

German-Americans and the Saloon

German-Americans, in constantly increasing numbers, are becoming weary of their position as scapegoats for the organized liquor traffic, according to the Rev. E. D. Kohlstedt of Milwaukee.

Mr. Kohlstedt has an illuminating article in a recent number of the Northwestern Christian Advocate in which the real attitude of the German-Americans toward the saloon is set forth with intelligence and clearness. This, of course, relates to German-Americans who are not financially interested in the traffic.

It must always be borne in mind that the environment which has influenced the life and thought of the German from earliest childhood up to the time of his departure for America, makes it extremely difficult to convince the German immigrant of the harmfulness of moderate indulgence. The most that can reasonably be expected is that by directing the proper efforts toward winning over his children, the third generation may be brought to see the advantages of total abstinence.

Mr. Kohlstedt tells of receiving into his church on last Children's Day the fifteen-year-old son of a saloonkeeper. The boy was a total abstainer from the use of tobacco and intoxicants, "a thorough-going little Christian who had won the confidence of all, young and old." His German-American father was present when he was taken into the church and gave the transaction his full approval.

Give It Freely to the Children.

In Germany at the social gatherings of children of tender age, wine is served freely by the hostess as a matter of course. When a guest arrives in the home the first demand of courtesy, after greetings have been exchanged, is not an opportunity to wash his hands and face, to brush or change his travel-stained clothes, but rather to refresh himself with some intoxicating drink. This is a custom hoary with age and is held as a sacred social obligation.

The German beer garden and the American saloon in contrast is an interesting study, says Mr. Kohlstedt. The German beer garden is one of the time-honored social institutions of the fatherland. It is frequented by men and women of excellent character and loftiest ideals, often accompanied by their children. Pastors and church members, professors and theological students, lawyers and clients, men of affairs, etc., may be found sitting together in the beer gardens of Germany, discussing some church problem, clearing up some theological difficulty, unraveling some legal tangle, talking over the affairs of state, or enjoying a bit of social converse, with now and then a sip from the glasses before them.

On a Higher Plane There.

In Germany, where the moderate use of mild intoxicants is so generally interwoven with every phase of business, social, and political life; where, to the student in academy, college and university, the delegate to church gatherings and Christian congresses, the social glass is so bound up with the most elegant manners and delightfully entertaining and attractive social prerogatives, says this writer, as to rob it of many of its dangers, particularly the temptation to excess, with which we are so familiar, it is doubtless true that the moderate drinker is less likely to become a drunkard in Germany than in the United States.

Contrasted with those of Germany, America can hardly be said to have any drinking customs which need to be reckoned with by the business man, the scholar, the social leader, or

even the politician, although the appalling size of our national drink bill is ample evidence that the American consumes more than his share of intoxicants, and is a constant reminder of the grave necessity of doing our utmost to counteract the drink habit. In a country where the population is so heterogeneous, social customs are likely to be as varied as the nationalities represented.

Has No Standing Here.

The American saloon, in contrast with the German beer garden, with which it claims to be on a par, has no recognized place among our most representative institutions, business or social. The liquor advocate's eloquent plea for the saloon, with its palm garden attachment, as an American edition of the German beer garden, is utterly absurd.

Indeed, instead of disguising the real character of the saloon, the so-called "Palm Garden," with its unsavory reputation as a feeder to the lowest traffic in vice, serves rather to help expose the wretched counterfeit.

The questionable advantages claimed for the German beer garden are not duplicated by the American saloon, which, as yet, has not even been able to establish its claim to respectability. All are agreed that the saloon is no place for children. No respectable woman cares to be known as a frequenter of the saloon. Our most representative business men frown upon it as a menace to the efficiency of their employees. Those who patronize the saloon prefer to hide behind screens and curtains while indulging their appetites for intoxicants. Few drinking men care to be accompanied to the saloon by their wives. The great majority of saloonkeepers are themselves ashamed of the business in which they are engaged.

They Shun the Saloon.

Mr. Kohlstedt says that, while it must be admitted that the majority of German-Americans are still wedded to the saloon, it is a significant fact that there is a strong and decidedly influential minority among them, ever increasing in numbers, that is becoming fatally hostile to the institution. They may still want their beer, but the most representative German-Americans now have it delivered to their homes in preference to going to the saloon after it.

The German-American's growing hostility toward the saloon as a distributing agency for intoxicants, can no longer be ignored or explained away by the brewer and the saloonkeeper. The opinions of men may differ as to the cause for this change of sentiment among the better class of German-Americans, but the fact itself compels recognition.

Learning the Truth.

The truth is forcing itself upon the fair minded German in this country that the attempt to incorporate German drinking customs into American life has been a failure, with disastrous results. The German-American is becoming awake to the fact that for the sake of perpetuating in America, under impossible conditions, the social customs of Germany, he has often lost sight of the great issues involved in the amalgamation of the children of all climes and nationalities, and sold his birthright as an American citizen for a mess of pottage—the Continental Sabbath, with its Sunday saloon.

Moreover, he is learning to regard the saloon in its true light as a creator of appetites for intoxicants, a destroyer of health, a corrupter of politics, a debaucher of morals, a feeder to the tenderloin, a rendezvous for criminals, a blight to the home, an enemy to the Church of God, a door to hell,