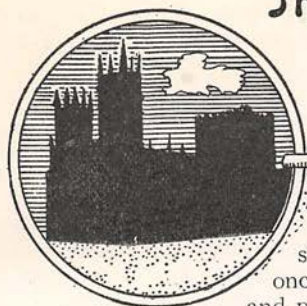


The Phantoms at John Bull's Feast.

By W. GREENWOOD.



THERE is something at once impressive and pathetic in the mental picture of "John Bull," as with the regularity of an automaton he pours "liquid comfort" down his capacious throat at the rate of forty-four gallons a second, and at every tick of the clock hands over five golden guineas in prompt settlement of each second's bibulous account. It is really difficult which to admire the more, the quality of a thirst that demands every moment for its quenching, a tankard which four strong men could with difficulty raise to his lips, or the complacency with which he pours out his gold at the rate of something like three hundred guineas a minute.

"John" is in the habit of doing things in a "lordly way," and when he takes his pleasure in the cup he is little in the mood to count the cost or to place any limits to the quantities his thirst demands. In the bibulous glow of his self-content he would say to any one daring enough to question him on the subject, "What does it matter to you, sir, or to anybody what I spend on liquid refreshment? Every second of my life my revenue places forty-four guineas in my pocket, and if I choose to spend five of them on what you call intoxicants, who shall say me nay? And besides, sir," with an added glow of satisfaction, "do I not pay £40,000,000 every year towards the cost of running my Empire, and all for the privilege of being allowed to spend my own money in my own way?"

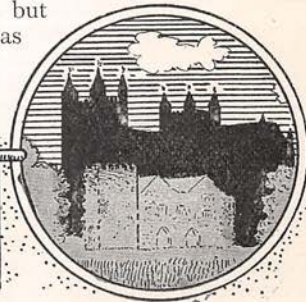
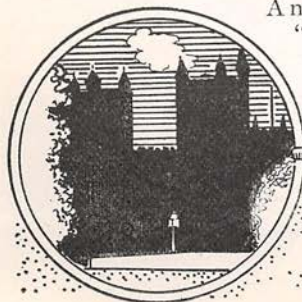
And yet if "John" were not so pleased

with himself and his wealth, and if his eyes were less dazzled by the glamour with which he invests himself, he might see more than one spectre at his feast, the sight of which would perhaps make him pause and reflect whether, after all, his pleasures are not purchased at a greater price than he realises. For to those who have eyes to see it is not the spectacle of "John Bull," florid and flourishing, that arrests the attention, but the phantoms lurking in the background, which yet spring as surely from his cup as the physical and mental glow which inspires his complacency—the suffering and sorrow which even seas of tears are powerless to quench.

He does not wish to see them; the sight might spoil his enjoyment of life as viewed through the glass; but they are there all the same and terrible forms they are.

Eleven years ago the late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, when charging the Jury at the Birmingham Assizes, said: "Few people have opportunities of realizing as I have the terrible effects produced by intemperance. Of course there are cases which stand quite apart from the influence of the public-house—crimes such as perjury, forgery, false pretences and others—which require the assistance of education. But drunkenness is mainly the cause of the commoner sorts of crime, and if England could be made sober, three-fourths of the goals might be closed."

This is a terrible indictment; but proceeding as it does from the lips of



A CHAIN OF PRISONERS
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DRINK



incarceration in England and Wales, every year, of no less than 115,000 persons, a number sufficient to re-people a town as large as Preston or Birkenhead.

If we wish to realize something of the sad significance of this fact, it is only necessary to picture a melancholy chain of prisoners, stretching in single file, all the way from London to Northampton, every one of whom, but for the fatal fascination of the cup, might have been a creditable member of society; and each of whom is the cause of shame and sorrow to many other innocent sharers of his punishment. It is certainly no exaggeration to say that every year half-a-million people in England and Wales alone suffer for crime which is the outcome of drink.

a Judge so observant and conscientious as the late Lord Coleridge, it commands respect and credence. In earlier years Lord Chief Baron Kelly wrote: "I express my belief—indeed, I may say my conviction—that two-thirds of the crimes which come before the Courts of Law of this country are occasioned by intemperance;" and Lord Justice Kay is responsible for the statement: "A long experience as a county magistrate, and my experience as a judge, have quite convinced me that I am speaking within the mark when I say that, if the people of this country would be weaned from the fatal habit of drinking, crime would be diminished by one-half."

