

Other Stories

Sons of Temperance

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Story outline

A series of letters in the *Bendigo Advertiser* from W.D.C. Denovan to Robert Lindsay, on nationalism in certain societies like the St Andrew's and St Patrick's societies. *Quite witted or dim witted.*

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THE SONS OF TEMPERANCE.

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Fri 3 Dec 1869 Page 2

The first anniversary meeting of the Sons of Temperance, Royal Diadem Division, was held in the Rifles' Orderly-room, last night, and was the occasion of a large amount of happiness to a numerous attendance, including a good number of juveniles. The first part of the programme was comprised in the tea meeting, which proved a very sociable affair. When the tables were removed, the second part of the entertainment of a miscellaneous character, including speeches, songs, and recitations, began. The chair was occupied by Mr A J Cox PWP, who apologised for the absence of the hon F Longmore, the intended chairman, on the score of Parliamentary duties. Mr J Lester addressed the meeting, alluding to the benefits of such societies as the Sons of Temperance, Foresters, &c.

Mr J L Moffitt WP, spoke of the progress of the Sons of Temperance since the Order was first established in America in 1842, and since then it had become the largest and strongest of temperance societies, numbering no less than two million members, and when they looked back on that progress it gave wonderful encouragement for the future. In Victoria the Order had been eight years established, and numbered over 1200 members, having a fund of £2450 to their credit. The Sandhurst Society was established in Oct, 1868, and after surmounting many difficulties was in a fair and satisfactory condition. They were about forming a daughters' branch, and when they had the assistance of the ladies he felt certain their progress would be most rapid.

It was also intended to form a juvenile branch, and by the next anniversary he trusted the Sons of Temperance would number 200 members on Sandhurst. He was happy to see so many representatives from other and kindred societies present. All

had a good object in view - to help and cheer the destitute and sick of the human race. He recommended such societies, based on the total abstinence principle, and he asked the sympathy of the ladies, which if obtained would be sure to lead to success - (Applause).

Mr Denovan rose, and congratulated the Sons of Temperance on the large attendance at their anniversary, which he felt assured augured well for their future progress, for if they could do so much in their youth what might not be expected from their manhood - (Applause). He thanked the order for their invitation, and said that he had been a temperance man for the last twelve months, although he did not belong to any temperance society. Probably when he was better acquainted with the Sons of Temperance he would become one of them - (Applause). He wished them God speed, and he asked them to join with him in wishing success to the Sons of Temperance and kindred societies - (Applause).

He had not much faith in those societies which, before one could become a member, required to know from what part of God's earth one came. The founders of benefit societies were far-seeing men, and knew the value of money. If working men could but see how much their lot would be improved, he was sure they would all become members. It was by the numbers, wealth, and influence of such societies as the Sons of Temperance that the drinking customs of society were to be overcome, and he believed that such societies were the best means for this purpose, and their success would be ensured if sensible and moderate arguments were used. The progress might be slow, but if they all pulled together, certain. Any mere legislative enactments would not effect the object sought.

The publican interest was too powerful just now. This was an interest which had grown with the nation, and many millions of money were invested in it; any sudden overthrow would therefore be hurtful, and would bring ruin on thousands. Let the public mind be educated by the temperance advocates, and the great resolution they desired would surely come about with the least evil. The drinking customs were the fruitful parents of vice, crime, disease and death, and alas! were not confined to one class, but pervaded all classes. Men of the highest talents and noblest natures had fallen victims to them, yet in the face of that there were men who sneered at the efforts of such societies to correct the evil. This revolution could not be brought about in a day for they had a large monied interest to contend with, and they must place themselves in an equally advantageous position in order to overcome it, for the longest purse would win.

Mr J T Moffitt on behalf of the Sons of Temperance, replied, and remarked that one feature about them was their cosmopolitan character, for they embraced all nationalities and religions. There was scope for such societies, and there was no more cheering political or social fact than that in this colony so many of them had sprung up. He was glad to see such a meeting, for it proved that in the temperance cause there was a domestic principle which embraced and brought into a common

enjoyment the husband, wife, father, brother and sister. Mr Lester, on behalf of the Foresters, responded, and said that they held out the right hand of fellowship to the Sons of Temperance. He strongly advised people to join a benefit society. In Eaglehawk he said there were 1100 ratepayers, and of these 800 belonged to benefit societies.

