qualify this exception by adding, "not that he's ever exactly drunk, you know."

He is not to be confounded with the cadger, who lurks about the bar, on the chance of being asked casually to have something to drink by somebody who

has reached the hospitable stage of inebriety—the degraded wretch who wears the rags and remnants of broad-cloth, and assumes a kind of defiantly humble, smirking air, to hide the cynical ruffianism that is ready to be displayed whenever it may show itself with safety. He may sometimes assume an air of sudden indisposition, and simulate hurry, as he asks in a



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whisper for a dram; but this is not that he may obtain it from some generous sympathiser. The most pitiful characteristic of the "gin-crawlers" is that they maintain the homage that vice pays to virtue, or degradation to respectability, by keeping up a constant pretence, which deceives nobody—unless, indeed, it is a part of their lost condition that it ultimately befools themselves. They will even go to the

length of passing the gin-shop, as though they had no intention whatever of entering; will suddenly look up as with a sudden reflection that it would be as well to know what o'clock it is; will stealthily open the door and peep in with an air of being strangers to the place, and so will slide to the bar as though they had inadvertently slipped in through the chink while peering overhead for the clock. They will go to the same public-house three times in a morning, and yet preserve a stolid pretence of having come in quite briskly for the first time; but they will seldom, if ever, have two drams immediately one after the other at the same place, and will never have a double quantity at once. And so with blue drawn skin,

pale haggard faces, fleshless bodies, sunken eyes, and cold bloodless hands, they flicker to the socket till the day comes when there is a dead man or woman discovered in a bare room without food or fire, or when a parish funeral goes out from a house where a quiet lodger leaves nobody to mourn for him, or perhaps leaves wife and daughter, little the worse for the loss of his scanty earnings—or rather of the balance which was left when he had finished his daily rounds.

There are other habitués of the gin-shop, however—poor pallid creatures, who belong indeed to the working classes, and are mostly among the underpaid—those who follow humble callings in foul and pestilent streets, where there



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is lack both of air and water. It is sad enough to see some of these people, when they escape from cheerless, foetid lodgings, to the nearest solace, to be found only a few doors off—to note the frequent kindness with which they speak to each other, and the maudlin uncertainty of temper whereby it too often changes to a wrangle, and to fearful imprecations.

The rapidity with which even a small quantity of poisonous fiery liquor will carry these underfed, thin-blooded people through the various stages of inebriety is a remarkable feature of "the next public-house;" and should it be a large and busy tavern, with a brisk evening bar-trade, the variety of its cus-



EN ROUTE TO THE POLICE STATION.

tomers is scarcely less surprising: even decent-looking girls, who ask for what they want in a whisper, and drink it among themselves with a giggling affectation of shame—or it may be a real sense of impropriety in entering such a place—are among the occasional visitors. They are servants, not of the highest class, who have been for their day out; and you may see some old unabashed woman with them, to whom they are standing treat—the charwoman to whose house they go to change their plainer attire for holiday finery, and to change back again on their return. Then there are omnibus conductors and drivers, cabmen, policemen off duty, and others whose avocations, including exposure and long hours of work, are thought to need the amelioration of drink, and whose labour is, if that drink be spirits, made harder and harder by the loss of nervous energy that comes after the deadly draught has spent its force.

But who can describe the habitués of “the next public-house” in a page? Let us for a moment consider what can be done to mitigate this plague of intemperance, to allay this mad thirst for strong drink—what can be put in its place, and how the conditions that lead to half the drunkenness in our great towns may be ameliorated.

It is not intended here to enter into the question of total abstinence, or to reopen the already vexed arguments on the subject of moderate drinking. My own unalterable conviction is that the first means for procuring a real diminution of intemperance will be the improvement of the dwellings of the poor, the provision of air and water, the opportunity for having clean homes and clean bodies. I will venture to affirm that the habitual drunkard is scarcely ever an habitual bather. I will go further, and declare that a daily ablution of the whole body, and attention to personal cleanliness, go so far to produce self-respect, that those who form the habit of observing both are very unlikely to drink to excess, while the actual physical condition produced by the free external use of fresh water is in itself a corrective to the craving for liquor.