Some years ago, as the result of inquiries made from over two hundred judges, magistrates, prison governors and chaplains and chief constables in every part of the United Kingdom, it was ascertained that, on an average, three out of every four criminals owed their conviction, directly or indirectly, to drink; the percentage in some prisons rising as high as 80 and 85 per cent.

In Wakefield prison during the four months from Nov. 24th, 1897 to March 24th, 1898, there were 756 cases of drunkenness with sentences of under three months. Eighty-two of these admitted that they were powerless to resist drink if once tasted; eighty-seven were hopeful cases; eight appeared utterly hopeless, having been convicted from 60 to over 130 times.

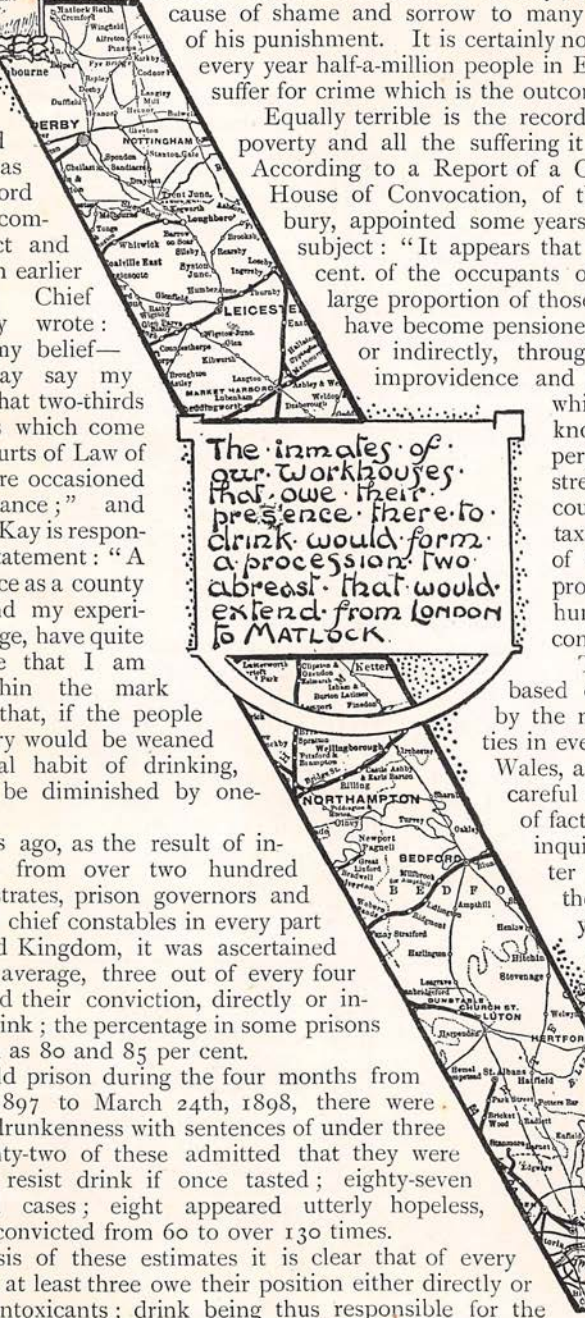
On the basis of these estimates it is clear that of every five criminals at least three owe their position either directly or indirectly to intoxicants; drink being thus responsible for the

Equally terrible is the record of drink as a cause of poverty and all the suffering it entails on the innocent. According to a Report of a Committee of the Lower House of Convocation, of the Province of Canterbury, appointed some years ago to inquire into this subject: "It appears that at least seventy-five per cent. of the occupants of our workhouses, and a large proportion of those receiving out-door pay, have become pensioners on the public, directly or indirectly, through drunkenness and the improvidence and absence of self-respect

which this pestilent vice is known to engender and perpetuate. The loss of strength and wealth to the country, the increase of taxation, the deterioration of national character thus produced, it is at once humiliating and irritating to contemplate."

