

A father writes in to the Port Arthur News Chronicle and discusses the dangers of alcohol. This article took place in December 1915, when the Temperance Movement was sweeping through the Lakehead and people were taking sides in the discussion of the "local option", the sale of alcohol within the cities.

A Soldier Father to His Soldier Son

By J. W.

This was written by a Port Arthur man who served as Captain in the Canadian militia and now has two sons in khaki overseas, with a third recently enlisted in the Ninety-Fourth.

My third boy, just eighteen, came home the other night in khaki and, giving the correct military salute to the old captain, says, "how do you like me now?" and I says truthfully I never saw you looking better, and I braces up like the British father in "The White Feather," and gripping him by the hand, says in my best dramatic manner, learned in the old town hall when Harold Nelson spoke, "Good luck to you, my boy." His two older brothers are doing their duty in the muddy trenches holding the German war machine at bay, and he couldn't rest until he'd had a crack at it himself. And I says "go to it for you're looking like a man. There are a couple more growing up but I hope that you older fellows will have the rumpus settled long before their time comes. Your mother is right proud of you all; you were not at all times the easiest crowd for a mother to get along with, and I know she had many a troubled night over you; but it makes up for it all when you are so ready to stand by your country in her time of direct need; you'll be better citizens if you get back, and if you stay there, why, a hero's grave is some compensation for all you may suffer to get it. Never did a country do better by her soldiers than Canada is doing for her brave lads, both in outfit and pay; when she sends you out to do a man's work she gives you something near a man's pay. You've enlisted for a great purpose and there will be no fooling, like we too often used to have in the old militia camps when there was nothing to interest us but a bit of Fenian scare now and then; until Riel turned up in the northwest. Our old captain used to give us a hot lecture now and then, when we had exercised too much "personal liberty" around town the night before; and he says one day, "I don't know why it is that so many men think that when they get on the Queen's uniform it entitles them to full liberty to be as big a 'blaggard' as possible." It has always been a puzzle to me, why the soldier with death always facing him, should be known as the most reckless of human beings when he ought to be a good Christian; and indeed the Christian soldier has had a good record from the "Thundering legion of early

Christians in the old Roman army, down through Cromwell's Puritan Ironsides, Havelock's Saints, General Gordon, Stonewall Jackson and a host of our own day Y.M.C.A. and church member soldiers. I have soldiered some in my time and discovered that a soldier is only of much account in the public estimation when there is a war on. The peace soldier has the hardest time of it. There is one enemy that you will meet long before you get a crack at the Germans, and that is "booze," the especial enemy of soldiers and discipline. You see, there are so many really good friends at heart of the soldiers who, according to our social customs of today know of no other way to show their appreciation but by filling them up with liquor at every chance; and though war may be hell, I know from personal observation that unlimited liquor in a barracks comes in a good second. Those good but thoughtless friends will draw you into the legalized snares, the bar rooms, they will put the smuggled bottle to you, and then they will desert you when you are stripped of your uniform and sent home as "worthless." A thousand times better, my boy, to be knocked out honestly by a German bullet than by a home distilled bottle. Uniformed drunks lying around the back lanes are not conducive to good recruiting, nor are drunken rows with the police conducive to a healthy public sentiment in favor of the army. Personal freedom is a great thing and you are fighting to spread it more fully in the earth, but it must have its limits clearly defined where intoxicants are in use. If the Ninety-fourth should be with us still next summer, though of course you will all hope to be nearer the "front," we will try and give you a better town to live in by removing the public temptations that proved too much for some of the Fifty-second. Remember the example of our good king. He recognized the danger, but instead of saying, like the Czar of Russia, "You can't have any more, I say so, and my word goes," our sovereign said, "Now, boys, I'll make a bargain with you. I have been used to liquor in the house as free as milk all my life, but I'll cut it out, if you will," and he did, and every good soldier should follow his example.