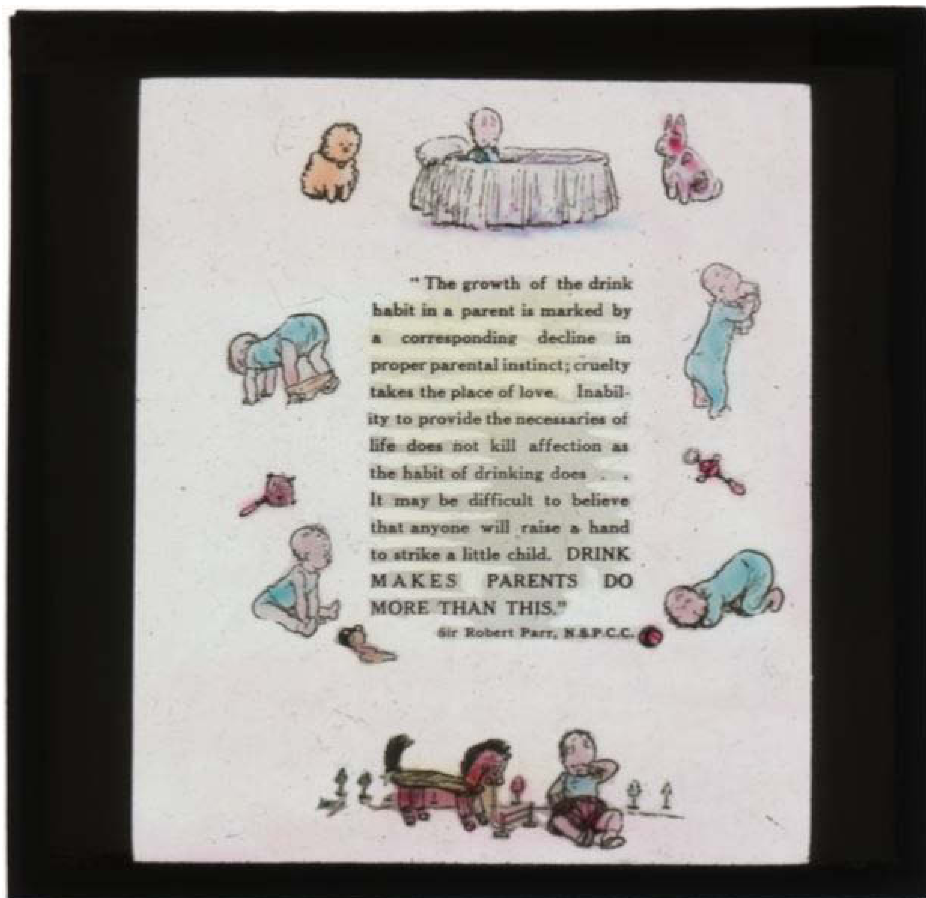
"Cruelty takes the place of love": A Magic Lantern Slide and the Band of Hope

by Stephanie Olsen



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Ephemera can be real treasure, especially perhaps for the historian of emotions. It can allow us to conceive of the emotive qualities of actors or events in different ways from sources that were meant to be preserved for posterity. This piece of ephemera, fortuitously preserved long after its technology was made obsolete, is a magic lantern slide. The magic lantern was widely used, in an era before the spread of movies and computers, for entertainment, sometimes combined with education. The medium was ubiquitous in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, yet, because of the equipment required, rare enough to be special to viewers. The British Band of Hope movement used this medium widely, and its major unions under which local bands were active had well-organized lending policies of magic lantern slides and projectors. But what can one dusty slide tell us about the motivations of the adults or the children involved in this movement, and how can it enlighten us as historians of emotion?

My research explores important historical attempts to cultivate the "right" emotions in boys, to promote manliness, future fatherhood and citizenship.[1] The Band of Hope is an important part of this story. An influential multi-denominational, mainly working-class national temperance movement in Britain, it attracted over three-million boys and girls at its peak, around 1914.[2] According to Charles Wakely, the General Secretary of the United Kingdom Band of Hope Union, the age of membership differed in various societies, but in most Bands of Hope the members were received at seven years of age, and at fourteen were drafted into a senior society, where the proceedings were adapted to their "increased intelligence and altered habits of thought".[3] Membership was conditional upon giving a written promise of abstinence, and upon compliance with the rules that governed each society. The declaration in general use was the following: "I promise to abstain from the use of all intoxicating drinks as beverages". The pledge was central to the Band of Hope. "It makes the signatory feel that he is one of many who have banded together in a crusade. When later in life he tries to keep his promises and overcomes temptation, he is strengthened in his moral and spiritual character".[4]

Though there was widespread concern in the middle and upper classes of the period about working-class moral and physical degeneracy, it would be too simplistic to say that the Band of Hope was a reform movement of the working classes from above. Rather it was driven by working-class people who recognized that moral and physical reform needed to take place within their own communities and starting at a young age. Cultivating the emotions of the young through weekly meetings and through the movement's reading material was essential to this reform.