This grave statement was based on information supplied by the most competent authorities in every part of England and Wales, and may be taken as a careful and reliable statement of fact. The result of a similar inquiry made in Manchester by the vice-chairman of the board of guardians, yielded the following instructive figures:—

The inmates of our workhouses that owe their presence there to drink would form a procession two abreast that would extend from London to MATLOCK.



·IN·ONE·MINUTE·JOHN·BULL·DRINKS·FIFTY·TWO·BARRELS·OF·BEER·

per cent.
 Pauperism caused by drunkenness in men 24'32
 " " " women 4'40
 Widows and children of drunkards . . . 21'84
 Widows who have drunken sons who
 could support them if steady . . . '68
 making a total percentage of 51'24 cases
 for which drink was unquestionably re-
 sponsible.

The proportion naturally varies in different districts; but it is probably an under-statement of fact to say that drink is responsible for two out of every three paupers in the United Kingdom.

On this basis, and taking the latest figures available, there are at this moment half a million paupers in England and Wales alone, who, but for drink, would never have made the acquaintance of the workhouse. This pathetic army of life's failures and derelicts is numerous enough to people half-a-dozen towns as large as Rochdale; or, if it were formed into a long procession, two abreast and at intervals of a yard apart, its van would be at the doors of St. Pancras Workhouse, while the rear rank was leaving Matlock, in far away Derbyshire; and, marching night and day at the rate of three miles an hour, it would take the rear-rank paupers nearly forty-eight hours to reach the poor refuge of a London workhouse.

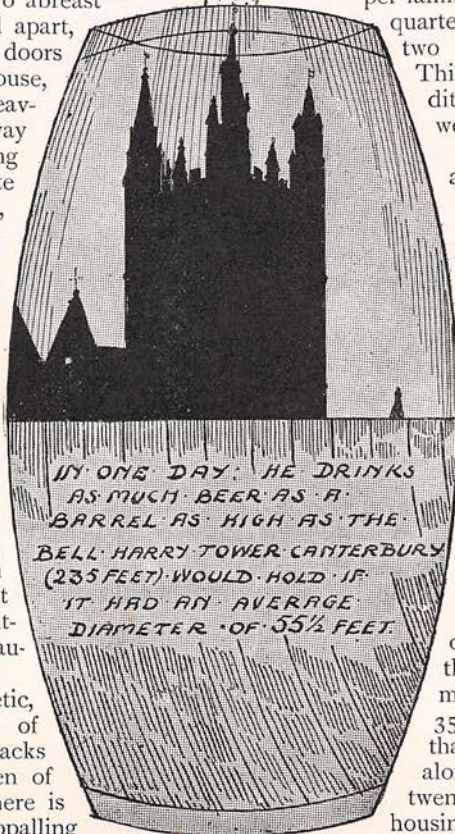
To maintain this "sad-eyed army of the poor"—at least 140,000 of which are children, the helpless and innocent victims of drink—costs the British rate-payer no less than seven and a quarter million pounds a year, an amount of gold that would outweigh eleven hundred paupers.

But still more pathetic, perhaps, is the burden of poverty it heaps on the backs of the wife and children of the labouring man. There is something positively appalling

in the contribution the British workman makes to the annual drink-bill from his too slender purse. Of every four gallons of beer and spirits consumed every year within the United Kingdom he drinks no less than three, and one out of every ten gallons of wine. So exacting is his thirst, that of beer alone he disposes of *fifty-two barrels every minute* throughout the year; and his drink-bill at the end of twelve months shows the stupendous total of £101,000,000, representing a rectangular column of sovereigns, seven feet square, and more than fifty-seven feet high, or ten times as tall as himself.