Mr Buchan on behalf of the Rechabites responded and said there was plenty of scope for such Temperance Societies, for they had one common object in view, and that was to relieve the sick and distressed. Those benefit societies which did not adopt total abstinence as one of their tests of membership were good to a certain extent, but it was merely a pecuniary good. The Temperance Societies did the same, but went further, for their great object was to elevate man from the degradation of drunkenness. The statistics of Temperance Societies proved that their members were less subject to sickness, and longer lived than the members of other societies. They were calculated to lift man up to that niche in creation's temple which God has so ably fitted him to fill - (Applause.)

Mr Lindsay, on behalf of the St Andrew's Society, responded, and took exception to the remarks of Mr Denovan against national societies. The St Andrew's Society was established for the purpose of upholding the national games of Scotland, but they had nothing to bind the society together until it was formed into a benefit society. He wished every success to the Sons of Temperance.

Mr P Flood, on behalf of the St Patrick's Society, also replied, and dissented from Mr Denovan's remarks. He hoped that the ancient games of Ireland, England, and Scotland, would be maintained in the land of their adoption - (Applause.)

Lieutenant Blackham, of the Volunteers, proposed a vote of thanks to the ladies who had presided at the tea tables, and also to the singers.

Mr Moffitt seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Mr Avery proposed a vote of thanks to the chairman and the speakers, and that was also carried unanimously.

During the evening songs were admirably sung by Misses O'Sullivan, Norris, Weston, and Wilkinson. Miss Palmer recited "Mary, Queen of Scots," with feeling. Messrs Hobbs and Stevens rendered effective assistance as vocalists, and Mr Goodchild put the audience into the greatest good humour by his comic recitations. The entertainment was concluded by the company singing the National Anthem.

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1st Letter - from Robert Lindsay

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Tue 7 Dec 1869 Page 2

THE LATE TEMPERANCE MEETING.
(To the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser.)

Sir, - It was a very pleasing feature in the late celebration of the Sons of Temperance that it was so largely countenanced by representatives from other societies, which clearly evinced a general desire to cultivate and maintain harmony and kindly feeling between all societies whose aims are directed to the one common cause of alleviating suffering humanity and the misfortunes to which we are all subject.

It would therefore be naturally supposed that nothing would be said or done at so social a meeting to mar the good feeling which existed, and which appeared to be the general desire of all present to encourage and foster; and it is to be much regretted that a certain speaker in proposing success to the Sons of Temperance and kindred societies should have overstepped the bounds usually observed on all such occasions, by denouncing all societies partaking of nationality, which in his opinion ought to be deprecated.

I do not find fault with the speaker for holding any views he pleased on the subject; he can if he likes ignore his country and the land of his birth, whatever that may be, but it was certainly out of place and showed very bad taste to take advantage of the occasion for giving vent to his feelings for the purpose of kindling a spirit of discord among public bodies desirous of cultivating a friendly intercourse with each other. I am glad, however, to find that instead of Mr Denovan's views being participated in by the audience, they were entirely "deprecated" and will tend to produce an opposite result from what he intended.

What stigma can attach (except in the pure eyes of Mr Denovan) to any body of men hailing from the same country for associating themselves into a friendly society for providing relief to its members and their families during sickness, and alleviating the infirmities of old age, and at the same time forming a bond of union for perpetuating the games and pastimes of their fatherland, and to which they were familiar in early years?

On the contrary, it is a laudable object thus to cherish the memory of the land that gave them birth, and in which their forefathers fought for that liberty and freedom which are now part of the British Constitution, and the admiration of the whole world. Britain derived its stability from nationality, and the day that national spirit dies the prowess of Britain will be a thing of the past. But this will never be, nationality ruled from the earliest history of the world and will continue down to the latest ages.

It is well known that in Scotland and Ireland, and in many parts of England, it is the practice to this day to perpetuate the ancient sports and pastimes peculiar to each district, and, if this be so, how laudable and becoming it is to form bonds of

union in this remote part of the world for cherishing the memory of our native country in keeping up its ancient pastimes? The man that carries in his bosom no love for his native country nor venerates the customs of the "good old times" is more to be pitied than "deprecated" by his countrymen.