The emotional bonding with other children and with leaders, most of whom were pledge takers as children, was considered to be vital. United feeling and combined will encouraged pride and happiness when individuals adhered to the moral precepts of the movement, amplifying negative feelings when a child strayed from the ideal. This was probably accomplished through personal interaction within the group and the community, but was certainly strengthened rhetorically in the movement's publications and recitations for

its members. This feeling of community might also explain the "emotional hold of the church on individuals" in later life.[5] In addition to negative emotions linked to individual conscience, many stories, songs and recitations also attempted to trigger embarrassment, pity and fortitude in children whose parents (especially their fathers) strayed from the moral ideal.

The first Band of Hope was founded in Leeds in 1847, with the aim of instructing boys and girls as to the properties of alcohol and the consequences of its consumption. Bands organized midweek meetings with music, slides, competitions and addresses on the importance of total abstinence. By 1855, there were so many local bands that a London Union was formed and in 1864 this was expanded to become the United Kingdom Band of Hope Union. Important regional unions were also formed, such as the Lancashire and Cheshire and the Yorkshire Band of Hope Unions. The increased support for temperance by churches and chapels of all denominations gave the children's organization a great impetus to expand, particularly starting in the 1880s. In addition to the meetings, there were many publications associated with the Band of Hope movement. The best in terms of quality and content and the most widely distributed were the *Band of Hope Review* (1851- c.1936), connected with the United Kingdom Band of Hope Union, and *Onward* (1865- c.1964), published in Manchester by the Lancashire and Cheshire Band of Hope Union.

It was important for the Band of Hope to reach children while they were still emotionally malleable, so that they would not end up like the morally dissolute parents in the stories told in Band of Hope publications. Teaching emotional conditioning and control was achieved through frequent repetition in meetings and in Band of Hope publications of the core emotional and moral lessons. Both boys and girls were encouraged to "not be quick in judging others; be unassuming and charitable in thought and in deed to all who differ from you, but nevertheless hold firmly to your own pledge".[6] Boys especially were targeted as future fathers and citizens and entreated to learn how to be manly at an early age.

This message, like so many others, was driven home through story telling. One such story, entitled "As Boy and Man" from the 1884 *Band of Hope Review*, compares ideals of "real" manliness to those of the "rough" masculinity that boys seemed to prize, no matter their social standing – posed as a question of physical versus emotional strength. Residents of a middle-class school, Jack was a little teetotaller and Philip was an older boy who drank. Philip said of Jack: "A teetotaller is a sneak; they are all mean, miserable people, without a spark of *manhood* in them. They have no pluck, and are nothing but a lot of mean beggars". He tries to force wine down Jack's throat, injures his face with the broken glass and is dismissed from school. Years later Jack saves Philip who is about to end his life, made miserable and impoverished by drink and gambling. And of course, in the end, the morally weak boy is also the physically weaker man. Philip ends the story by saying: "What would have been the consequences if Jack had yielded when a boy to either persuasion or oppression?" The narrator permits himself to answer the question didactically:

Assuredly evil would have followed. It will be well for the young to think it over. Knowing yourself to be in the right, be strong in it. Resist temptation. Be neither persuaded nor bullied into doing wrong. Do not trust, however, in your own strength, which is perfect weakness. Remember that without God you can do nothing.[7]

Jack is clearly shown as the real man, one who shuns vice in favour of the positive character traits of manliness. Indeed, he has "pluck" after all. His status is not reflected in his social class – in this case both boys are middle class – but rather in his own character. In general, as in this story, character traits were firmly based on Christian ideals. More importantly, boys' religiosity was supposed to see them through the difficult years before manhood. A firm, personal relationship with God was seen as essential to manliness and to provide the emotional strength necessary to shun temptation and prevent violence.