When reduced to the individual even, the figures are sufficiently startling; for, according to Mr. Dudley Baxter, in his *Taxation of the United Kingdom*, "a temperate artisan with thirty-five to forty shillings a week, will drink with his family six glasses of beer a day, say 150 gallons per family per year, and one to two quarters of spirits a week, or two to four gallons a year. This will represent the expenditure of 4s. 6d. to 5s. a week."

On the other hand, there are thousands of working men, on wages ranging from a pound to thirty shillings a week, who are known to spend fifteen shillings and more, weekly, on drink; and the estimate made by the Committee of the British Association in 1882, of an average weekly expenditure of 6s. 2d. per family, probably errs on the side of moderation. Accepting this estimate, however, as fairly approximate, we reach the startling discovery that the family of the average British workman, with an income of 35s. a week, spends no less than 6s. 2d. of it on drink alone, leaving less than twenty-nine shillings for housing, feeding, clothing and

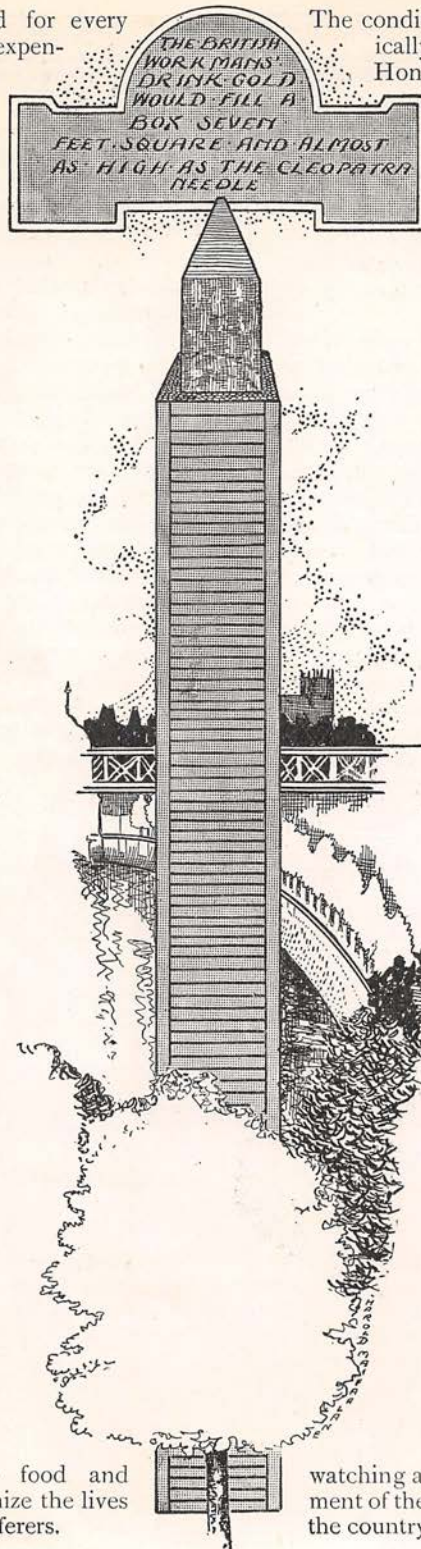


educating his family and for every other form of domestic expenditure.

Let us for a moment consider the case of the working-man (of whom there are millions) whose average wages do not exceed twenty-five shillings a week, and who spends no more than this common allowance of six shillings weekly in intoxicants. Deducting this sum from his earnings, we find that he is left with nineteen shillings on which to support an average family of four persons.

If he restricts his family to the diet allowed to pauper inmates of St Pancras Workhouse, his weekly food-bill alone will account for sixteen shillings of his poor balance, leaving a miserable three shillings for rent, clothing, and all the other bare physical necessities of life. When we consider that in many parts of London the rent of a single room is five shillings a week, it is clear that, to make ends meet, there must be some disastrous retrenchment in the allowance for food, reducing it far below the limits of "union" fare, and the minimum demanded by Nature for the maintenance of health and strength.

