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Temperance teaching through the magic lantern slide

A match made in heaven?

The period 1830-1920 saw both the zenith of the Magic Lantern, and the growth of the Temperance movement into the largest social amelioration force in the UK and US. Not only were they natural partners, but each contributed to the spread of the other. The many groups advocating temperance (meaning total abstinence from alcohol, by the 1840s) promoted the magic lantern as a means of circulating propaganda to large audiences, as well as making meetings entertaining. By the 1880s most temperance lectures or events would feature a magic lantern show, and temperance groups were among the greatest producers and distributors of slides and lanterns—especially the Band of Hope, the UK children's movement founded in Leeds in 1847. *

The Band of Hope and the lantern

From the first year of its national organisation (1856) the Band of Hope held a stock of magic lantern slides, which it lent out as a package, with operator and lantern, to meetings. Soon new slides were commissioned and this became a thriving business. Ten years later 20 slide set lectures were available, and in the next year more lanterns were purchased so that four lecturers/ operators could be sent out on the same evening. Reports mention thousands of attenders and 'extras' such as choirs of hundreds of children singing before and afterwards. From 1875 slides were lent to groups with lanterns, and numbers of slides hired and performances given show a vast increase—1,200 slides by 1892, and then slides were too many to list, but performance figures are given—2,221 in 1914-15. The trading department was turning over £5,000 a year by 1893, most of which was from lantern slide hire or purchase. With over 3.5 million members by 1900, the Band of Hope was a huge market.



Why was the archive of the British National Temperance League given to The University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) in 1987? UCLan is in Preston and one of its founders was Joseph Livesey, honoured as the birthplace and father, respectively, of the Total Abstinence movement in 1832. This 50,000+ collection of books, periodicals, pledges, badges and medals, textiles, china, photographs, magic lantern slides, and more, is known as the Livesey Collection. It has given rise to 4 exhibitions, including www.demondrink.co.uk, and now the TEASIP slide project ...



Temperance teaching arguments

Health

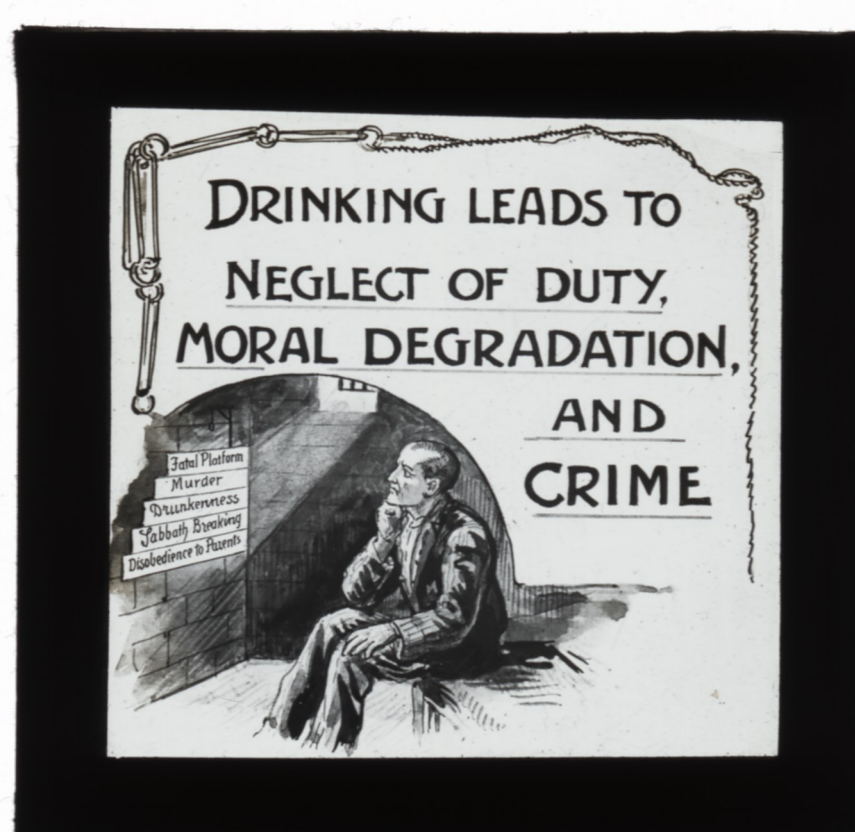
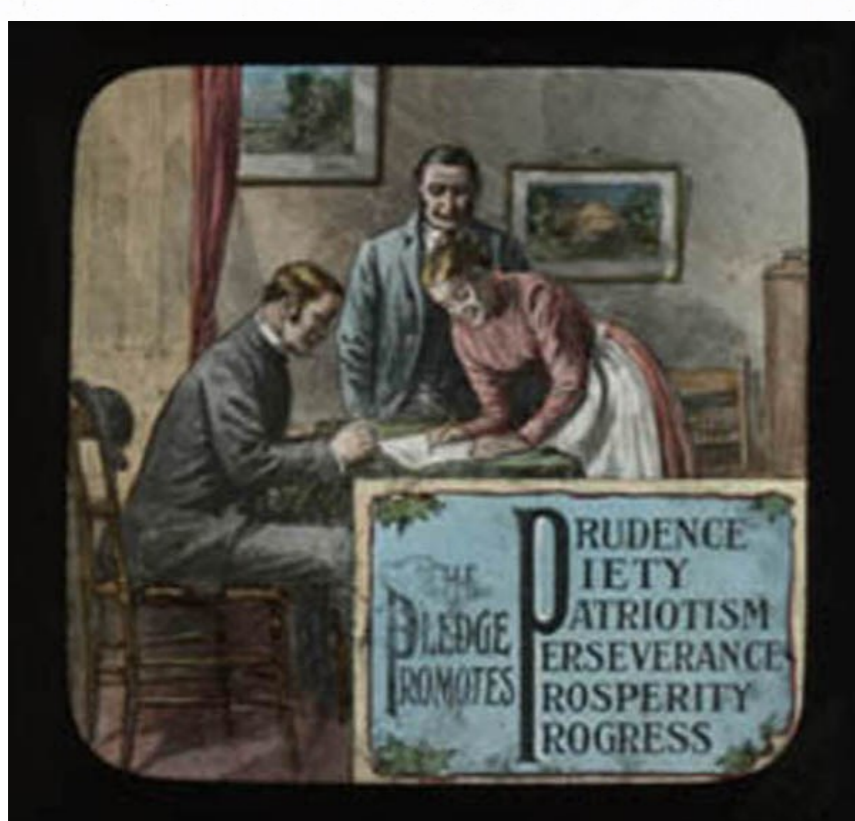
From the earliest days, the Temperance movement had stressed the danger to health involved in heavy drinking, and this was soon applied to **any** alcohol, with scientific evidence to show that it was 'a poison.' The Band of Hope built on this, with slides used in millions of talks given in schools as well as its regular evening meetings.