This brings us back to our slide. The text was clearly selected for its weighty message, and for the authority of the man who uttered it. Sir Robert Parr (1862–1931) was the second director of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (founded 1884 as the London SPCC). Intemperance was the target here, not so much for its destructive physical or economic potential, but for its destruction of proper feeling of parent toward child, or of the "proper parental instinct". Poverty was not as destructive to familial "affection" as drink. Surely no parent could allow "cruelty" to take "the place of love" for his children.

This may seem like a didactic message for parents from the director of a society concerned primarily with preventing child abuse. When put in the context of a Band of Hope meeting, however, the thrust, the tone and the emotive qualities of the message change considerably. Imagine the Band of Hope child experiencing this magic lantern show; this one slide among many repetitively driving the temperance message home, in more or less entertaining ways. This show would have been a special treat, among sessions filled with recitations, songs, and readings, all repeating the message of temperance and Christianity. This repetition of message could have many emotive effects, ranging from shared feelings of resoluteness and sympathy, to boredom, fear or anger. The movement's popularity (archival records confirm that many children faithfully attended on a weekly basis) suggests the mood was probably more often joyous than coloured by ennui or negativity. This particular slide might have been a poignant reminder for some Band of Hope children that their own parents were not living up to the ideal. It informed all of them, whether they had intemperate parents or not, what the ideal was for themselves, as they reflected on their future lives of parenthood and citizenship. This message that children were crucial to the future of the nation was ubiquitous. Parr himself wrote of the centrality of children to religion, to the home and to the nation:

As the child is the central figure in religion, the moving force in the home, so it should be the main hope of the nation, and when the national mind is concentrated on this ideal, the nation's responsibility will begin to be fulfilled.[8]

The images of the lantern slide, crude though they may be, intended to evoke similar feelings. The baby is shown with his playthings, but he is alone, without parental guidance or help. In the bottom image, he is crying, reinforcing his vulnerability and his need for protection. The centrality of the text around which the lone child is serially depicted begs the question of who or what is to form the guiding focus of the child's life. The text itself implores the parent to be temperate in the name of the child's future, with the authority of a voice that had borne witness to cruelty on a national scale. The guiding force was to be love. But the medium, a lantern slide, implicitly involved the child in this exhortation as a physically present reminder of his or her as yet indeterminate future. This little lantern slide, in context, captures historical preoccupations with masculinity/manliness, and lays bare the *fin-de-siècle* concerns about personal relationships to God, the place of the child, the parent and the citizen in the nation, and the role of the emotions in the education of the young for their future familial and public roles.

Further Reading:

- George K. Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870-1908 (*Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982).
- Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Papers in Britain: A Cultural History, 1855-1940* (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).
- Thomas Dixon, "Educating the emotions from Gradgrind to Goleman," *Research Papers in Education* 27, no. 4 (1912), 481-495.
- Monica Flegel, "Changing Faces: The NSPCC and the Use of Photography in the Construction of Cruelty to Children," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 39, no. 1 (2006), 1-20.
- Monica Flegel, *Conceptualizing Cruelty to Children in Nineteenth-Century England: Literature, Representation, and the NSPCC* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).
- Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: the Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), 192-4.
- Annemarie McAllister, "Picturing the Demon Drink: How Children were Shown Temperance Principles in the Band of Hope," *Visual Resources* 28, no. 4, (2012), 309-323.
- J.A Mangan, "Muscular, Militaristic and Manly: The British Middle-Class Hero as a Moral Messenger," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 13, no. 1, (1996), 28-47.
- Stephanie Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880-1914* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).
- Lilian Lewis Shiman, "The Band of Hope Movement: Respectable Recreation for Working-Class Children," *Victorian Studies* 17, no. 1 (1973), 49-74.
- Lilian Lewis Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England* (London: MacMillan, 1988), 134-155.
- John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
- John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005).

[1] Stephanie Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880-1914* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

[2] United Kingdom Band of Hope Union, *Annual Report* (1914) 6. This important movement has been largely ignored by historians. See "Further Reading" for notable interventions on the topic.

[3] Charles Wakely, *Bands of Hope and Sunday Schools* (London: United Kingdom Band of Hope Union, 1894), 4.

[4] R. Tayler, *Hope of the Race* (London: Hope Press, 1946), 40.

[5] Sarah Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c. 1880-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 156.

[6] James Edmunds, "A Talk to the Young," *Church of England Temperance Chronicle* (1882), 88.

[7] "As Boy and Man," *Band of Hope Review* (1884), 182-3.

[8] Robert J. Parr, *Wilful Waste: The Nation's Responsibility for its Children* (London: NSPCC, 1910), 70.

Citation