

Friends Intelligencer

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Inconspicuous Individuals

By LEONARD S. KENWORTHY *

It is good for all of us to live in imagination with the great heroes of humanity and to derive inspiration from them. At the same time it is good for us to examine the lives of simple folk—men and women more nearly our own stature, possessing the same potential power for good that we possess.

In American history and in the history of other nations, we have been prone to erect statues to a few of our national heroes. Too often we have forgotten the importance of thousands of nameless heroes whose lives have enriched our nations. I rejoice on this account in a new kind of statue that the United States has begun to erect, such as the statues to the Pioneer Mother which are appearing at frequent intervals along the National Road, the main thoroughfare in the early days of westward migration. To me these statues symbolize the influence of countless thousands of unsung heroes upon the development of our western land and its settlers. Common people they were who played their rôle and played it well.

Because one can speak with more authority from one's own experiences, I beg your indulgence while I draw some very personal sketches to illustrate the importance of these inconspicuous helpers upon the lives of others. My mind turns back at once to my second year in school, a year spent with a wonderful teacher. I do not remember much about her personal appearance or characteristics, but she must have loved children for I have nothing but pleasant memories of that year. She was only a second grade teacher in an ordinary public school in a small mid-western town but how tremendously important she and others like her are in the lives of those they teach.

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My thoughts turn then to long winter evenings spent with my 85-year-old grandmother. She was a graduate doctor in the days when women physicians were scarce. She had taught Negro children in the South during the reconstruction period following our Civil War. She was an exponent of women's rights. But what endeared her to me were her youthfulness, her love of reading, her understanding, and her ability to play children's games. Her name will never go down in the chronicles of the great, but she was a Christian woman who made her life count. How often older people wield such an influence over younger ones!

In a very small mid-western town lived my other grandmother and grandfather. Both were active in the Meeting and in community affairs. So beloved were they that they were known to many as Uncle Mit and Aunt Lucy. In a lifetime of service in that one community, they left a Christian imprint on it and, through those who left it, upon the rest of the world. The faith these two people had in God was the most vital part of their lives and no one should underestimate the tremendous influence that faith had upon their neighbors. What a power for good can be concentrated in one community in the lives of two such inconspicuous individuals.

In this portrait gallery belongs another "type," an Irishman, a Roman Catholic, a shoemaker who had a tiny shop just off the campus at Westtown School. He knew all the students by name, and when we were homesick or tired of boarding school life we would somehow find a hole in our shoes and pay a visit to Johnny, whose good humor and sympathetic understanding were like an old-fashioned tonic. Unimportant as he was in the annals of the world, he was nonetheless important to those whom he met in the daily routine of his work.

In college there was the influential personality of "Dad" Lehman, director of the a cappella choir, to whom music was a great medium for the expression

and cultivation of religious experience. To his students he transmitted the love of music and the love of the good life, vitally affecting their lives. And there was "Daddy" Hole, the geologist, who showed us that religion and science are not antagonistic but complementary to each other. He opened to us the mysteries of the universe through many of the commonplace objects of nature around us. He could have had more prominent positions in government or education but he chose the comparative obscurity of this small college. Yet who would dare to say his choice was a wrong one?

These people and others like them whom you or I could name give meaning to life in their own individual ways. They are the kind of people who make life worth living. Perhaps their only common denominator is that power which gave Christ his influence over men—the love of God expressed through love to one's fellowmen.

Reexamine the three years of Christ's so-called "public ministry" and you will perhaps agree that it was in large part a "private ministry." As he went about great multitudes followed him. Once he fed

5,000, another time he fed about 100 more when he dealt in units of one or two. He wrought miracles by touching individuals rather than groups. It was one woman at the well, not many; it was a leper cleansed, not several; it was Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night, not a delegation; it was a rich man who sought Jesus, not a group of wealthy men. His life was a succession of personal contacts, but how powerful each of them was!

We live in a world that has belittled the importance of these personal relationships, a world that measures all things by the mass. Yet, when we examine our individual lives for the sources of power therein, I think we can agree that there is something far greater than mere numbers or size. That something is the power of God transmitting itself through the daily lives of men and women. On a small scale Christ's power is being duplicated daily by those we know and love. Often they are inconspicuous individuals but the power for good they wield can never be measured. May we remember with Goethe that "Each man has a special circle in which he can work in an unparalleled way . . ." and work effectively therein!

Promotion of Temperance—The Present Situation

By EDWARD B. DUNFORD *

The practice of drinking alcoholic beverages is centuries old. Formerly they were regarded as helpful rather than harmful, offering a seeming way of escape from life's difficulties.

Ignorance is being attacked by education and science in realistic fashion, as smallpox, malaria, yellow fever and other diseases have been. Less than sixty years ago, largely through the efforts of Mrs. Mary H. Hunt of the W. C. T. U., the first state law was adopted requiring the teaching in the public schools of the effects of alcohol on the human system.

The result of public education is illustrated by the reduction in the quantity per capita consumed. In 1913 per capita consumption of all alcoholic beverages was 22.8 gallons, the highest in our history. The number of retail outlets was 216,000, or one for every 420 of the population. In 1941 the number of retail outlets was 409,000, or one for every 320 individuals. Yet in spite of the greatly increased number of selling places, the per capita consumption in 1941 was 14.06 gallons, or 61 per cent of what it was at its peak in 1913.

This decrease occurred despite some things which might have been expected to produce a substantial increase: 1. Removal (in the minds of many) of social taboos against the use of liquor by women. 2. Advertising by all the new media of publicity. (During 1940, 28 million dollars were spent for liquor advertising in newspapers, magazines, radio and farm

journals alone.) 3. Increase of leisure time.

Factors working for lowered consumption were: 1. Organized temperance work. 2. Public health efforts. 3. Emphasis upon athletics and recreational facilities. 4. Better housing projects. 5. Studies by scientific bodies. 6. Competition by fruit juices and other healthful products.

Science has established the narcotic character of alcohol. How is our democracy attempting to solve this problem of the use of a habit-forming drug? Dr. Austin H. MacCormick, in the *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* for September, 1941, says, "Alcoholics go through our police stations, courts, probation departments and institutions with very little being learned about them." He thinks these "methods are unscientific and socially unsound, . . . wasteful of public funds and of human beings alike. It is generally agreed . . . that our present methods not only do not cure or salvage a significant percentage of the persons to whom they are applied but rather tend to confirm and even to aggravate their condition."

To curb the profit motive as a factor in increasing alcoholism, various governmental devices have been tried—principally liquor control laws, taxation, and government monopoly of sale. All are operating defectively. Federal, state, and local liquor revenue is estimated at a billion dollars annually—a powerful incentive to legislators to rely on it in public finance, but with scant consideration of its social costs. There has also been a tendency to subsidize old age pen-

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