Wealth

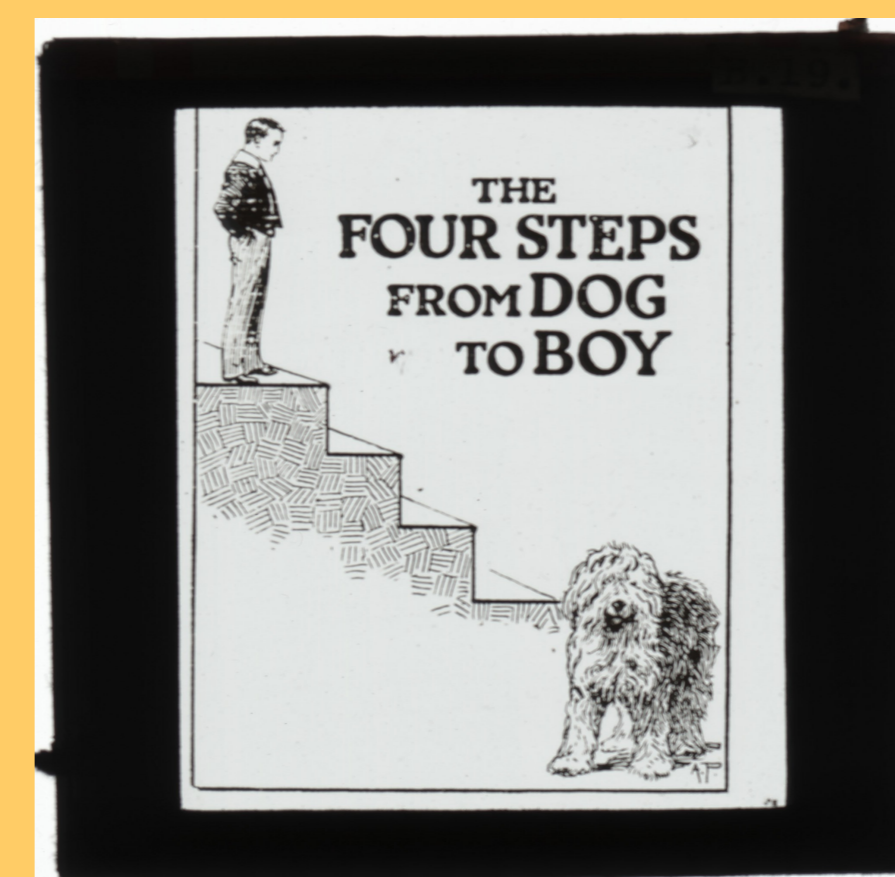
As wages were often paid in pubs, the main working-class meeting places, drink was often associated with poverty. Joseph Livesey said, 'Teetotalism, for the poor family, means a fuller cupboard and better food; more clothing, and that clothing safe at home; more furniture; good blankets and warm bedding.' Children were often presented with arguments showing alcohol as a waste of individual and national resources.

Moral arguments

Early Band of Hope material made much use of appeals to religion and moral behaviour, and this persisted in the many groups linked to Sunday Schools. Later more sophisticated discourses produced rich images such as this murderer sitting in the condemned cell, having followed a path including 'drunkenness.' **



Steps up from a merely animal existence



The child viewer is reminded in this slide set of his or her moral duty to behave in a superior way to animals, by refusing to act on every impulse.

From mere awareness of existence ('I am') the child is led through the steps of realising that there is more to human potential ('I ought; I can; I will'). The goal is a healthy mind in a healthy body (*mens sana in corpore sano*).

This argument is grounded in personal and social, as well as religious morality— alcohol was often seen as destroying rationality.



* See McAllister "To assist in the pictorial teaching of Temperance": the use of the Magic Lantern in the Band of Hope' in eds, L.Vogl-Beinek and R. Crangle, *Screen Culture and the Social Question 1880-1914 KINtop Studies in Early Cinema* vol. 3 (New Barnet, Herts, 2014) (124-134)