

**PALMERSTON NORTH SCIENTIFIC TEMPERANCE COMPETITIONS, 1916.**

**PRIZE ESSAY.**

**HIGH SCHOOL.—FORM VI.**

(Written by Miss Elsie Gawith.)

There should be temperance in all things, in our amusements and athletic games, in eating and drinking, and in every species of the work we do in our daily life. But the prevailing habit of intemperance is that of drinking, and this habit is made worse by the fact that a dangerous substance, known as alcohol, is present in that drink.

Drinks such as wine, beer, and spirits are not nourishing foods such as milk is. Instead of building up the tissues of the body, they wear them away; instead of giving bodily strength, they weaken us, and deprive us of great bodily warmth. This is due to the presence of alcohol, and this dangerous substance is more harmful than any other substance in the world.

Alcohol hinders every organ of digestion. It causes an excessive flow of gastric juice in the stomach, and in the absence of food this is wasted. The liver does its work badly too, for alcohol will at first cause it to swell, then it will shrivel up and become hard. The kidneys allow valuable products to escape, and retain the worthless ones. This waste matter becomes injurious; it sets up sickness and rheumatism, and finally may cause incurable Bright's disease. The lungs, organs which should be carefully looked after, become weakened, and are less able to resist disease. Alcohol also weakens the pumping power of the heart. It becomes swollen with fat, and flabby. Is it any wonder that so many drunkards die of heart failure? The brain will not receive its messages or control bodily movements so quickly, so gradually insanity and paralysis set in.

We wonder why people still persist in taking alcohol when they become such physical wrecks. If we were to ask a drunkard why he took his first drink of alcohol, he would probably say that he was thirsty, and had seen others drinking. The first step taken, there is always the danger for the desire for drink, and thus the craving

which causes so much pain and misery is set up.

Every arrest for drunkenness and the crimes committed under its baneful influence is the cause of unhappiness. Prisons, workhouses, and asylums are set up. This is only what we see. What is not seen is far more terrible. Each of these arrests is the cause of misery and shame for innocent people. If the father of a family is the drunkard, what becomes of his wife and little children? Their life is misery to them, and at last, to keep them from utter starvation, they find their way to the workhouse.

This is a burden to the nation. If it were not for alcohol, there would be not nearly so many prisons, workhouses, and asylums. The State must pay for these, and for the policemen and warders who look after them. Not one-tenth of the misery, shame, and unhappiness caused by alcoholic drink is presented to the public eye.

We know that alcohol is dangerous in every way, and we see that we keep upright ourselves. But that is not enough. We are indeed "our brother's keepers," and we should try to help others who are not so strong to resist temptation as we are. If each helped the other, and made it his duty to see that his friend was influenced against alcohol, would not the world be a pleasanter place to live in?

Alcohol is the cause of much unnecessary suffering. Loss of position, loss of happiness, loss of friends, even loss of life itself, are due to this dreadful poison. Why do I say loss of life? Many insurance companies are known to offer more to a person whom they know has "signed the pledge" than to another who is known as a habitual drinker. Those who take alcohol live much shorter lives than those who abstain from it.

Why does Lord Brougham say "Drink is the mother of want and the nurse of crime"? The money spent on alcoholic drinks is the cause of much distress in the home life. Every penny spent on them would buy some necessary article. It also means misery inflicted on the family. If one member of the family is a drunkard, can the others feel proud of their name and family? Each night, a tired, harassed wife will stay up until very late at night, waiting for, yet dreading the return of her husband. At last she hears his tottering step,

and waits to see if he is worse than on the previous night. She ministers to his wants with gentle hands, and for her kind actions will perhaps receive scornful words, and even blows. No man in his proper senses would strike a helpless woman, so well may we say that drink causes madness. The little children cannot learn to look up to and to respect their father; instead of that, they learn to dread and fear him. They, like their mother, dread his homecoming.

Drink causes crime. When under the baneful influence of alcohol, men, and even women, will commit crimes, never done when in possession of their right senses. Not only are crimes done, but accidents will often happen. A drunkard will stagger across the street, never thinking to look out for traffic. Within a few minutes he may be knocked down, and perhaps killed. This will mean more suffering for those depending upon that man for their daily bread. In his craving for alcohol, no man realises the extent of the misery and shame he brings upon his relations.

People who abstain from liquor are much more able to stand hardship than others. They are stronger in body, clearer in mind, happier in soul. When the State wants some great work done, a man who has taken alcohol would never be chosen. Captain Webb, who swam across the English Channel, had never touched it; nor had any other person who has performed such feats of strength. Why do explorers to the Pole forbid their men to take alcohol? Simply because they could never endure the cold if they once took it.

If then we are aware that alcohol causes so much suffering, and that two-thirds of the prisons and asylums would be closed if alcohol were abolished, why do we not look after those who are nearest and dearest to us? Let us be "our brother's keepers"; let us look after our relations; let us give friendly advice, and then we'll know that:

"Happy is the State whose people learn in youth,  
To conquer evil with the Sword of Truth."

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men should do nothing.—Burke.