It is useless to lose sight of the now admitted fact that alcohol, even though it may be at a deadly cost to the springs of life, does mitigate the otherwise constant uneasiness, the sense of want and of sickness, that comes of insufficient or bad food, and a vitiated atmosphere. To deny this is to call in question an almost universal experience, that may be said to have been founded on instinct, and to refuse to accept the physician's established remedies for a class of disease having a close resemblance to this low, feeble state of health—and for which even temperance prescribes ammonia, chloric ether, carminative tinctures, and aromatic gums or herbs.

Let us not forget, either, that the habit of drinking saps the energy which has been already depressed by foul air and water—the denial of the right to wash and be clean. We want a gradual improvement in those London slums of which we have already written—the free use of the whitewash brush, an urgent demand that local authorities shall do their work in drainage,

and in enforcing a more ample—or, at all events, a more regularly copious supply—of water; and we want at least a hundred more buildings in London where not only men and boys, but girls and women, may have hot and cold, and even swimming baths, that cleanliness may become luxury and necessity—a duty and a pleasure.

We were to have had a floating bath in the Thames, lying off the Embankment; but another summer is nearly past, and there are few signs of the completion of such a good and desirable provision. I believe that good baths in every district would do more towards the restoration of the health of the people, and therefore more in the cause of temperance, than all the meetings that have been held for advocating temperance principles in the past two years. But, alas! there are no signs of such a movement. Water to wash is not attainable by a large section of the community which needs it most, and water to drink is qualified by “something to kill the animalcule,” on the strength of the continued reports of impurity in about three-fifths of the supply furnished to the Metropolis.

As to the Embankment, the very mention of that great causeway, which might be made one of the finest boulevards in Europe, but which remains, like many of London's open spaces, a chaotic example of the results of undecided authority—the very mention of it leads one to ask, “Why must the thirsty Londoner, who declines the tepid draught at one of the few dingy fountains left to decay in the summer's sun, be committed to strong heady or fiery potations? How is it that so few London restaurateurs—and among them only a dozen or so of Italians, who keep little stuffy shops in some of our main thoroughfares—have made the provision of really enticing, cool, pleasant beverages a feature of their business! Even the sale of light wines—of cheap claret, which, mingled with twice its measure of water, is a grateful draught to the thirsty Parisian—has not been promoted; and the bottled lemonade, soda-water, and other aerated drinks of “the next public-house” are so ruinously dear, that it is to be surmised the price is kept up in order to maintain the claims of gin and beer. Now aerated water, if produced with a proper machine, costs next to nothing, and iced water very little, while the fruit essences, of which delicious beverages can be made, are cheap enough (the Italian confectioners sell a glass of fresh lemonade for a penny), and offer a very pleasant variety of flavours. Strangely enough, too, the chemists and grocers in some neighbourhoods will send out soda-water, lemonade, and seltzer for half-a-crown a dozen, and so must buy them of the makers at considerably less. Why should not a whole series of temperance restaurants or cafés be opened in London?

The Thames Embankment, when it has its floating bath alongside, gay with striped canvas and flying bunting, will need something to balance it on the land side. Where are the “kiosques,” the pavilions, the light, pretty structures that were once talked of? On a Paris boulevard the loungers may sit at little tables

on clean wooden rush-seated chairs, and sip groseille, or orangeade, coffee, or one of a dozen pleasant refreshing drinks. In Venice, Madrid, Naples—almost all the cities of Europe—there are bright, attractive cafés, where men and women may take temperate refreshment for the cost of a very few pence, or may slake their thirst for a penny or twopence without poison to blood or brain. Why should not the great new highway by the river be a boulevard where, in the chairs beneath the gay awnings of sundry cafés, tired and thirsty pedestrians could obtain tea, coffee, fruit, and summer drinks? The very existence of such places would be an attraction, if they were pretty and

well-ordered, and there is no reason why that glorious French institution, the Crémérie, should not have a place. There are two or three in the neighbourhood of Soho, and they would drive a rare good trade if they came out from those dingy purlieus, and had a bright little white-tiled, cool, dairy-like place by the river, with clean stone pans and polished milk-pails, cups of milk, glasses of whey, soft, delicate little loaves, cakes of "galette," and new eggs. I shall be told that I dream. Perhaps so; but only by the reality of other drink than beer and gin being provided for those who also need air and water, shall we get beyond "the next public-house."