"The wretch concentrated all in self
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonored and unsung."

ROBERT LINDSAY.

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2nd Letter from Denovan TO Lindsay

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Wed 8 Dec 1869 Page 2

DENOVAN TO LINDSAY.

(To the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser.)

Sir, - In your issue of this day I have read a letter from Mr Robert Lindsay, the President of the so-called St Andrew's Society, reflecting in no measured terms upon me for some remarks made by me at the Sons of Temperance Anniversary, with reference to objectionable national societies, and which he was pleased to appropriate to his society.

Let me say at the outset that if the cap fits he is quite welcome to wear it. "A wilfu' man maun has his way." The reference which I made at the meeting in the Orderly-room on last Thursday evening to national societies was as follows:-

"I was glad to read in the ADVERTISER of that morning that the only test of admission to the ranks of their Order was a profession of total abstinence principles, and that they did not require anyone to say from what portion of God's earth he came.

In this mixed community of ours, societies of an exclusively national character are to be deprecated, for if benefit societies are requisite - and I believe they are - they could be found in connection with the excellent order of the Sons of Temperance, or with those noble orders, the Oddfellows and Foresters, where all nationalities are represented and where all are equally welcome."

The audience generally applauded these few remarks, which were made in good faith, and not with a view of giving offence to anyone. But Messrs Lindsay and Flood at once took umbrage and fired off their St Patrick and St Andrew

popguns at me. Of course the audience laughed, but it was not in approval of them, but at them for fitting the cap so nicely on their own heads. Both gentlemen defended their national games (which no one attacked), as Mr Lindsay again does today; but neither of them dared to say a word about the exclusively national character of their societies. This is the point at issue between us.

I rejoice to see the games of Europe perpetuated here in so far as they are adapted to the climate; but I object in common with nine-tenths of the Scotchmen on Bendigo and elsewhere to the formation of a society which excludes all from its ranks but my own countrymen. Let Mr Lindsay throw open his society to all nations and change its name to Bendigo, and I will go hand and heart with him in carrying out his games, even to his wearing the kilt for the purpose of showing how handsome his legs are.

I also object to a special benefit society for Scotchmen. It places us in a false position. Scotchmen are quite as able as any other nation to push their way in the world without these silly St Andrew crutches. We never see Englishmen getting up such sectarian societies. The game of cricket is essentially English; but what would be thought if the cricket clubs were to declare that none but Englishmen were to be admitted, and that a benefit society for distressed Englishmen was to be attached to them?

I think I may safely say that no Englishman worthy of the name would have anything to do with them. Why, then, should either any portion of Irishmen or Scotchmen act differently in this young colony, where all have the same rights as Englishmen, and where they are, generally speaking, as successful in business. I will not condescend to notice Mr Lindsay's remarks about my "ignoring the land of my birth", and such schoolboy chap-trap. I am as true a Scotch on all matters pertaining to the honor of my native country as Mr Lindsay can possibly be, and it is because I feel its honor at stake that I denounce, as I now do, this mongrel St Andrew's Society, as at present constituted. Let me advise Mr Lindsay to throw open the membership of his society to all nations on Bendigo, and I venture to say that for one member he gets among Scotchmen now, he would then get twenty.

The games, I am happy to see, are open to all; why not admit all to the society as well? If the St Andrew's Society are not above taking money from other nations beside their own, why should they seek to exclude them from the membership of the society?

Answer this question, if you please, Mr Lindsay.

I am, sir, yours truly,

W.D.C. DENOVAN

7th December 1869

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3rd Letter from a member of St Patrick's to Denovan
Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Fri 10 Dec 1869 Page 2

ST PATRICK'S SOCIETY TO MR DENOVAN.
(To the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser.)

Sir, - Will you kindly permit me space in your valuable columns to reply to Mr Denovan's letter which appeared in your issue of the 8th inst, in which he has adopted some erroneous ideas regarding kindred societies. Mr Denovan, however, not satisfied with attacking the St Andrew's Society, has availed himself of the opportunity of addressing himself to the St Patrick's Society, which society takes it stand precisely on the principles much admired by all men, bearing a true love for their fatherland.

