

CHATTER.

(Being the personal opinions of the writer and for which no one else is in any manner responsible.)

For the first time in history we are confronted with the spectacle of the W. C. T. U. and the saloonmen, together with the brewers and distillers, working in harmony for the prevention of legislation. Both sides are working tooth and nail in an effort to influence congress to refrain from enacting a law re-establishing the army canteen, where the enlisted men serving their country can buy beer and light wines on the government reservation, instead of having to visit the adjacent towns or cities, where they drink all sorts of Jersey lightning and forty rod whisky and get drunker than lords. The W. C. T. U. affects to believe that a great victory was won for the cause of temperance when the post canteen was abolished, because it removed temptation from the soldier and prevented the government from "recognizing crime." The members of the organization have been slightly jubilant ever since, notwithstanding general officers, regimental and company commanders have declared that since the abolition of the canteen, drunkenness and the crimes which follow it have increased. The saloon man takes no such high moral ground. He wants the post canteen abolished, because when the soldier cannot get beer and light wines at the post he comes down town and spends his money over the bar. Between the two; the W. C. T. U. and the liquor dealers, there is every reason for believing that the canteen will not be re-established; that congress will take no action.

The manner in which post canteens were conducted was such as to limit drunkenness. When the soldier got too much aboard the keeper of the place refused to sell him any more, and as a result he went to his quarters and went to bed. Under the present system he comes into town, stands up in front of a bar and drinks as long as he has the money to pay for it, and when too full to stand, is taken into a back room and left to sleep it off. If he misses "check roll call" or "reveille" next morning he goes in "quad" and is punished, in addition to giving the saloon man all of his month's pay. Under the post canteen system the profits were used for the general good of the command; under the present plan the saloon man buys an automobile. No wonder the saloon keeper wants no change made, but what a marvel that the good women of the W. C. T. U. cannot see the light as it should be seen. If the abolishment of the post canteen increases drunkenness, and its attendant inconveniences and punishments, and the re-establishment of the post canteen decreases drunkenness and increases the soldier's comforts and lessens his chances of going to the devil, why on earth should any association, pledged to the improvement of mankind, object? There are some odd things in this world, and this is by no means one of the least odd. Strange, too, that the W. C. T. U. should object to the canteen and file no protest against the officers' clubs. The man with the shoulder strap can go to the club and

get fuller than a tick, but the soldier must hie himself to a dive off the reservation where he is flim flammed and held up and then chased out until next pay day.

In another column will be found something about babies born in this state last week. Of course that does not include all, for there are babies and babies whose advents are never chronicled. All of which leads one to think of this matter of "race suicide," so-called. Roosevelt was the man who gave the subject its greatest airing. Since he took the matter up it has been aired and re-aired. Recently a society of women down east discussed the matter and decided that parents had a right to restrict the output of children; decided that it was a crime for the very poor to bring children into the world to suffer want and privation. There are two sides to this question, as there is to nearly every one submitted to the candid judgment of a people. The anti-race suicide people seem to have the better of the affair, when the question of morals is considered, but the other people have some arguments that are weighty. It is a delicate question to debate in a public journal, but avoiding the coarser references, it can be debated. For instance; if it is a crime for a couple to refrain from having children, is it not equally a crime for a woman who might have given birth to a dozen or more to refrain from marrying, and dying an old maid? If it is a crime for a married man to die childless when he might have been the father of a family, is it not equally a crime for a fellow to die an old bache'or? Is it not equally a crime to refrain from having children when opportunity presents itself?

Child murder is an abomination and should not be tolerated, whether the crime be pre-natal or post-natal. But are there not many instances where it would be better that children should not be born than to have them brought into the world? What is the use of a poor man having a horde of little ones around him brought up in ignorance? Why should the peasantry of Russia ignorant, unlearned, unlettered, a little bit above the level of the brute, perpetuate itself, when the misery that was endured by the parents and their parents is their only inheritance? The same argument applies in many other cases. Why should certain persons in our own land have any children at all? The writer recalls a certain case which occurred in this city. A man, hunchbacked, cross-eyed and red-headed, married a woman, also hunchbacked and red-headed, with one leg shorter than the other. Think of the progeny resulting from such a union. It was a crime to let them marry. Another case that came under my personal observation occurred back east. A fellow who all his life had been foolish, or underwitted, was wedded to a woman whose brain held but little more gray matter than his. The affair was managed by relatives, because he had not sense enough to ask her to marry him and she had not enough to assent. Result: Seven children, each combining the foolishness of both parents. They are living yet, and in due time will doubtless marry other foolish people and perpetuate the race.

Still, these are exceptions. Take the average couple and what rule shall apply? Of late there has been an argument advanced in favor of permitting the female to say when she shall bear children and when she shall not. That is right. At this time the woman is the slave to the ever-present and capricious desires of her lord and master(?). It is not so in the balance of the animal kingdom, from the highest to the lowest, and it should not prevail among human beings.



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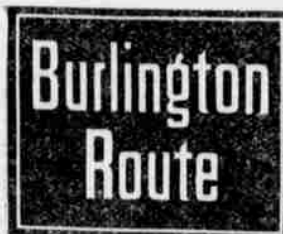
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