## THE GATHERER.

### 16,000 Miles of Apple-trees.

We are not such great growers of fruit as we might be, and as we really ought to be, considering the health-giving properties belonging to this branch of the vegetable kingdom. One who has the welfare of the human race at heart, has lately cast eyes on our neglected railway sidings, and it has occurred to him that they might be utilised by the growing of apple-trees. This is largely done in Belgium and Holland. Anywhere between Maestricht and Mechlin, for instance, you may see the espaliers kept low and neatly trained on wires. "Ask the station-master," says our philanthropist, "if the fruit ever gets stolen. He'll smile and say, 'Some does, perhaps; but there's enough left to pay the orchard company a good dividend.'" Surely we, too, might have limited liability railway-orchard companies. There are, by the statistical tables of 1873, over 16,000 miles of railways in the United Kingdom, and any one caring for such questions may set to work to calculate how many trees could be grown, and how many apples there would probably be, in a good season, for each of us.

### Bottled Light.

Countless accidents, as every one knows, arise from the use of matches. To obtain light without employing them, and so without the danger of setting things on fire, an ingenious contrivance is now used by the watchmen of Paris in all magazines where explosive or inflammable materials are kept. Any one may easily make trial of it. Take an oblong phial of the whitest and clearest glass, and put into it a piece of phosphorus about the size of a pea. Pour some olive oil, heated to the boiling point, upon the phosphorus: fill the phial about one-third full and then cork it tightly. To use this novel light, remove the cork, allow the air to enter the phial, and then recork it. The empty space in the phial will become luminous, and the light obtained will be equal to that of a lamp. When the light grows dim, its power can be increased by taking out the cork, and allowing a fresh supply of air to enter the phial. In winter it is sometimes necessary to heat the phial between the

hands in order to increase the fluidity of the oil. The apparatus, thus prepared, may be used for six months.

### Voting by Electricity.

M. Martin, the French electrician, has invented a plan by which the votes in legislative and other representative bodies may be made and recorded by means of electricity. Upon the desk of each representative or delegate is fixed a small box containing two buttons, or levers. As one or the other of these buttons is pressed, there immediately appears, opposite the deputy's name, on a list at the Speaker's table, a piece of white or black paste-board, as the vote may be in the affirmative or negative. The board containing this list may be either exposed or in view of the clerk only. When a member desires to abstain from voting, and is willing that this intention be known, he can press first one and then the other button, and thus offset an affirmative by a negative vote.

### Growth under Trees.

How to clothe the ground under trees is sometimes a troublesome problem to the gardener. But, after all, a very little attention will enable him to do it successfully. The most valuable plants for the purpose among evergreen shrubs are the holly, yew, privet, and butcher's broom, and among frailer subjects we may name the ivy and the periwinkle, both of which endure shading and starving with remarkable good-nature. There are many useful plants suitable for the foreground that are seldom thought of. Should the shade not be very thick, and the soil be a good loam, violets and lilies of the valley will thrive. For very bad cases, we may fall back upon three serviceable plants, all of them British weeds. First of all is the dwarf elder, *Sambucus ebulus*, which in early spring presents a rich carpet of emerald-green. The next is the sweet woodruff, *Asperula odorata*, spreading like a green cushion, and covered in May with snow-white flowers. The last is the enchanter's nightshade, *Circæa lutetiana*, an elegant little herb. These three will stand both shade and drip, and will make pleasant-looking verdure where other plants, that have constitutional objections to shade, would die of sheer starvation.