Of the people who come within this class there are 1,300,000 in London alone; and one may conceive something of the hunger, disease, and death which owe their existence to the spending of that weekly allowance for drink, which, if translated into food and clothing, would revolutionize the lives of millions of helpless sufferers.



The condition of this class was graphically suggested by the Right Hon. A. J. Mundella, when describing a certain School-Board district in East London a few years ago. "Here," he said, "is a block containing 1,082 families and 2,153 children of school age. In this block are 3 schools, 2 churches, 3 chapels, 3 mission-rooms, and 41 public houses. What does it mean? 1,082 families, wretched, miserable, and poverty-stricken, maintaining 41 public houses; 1 to every 25 families and supported by them."

Figures have their limitations, and here they fail; for how can they convey any adequate conception of the sadness and suffering, the heart-ache and the tears that drink brings to hundreds of thousands of British homes, in which the breadwinner, without being a drunkard, is "fond of his glass"? The most pitiful picture one conjures up is that of the children, "puny, pale-faced, scantily-clad, and badly shod, who sit limp and chill on the school benches in all the poorer parts of London. They swell the bills of mortality as want and sickness thin them off, or survive to be the needy and enfeebled adults whose burden of helplessness the next generation will have to bear."

Dr. Edgar Sheppard, Superintendent of Colney Hatch Asylum, writing a few years ago to the *Times*, said: "For twelve years I have been here, watching and chronicling the development of the greatest curse which afflicts the country. From 35 to 40 per cent.

is a fair approximate estimate of the ratio of insanity directly or indirectly due to alcoholic drinks." It is only fair, however, to say that this percentage is not confirmed by the Annual Reports of the Commissioners in Lunacy, from which it appears that of 19,000 patients admitted during a recent period of ten years, 4,000 owed their insanity to intoxicants.

In illustration of the difficulty of obtaining reliable statistics in lunacy cases, Dr. Shaw, Superintendent of Banstead Asylum, in his Annual Report for the years 1896-7, says: "Table X, showing the causes of insanity, has been very carefully compiled, and shows the difficulty of obtaining accuracy here: for out of the 763 admissions a trustworthy history was forthcoming in only 358 instances—barely half."

A careful consideration, however, of a wide range of figures compels the conclusion that at least 25 of every 100 cases of lunacy are clearly traceable to intoxicants, and that there are at this moment in the asylums of England and Wales 28,000 persons robbed of reason by this third phantom at John Bull's feast.

To this terrible roll of criminals, paupers, and lunatics, the victims of the drink-fiend, we must add the hundreds of thousands of sufferers he has consigned to beds of pain in our hospitals. "I do not desire to make out a strong case," the late Sir Andrew Clarke once said, "I desire to make out a true case. I am speaking solemnly and carefully in the presence of the truth; and I tell you I am considerably within the mark when I say to you that, going the round of my hospital

wards to-day, seven out of every ten there owed their ill-health to alcohol. Out of every hundred patients whom I have charge of at the London Hospital 70 *per cent.* of them directly owe their ill-health to alcohol."

When we consider that there are in the United Kingdom more than 500 hospitals, and that the hospitals of London alone treat a million and a quarter of patients every year; and when to these we add the hundreds of thousands of patients treated in their own homes, whose illness is due to drink, the mind shrinks appalled from the vision of widespread suffering.

To complete the tale it is only necessary to add the fact that during the last ten years 16,000 persons died in England and Wales of chronic alcoholism, and 4,500 of delirium tremens; and that intemperance is the direct and sole cause of over 20,000 deaths every year.

The picture we have drawn of the ravages wrought by drink, of the waste of health and life and substance it works, and of the far-spread suffering and sorrow it scatters over our fair land, is surely a startling foil to the opening picture of John Bull quaffing his bowl and taking his lordly ease at his inn. The years come and go, and the stream of wasted gold and the tide of "wrong and ruin" grow fuller. Well may we cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?" for until John Bull awakes from his lethargy and really braces himself for a life or death struggle with the enemy who is desecrating his hearth, we shall look in vain for even the dawn of the era of "peace and goodwill."

