

Nicotine Next! Then Abolish Coffee and Tea!

By GERALD VAN CASTEEL.

New York Times (1857-1922); Feb 16, 1919; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times

pg. 68

Nicotine Next! Then Abolish Coffee and Tea!

By GERALD VAN CASTEEL.

AMERICA is trying experiments at a time when she should be taking business precautions. The easy victory won by that section of the Organized Uplift which has concentrated its attack upon the Demon Rum undoubtedly will spur these and other reformers to greater effort. It is worth while to glance at the possible fields left for their activities.

The next stronghold of evil marked for assault is that of tobacco. Its use is a pleasure, therefore may be abused. From the standpoint of the reformer, appearances are against it. For instance, the tobacco business is well organized; the persons employed in it are prosperous and contented. There is an atmosphere of geniality about a cigar store, and holders of stock in such enterprises are said to receive fair dividends and to pay substantial taxes. I cannot smoke, but I notice that when my friends indulge in a cigar they become more reasonable, they are on better terms with themselves and the world. This unearned felicity is, of course, wrong. It is unethical. It should be abolished. Those who have been sending smokes to the boys abroad should not be thanked but severely reprimanded. The weed that makes a man forget for a moment that this is a world of busybodies is marked for casting into the oven. Tobacco must go.

Our missionaries have projected China from the curse of opium; who will pro-

tect us from the curse of tea? School physiologies and the advertisements of coffee substitutes dwell on the pernicious hold such beverages have on the nervous system. The very fact that people find pleasure in these stimulants demonstrates that they are bad. Did not the best of Americans confess his weakness for "another cup of coffee"? Where strong men waver is it not time to prohibit? Away forever with these alkaloidal poisons! Rouse public opinion to such a pitch that when an actress makes "business" over a tea table, the show shall be banned as tending to impair public morals.

We all eat too much. Therefrom follow multitudinous diseases. These are avoidable. Animals take pleasure in their food; we should rise above the animals. We should eat only to live. Cooks should be looked upon with suspicion, unless very plain. The spices of life have no place in a reformed existence. They only make us eat too much. Let ketchup become a misdemeanor and the man who passes the mustard a candidate for jail. We are nearly ready for the Society for the Suppression of Spice.

And clothes: They need not be suppressed, of course, but they should be duly regulated so that the feet of the brothers and sisters of the Uplift, treading flatly and firmly the paths of righteousness, shall not be put to shame by creatures with high heels and adventi-

tious attractions. When rouge is raging how perceive the blush of shame? Costly clothes are undemocratic; they make one look better than her fellow voter. This must not be. Our rage for regulation makes it not improbable that a limit will be set on the cost of apparel. Its enforcement will afford our policewomen a pleasant time.

All secret societies will come under the ban, for reasons readily expoundable by any uplifter.

As the new Revenue bill seems to tax everything that makes life worth living, a long gray dawn of betterment seems in store for us.

I believe the directions I have indicated have been attempted in one form or another before this. I now suggest a reform by prohibition far more fundamental. While we are in the mood to prohibit let there be no half measures.

There is one overpowering habit that affects not only the whole human race, without exception, but has grown also upon most of the animal kingdom. I refer to that form of wastefulness known as sleep. Some eminent scientists and many college professors tell us that "the primitive rest state out of which sleep has arisen in the later stages of evolution" was a nearly conscious motionless condition hardly approaching in intensity our cat-naps or forty winks. This natural or normal rest condition has been studied and labeled the "hypnoidal or primordial sleep state." From it by de-

generation—as grape juice degenerates into champagne—has come upon us a habit of suspended animation that takes at least a third of our time and requires a whole paraphernalia of beds, rooms and alarm clocks.

The farseeing reformers who have instituted our midnight cabarets are glimpsing a new dawn, and the child's objection to going to bed is the inarticulate protest of nature. Edison says he can work with less than half the sleep we ordinarians require. If it were not for the handicap of his sleep-habituated ancestors and environment he would probably not sleep at all. Away with this incubus and let us insist that everybody live twenty-four hours a day! A Society for the Suppression of Sleep offers a great career to wideawake reformers.

I have touched upon only a few reformable evils. We have but nibbled at the great problem of making things different. There is a seeking after new things. Every movement for change will get supporters, and no one dares to oppose anything.

In Greece the proposer of a new law went before the assembly with a halter about his neck in token that if his proposal was rejected he would be hanged. We threaten, on the contrary, to use the political halter upon any one who dares to oppose change, and prudent politicians have relapsed into acquiescence.