Having a view, and designing to be - what it has proved itself since its establishment - a means whereby Irishmen, without consideration of creed or country, by uniting for friendly and social advantages, may prove that whilst avoiding in their intercourse with their fellow-men any of that nationality which would be prejudicial to the well-being of a liberally constituted community, they still cherish in their breasts recollections of a land is dear to them as the mother that give them birth. Mr Denovan pretends to derive his right to address us from the fact that he has considered himself "divinely" appointed to rule supreme over Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotchmen in this part of the colony.

But why should Mr Denovan's narrow, biassed, and shrivelled intellect be so disturbed at the thoughts of a rose, shamrock, or thistle, or that the members of one society should wear a "kilt," or those of another a "harp and shamrock." It certainly must grieve Mr Denovan to his heart's content, that he cannot claim either of them as his. This leaves him were we first found him - "No where." If the "gauntlet", thrown down by Mr Lindsay, is too much for Mr Denovan, or the cap sent him through the columns of the ADVERTISER seems to fit him, there is still a color wanted to suit his particular taste. Is it not a pity that Mr Denovan could not find other words in which he could express his antagonistic ideas, without using the too vulgar terms "mongrel" and "poguns."

The fundamental error in Mr Denovan's letter is further shown by his not condescending to notice the remarks about his "ignoring the land of his birth." This is what Mr Denovan calls "clap-trap," but if Mr D's name as spelt Donevon, it would be Irish, and as he spells it, it is not Scotch; how then, in the name of common sense, can he be a Scotchman - or a Scot - unless he is a self-constituted one.

Let me inform Mr D that in America almost every trade has its society, and almost every nation its national society, and the grand total of members is

something imposing, and yet they carry out their national names and national games in a cosmopolitan manner, which is and ever has been the aim of the St Patrick's Society, the members of which repudiate with scorn any idea of Mr Denovan's in attempting to create or foster feelings of animosity amongst the different friendly societies on Bendigo.

In conclusion, sir, it would be almost degradation to take any further notice of the foul attacks of Mr Denovan on those occasions when he forgets himself, and descends to slander the character of a society of which he is totally ignorant. But it cannot be so easy for one to remain silent when such scurrilous abuse and unprovoked attacks are spit forth at a race, or a creed, or a class, or a saint.

I am, sir, &c, &c,

A MEMBER OF ST PATRICK'S SOCIETY

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Fourth letter from a writer called Cosmopolitan

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Tue 14 Dec 1869 Page 3

THE LATE SONS OF TEMPERANCE MEETING.

(To the Editor of the Bendigo Advertiser.)

Sir, - Permit me through the columns of your paper to express my utter abhorrence at the monstrous attacks which have been made on the remarks of Mr Denovan at the above named meeting by the representatives of the St Patrick and St Andrew's Societies.

Surely those gentlemen must be extremely sensitive respecting their peculiar nationalities to take exception to any remark which emanated from Mr Denovan on the occasion referred to, who also was a guest on the occasion; and further, let me say that there is nothing calculated more to sever those bonds of union and power which for centuries have been centred in the British throne by the amalgamation of the three countries, viz, England, Ireland and Scotland, than by encouraging the dissemination (especially in a young country like this) of those principles and practised which are alike disastrous in their effects, and both selfish and clannish in their operations.

A correspondent in your issue of today, signing himself "A member of the St Patrick's Society," wishes to prove his position by stating "that in America every trade has its society, and almost every nation its national society." Whoever doubted that?

But has it never entered into the capacious brain of your sectarian correspondent that those societies to which he refers never attempt to prevent any man, whatever may be his creed or country, from joining their ranks so long as he remains true to the principles those societies promulgate. Who ever heard of such

stupidity and downright bigotry as the establishment of societies whose main object seems to be the splitting up of British communities into a thousand factions. But, sir, those things are too glaring in their character to be encouraged by the enlightened people of the nineteenth century; soon they will become things of the past.

In conclusion, let me say that Mr Denovan's principles are too well known in this district to be at all affected by those scribblers who try to malign his character.
Yours, &c,
COSMOPOLITAN.
10th December.

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The the source of the quote used by Robert Lindsay:
“The wretch, concentrated all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.”

Walter Scott, The Lay of the Last Minstrel 1805



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