

Selected Story.

The People who Drink.

Physicians say that nearly two-thirds of their male patients suffer in one way or another from alcoholic poison. No close observer, says the *New York Sun*, will be disposed to doubt this.

From the low shops on South and West streets, along the line of fashionable saloons on and near Broadway, in the vicinity of the post-office, in the retreats that gird the Astor House, in the several places of note on printing house square, and in the magnificent marble palaces that fringe Madison square, not omitting the frescoed club room and the dingy slop shops of the extreme east side—from the first to the last, and in them all, the same story of intemperance may be learned.

And who are the drinkers? Boys, young men, middle-aged men, and old men. They all drink.

The young men meet in the lobby of a theatre. "What'll you take?" is the first and commonest salutation. They adjourn to a bar-room and drink. As the one pays, the other looks at his watch and says, "Just in time for another. Repeat"—and both drink again.

At each fall of the curtain at least one-half of the young men rise, push out, and hurry for a drink.

This is no exaggeration. We all know it and many of us do it.

I went to the basement of one of Gotham's greatest architectural piles this morning, and stood at the end of the counter half an hour to see what was done.

There were four bar tenders busily engaged.

In that brief time they sold to all sorts and conditions of men, two hundred beers, thirty-two whiskeys, ten lemonades, two plain seltzers and three gin cocktails.

It was an exceptionally busy half hour, to be sure; but as I took my seat at a table near the counter, I noticed in the next half hour, and made a memorandum to guard against mistake, a sale of one hundred and thirty beers, fifty whiskeys, and six gin cocktails.

The men who drank were not "bums." Very many of them are known to the world of politics, several are noted writers, the City Hall furnishes its quota, some do business in the swamp, and not one seemed in the least degree affected by what he drank.

Leaving this place, I went to another saloon, equally well known, whose proprietors pay an annual rent of \$50,000 for premises which are kept open from eight o'clock in the morning until eleven in the evening.

Standing by a little cigar case which is placed at one side of the room I devoted half an hour to a close count of the drinks and drinkers.

There were three barkeepers, and they had all they could do to attend promptly to the customers.

One company of six men drank six times in less than fifteen minutes, and each took his whiskey straight.

In half an hour's time that bar sold ninety-eight whiskeys, four ginger ales, three ciders and four gin cocktails.

The men who drank were respectable men of business, a few literary people, and two or three persons who might have been trackmen or mechanics.

None of them showed the effects of their drink.

As I went out I said to one of the six young men who drank six times "What are you drinking so much for today?"

"Oh, nothing," he replied; "I didn't intend to. Charley and I went in for an oyster stew, and were ordering when those four fellows from Albany came along. Charley asked 'em to drink and one followed the other."

That's the history of many a spree. The spree doesn't intend to go off, but meeting a friend the one tempts the other.

Returning to the saloon I visited first I ordered a lunch, and was soon joined—I always am—by an acquaintance, who, of course, said, "What'll you take?"

Being in a talking mood, I said I would try a glass of rye. He took the same. Having said "How," and emptied our glasses, I said, "Ruf, what did you drink that whiskey for? Do you like it?"

"No, I don't like it. I'm drinking too much, too. Guess'll pull up."

"Well, tell me, what did you order it for?"

"Well, for sociability's sake, I suppose. What did you drink it for?"

"Because I wanted to ask just this question. I've been looking at the fellows drink there, and I believe eight out of ten drink just because they don't like to say 'no!'"

"Does it make your head ache to drink whiskey?"

"Yes."

"So it does mine. I swore off whis-

ky and took to beer, the beer makes me billions."

"Why drink anything?"

"Hanged if I know, but we all do drink?"

We were joined by an actor. Being an actor, and in the company of a newspaper man, there was, he thought, but one thing to do.

Said he, "What'll you take?"

We took whiskey. So did he.

We each said, "How," and then said I, "Dan, do you like whiskey?"

"I hate it."

"Why do you drink it?"

"I don't often. I generally take gin; but they both upset me; give me a fearful headache. But what are you going to do? Must take something."

Conclusion in our next.

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