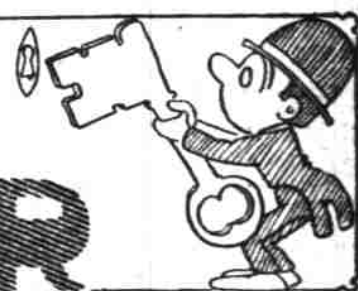




MIRTH ABOUT A SERIOUS MATTER



By FREDERICK HALL

MARK TWAIN was doubtless right: A man ought not to smoke to excess; or drink to excess; or get married—at least, not to excess. But, when all the world has become one grid waste of sobriety, think of the loss to the lovers of humor.

Take so simple a lyric as the following, entitled "The Diagnosis":
*When your heels hit hard, and your head feels queer,
 And your thoughts rise up like the froth on beer,
 And your knees are weak, but your breath is strong,
 And you laugh all night at some darn fool song—
 You're drunk, b'gosh, you're drunk.*
 Such a gem would have to be printed with footnotes.

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 This prohibition business is a serious matter. We have been told so by wets and dries alike, but, when you come to



think about it, all the best jokes have been made about serious matters and it looks as if the conservation of humor demanded that we gather together some of these bibulous pleasantries before they become lost through being unintelligible to the rising generation.

Take such pithy observations as:
 "Woman first tempted man to eat—he took to drinking of his own accord."
 "The reason some men can't make both ends meet is that they are so busy making one end drink."
 "Sing Sing has a prohibition club—they naturally want to get rid of the bars."

What could a man brought up in drought from childhood make of such comments?

Would he even see any fun in the irritated demand of the Sunday school teacher? "Now, then, all together, 'Little



Drops of Water,' and for goodness' sake put a little more spirit in it!"

Or in the following bit of dialogue:
 "Brother Jenkins!" It was the parson who was speaking. "I was glad to see you at the prayer meeting last evening." "Prayer meetin'!" exclaimed the startled village souse. "Was I there? Well, I'll be jiggered."

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 Courtesy is often positively enhanced by intoxication.
 "Excuse me," remonstrated the man

who was being jeered at for putting a saddle on to a horse hind side before. "Excuse me, but do you happen to know which way I was going?"



And alcohol sometimes calls out the most heroic qualities.

In the midst of a pouring rain a seedy individual was remarked standing beneath the full stream of a discharging eaves trough and making the motions of steady, resolute swimming. A good Samaritan went to his rescue, but in vain. "Let me alone," he shouted. "Shave the women and children. I can swim."

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 A New England school-teacher, who had been much annoyed by first-floor festivities in a hotel where she had formerly stopped, took the precaution of

writing to the leading hostelry in the city where the next teachers' convention was to be held and asking if they had a bar. When her reply came it read: "No, madam, we have not a bar and, if you are that sort of woman, we don't want you. The place for you is at the Tivoli, across the river."

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 But then one does at times grow impatient with these reformers.

"A miser!" exclaimed Hungry Higgins, amazed at his colleague's ignorance. "Why, bo, a miser is a man what denies hisself de luxuries o' life when he's got de money to buy 'em."

"Oh," returned Weary Watkins, understandingly. "Why, I heard of them."



But I always thought they called themselves prohibitionists."

Sometimes they do go too far. What

can one say, for instance, to the here of this:

The rigid prohibitionist

With pain his breakfast vicued.

"I cannot stay here, sir," he said,

"For all these prunes are steved."

And always there remains, at least



in some wet minds, the question as to whether prohibition will ever perfectly prohibit. Mark Twain said it couldn't. The discovery that brandy could be made from sawdust had, he maintained, settled the question.

"What chance," he demanded, "will prohibition have when a man can take a rip saw and go out and get drunk with a rail fence? Or make brandy mashes out of the shingles on his roof? Or get delirium tremens by drinking the legs off the kitchen chairs?"

Even a ladder might serve his purpose, and yet we read:

*This fact, evolved from fertile brains,
 Well fits conditions still, methinks:
 The ladder of success contains
 No round of drinks.*

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 There was a teacher one time who asked, "What is an inebriate?" and a pupil who, doubtless with some vague idea of an invertebrate in his mind, answered, "Why—er—it's one o' these here animals that ain't got no back bone."

And there was once a patient who presented himself and, having first specifically inquired whether the physician was the one who treated inebriates, continued, "Well, I'm one of 'em an', seein' it's your treat, you kin make it a whisky sling."

But for efficaciousness and strenuousness, all cures pale beside the conjugal methods of Mrs. O'Leary.

"How iver did you cure your man o' drinkin'?" demanded a fellow sufferer.

"Well," she explained, "Oi got him to bed an', after he'd been slapin' long enough to be pretty near sober, Oi sewed him into the bid clothes, took the broom stick an' jus' lambasted the devil out o' him. An' Oi never had a day's worry since."

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 Drinking, there is no manner of doubt about it, is falling into disrepute. It is a wet journal that defines a cocktail as a symposium of assorted liquors, producing a taste that is a cross between varnish and a motorman's glove.

And in a temperance barber shop recently a man with a suspicious breath was unable to get his mustache colored, because the proprietor positively refused to dye a drunkard.

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 Even as a medicine whisky is becoming taboo. One former advocate says that he used to think it was good for a cold, but on second thought—on sober second thought—he has decided differently; and that in taking it for a headache the only way to be sure of the result is to take it the night before.

Mother on the Job



LOIS—Do you know that I am soon to be engaged to Mr. Perfect Spooner?
 Jane—No. Has he spoken to your mother?
 Lois—No, but she has to him.