

A Cure for What Ales You:

The social consequences of the Civil War and the treatment of alcoholism during
the Gilded Age

by

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Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	5
<i>Chapter One: A Village of Taverns</i>	16
<i>Chapter Two: A Cure and its Critics</i>	29
<i>Chapter Three: Temperance Town</i>	41
<i>Conclusion</i>	61

Introduction

Veterans returning home from the Civil War radically reshaped the American social and political landscape. Scores of soldiers returned to their homes and families as changed men who struggled to adapt to life in the post-Civil War world. Meghan L. Bever writes in *At War With King Alcohol: Debating drinking and masculinity in the Civil War*. “Both Union and Confederate veterans found themselves unable to readjust to civilian life. Many were financially unstable and persistently pained by physical and emotional wounds; rocky relationships with their families were often exacerbated by dependence on alcohol.”¹ The story of soldiers and their addiction to alcohol cannot always be easily defined. Likewise, many of the aftershocks of the Civil War took decades to appear and create change in the wider American society, while other symptoms were immediately present. The returning veterans also played a role in galvanizing women around the central issue of temperance, as one of the major motivation factors for national women's temperance organizations was the vulnerability of women and children at the hands of men battling alcohol addiction. In this thesis, I argue that in a radically new social landscape, veterans became the locus of change in the decades following the Civil War, which propelled the American social, medical, and political spheres forward. This process of change can be observed by studying Dr. Leslie Enraught Keeley's Gold Cure.

Keeley was a Civil War veteran who moved to the small village of Dwight, Illinois after his service in the Union Army ended in 1864. Understanding the role of the Civil War in the following decades first requires understanding the war's impact on the nation. Dwight, Illinois, was geographically distant from the battlefields of the Civil War, but nonetheless, the

¹ Megan L. Bever, *At War with King Alcohol: Debating Drinking and Masculinity in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 170.

war took a central role in the village during the early 1860s. As the editors of the local newspaper wrote in *The Dwight Star and Harold*, in the aftermath of the Civil War,

While we mourn over the awful character and natural consequences of the Rebellion, we have reason to be grateful for its happy and beneficent results. There can be no doubt that war was necessary under the circumstances, and there can be no doubt that it was necessary for this great country to purge itself of the cause of slavery, and show itself to the civilized world as the great, the glorious, the free Republic of United America.²

This statement, written years after the war, claims to have captured the spirit of the townsfolk during the lead-up to the war. Although media outlets struggle to capture the diversity of views among any population, we can still gain valuable insight into the mind of what was likely a large portion of the village. As far as we know from the news record, Dwight was a loyal Republican-oriented village, and when the government needed volunteers for the war, many in Dwight would answer the call as over one hundred men from Dwight volunteered to join the Union Army. The pre-war fervor was noted as the *Star and Harold* continued,

During this period, however, a large amount of enthusiasm was developed here, as in many other places as well; and in the years 61-62 the interest and excitement which prevailed in the town, took a definite form, when some of our citizens cheerfully gave up the pleasures of home and nobly consecrated themselves to the service of their country.³

Those willing to volunteer traveled 20 miles south to Livingston County's seat, Pontiac, Illinois, to enlist at the mustering point for the volunteer soldiers.

Like the men and women in Dwight, Keeley also sought to aid the Union army. After earning his medical degree from Rush Medical College, named after founding father and medical doctor Benjamin Rush, in 1863, Keeley joined the Union Army as an assistant surgeon. His military career began while stationed at the St. Louis, Missouri, Benton Barracks. Later, he transferred to the Army of the Cumberland field hospital. Dr. Keeley

² Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 23

³ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 23-24.

earned notoriety as a doctor for his report on the poor sanitary conditions of the field hospitals. He also took a great interest in the drinking habits of the soldiers.⁴ The large-scale consumption of alcohol that Keeley witnessed during his time as a field surgeon led him to begin researching a cure for alcoholism.⁵ Keeley's brief service in the Army ended in 1864.

The connection between Dr. Keeley and Benjamin Rush is important. Rush was a pioneer in evolving medical theories that saw alcoholism as a medical condition. As historians David K. Damkot and Elizabeth Meyer wrote, "Dr. Benjamin Rush (1810, 1814) enunciated this philosophical movement most clearly by referring to habitual overindulgence as an addiction and suggesting drinking binges were similar to symptoms of other diseases."⁶ Keeley's adoption of Rush's view would be the foundation of his Gold Cure.

The advancements in addiction research Rush made in the early 19th century coincided with a time known as the Second Great Awakening.⁷ The moral faction of the temperance movement was largely based on theological concepts formed during this period of awakening, which established alcohol consumption and addiction as a lack of a strong moral foundation. Medical doctors also signed off on the moral explanation, which directly opposed Dr. Rush's work. Keeley was not one of these doctors. Keeley added to the discourse surrounding addiction by injecting the idea that alcoholism is non-hereditary. As historian Timothy Hickman writes, "Keeley differed from many of his contemporaries, however, by arguing that habitual use was not hereditary. In 1896, he wrote that 'the true pathology of this

⁴ Malleck, Daniel J. "Keeley, Leslie Enraught (1832-1900), physician and founder of a notorious inebriety cure." American National Biography. As part of the American National Biography, author Daniel J. Malleck writes about Dr. Keeley in the entry titled *Physician and founder of a notorious inebriety cure*

⁵ April White, "Inside a Nineteenth-Century Quest to End Addiction - JSTOR DAILY," www.daily.jstor.org, December 14, 2016, <https://daily.jstor.org/inside-a-nineteenth-century-quest-to-end-addiction/>.

⁶ David K Damkot and Elizabeth Meyer, "Alcohol and Social Policy: An Historical Perspective on Evolving Intervention Strategies.," *Journal of Drug Issues* 14, no. 1 (1984): 470–90, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002204268401400119>, 484.

⁷ Berk, Leah Rae. "Temperance and Prohibition Era Propaganda: A Study in Rhetoric." Alcohol, temperance and prohibition. Accessed March 16, 2024. <https://library.brown.edu/cds/temperance/essay.html>.

disease is a craving for the drug which caused the disease and poisoning by the drug.”⁸ It is clear that Keeley had a difference in opinion from those who supported the moral view towards alcoholism, and his desire to find the root cause of the disease began during his service in the Civil War.

As the Confederacy surrendered in 1865 and the war concluded, the soldiers who survived the war returned home. Soldiers from Dwight had fought bravely for the 129th Illinois Volunteer Regiment, as they eventually became part of Sherman's army during his siege of Atlanta.⁹ Meanwhile, locals rallied on the homefront and helped however they could. Many in Dwight had worked to organize and send rations and livestock to the Union army. With the war now over, Dwight would welcome back many of those who had gone away to fight and an influx of veterans from other parts of the country who had moved to Dwight.

One of the reasons veterans decided to move to Dwight was that the local economy was in good shape. Illinois farmers and miners adopted mechanized technology during the war and increased crop yields. This increased productivity meant that the Dwight stop on the Chicago & Alton railroad was more important than ever.¹⁰ In addition to the windfall created by the increased supply of crops, raw materials, and shipping-related business, Dwight was flooded with greenbacks from returning soldiers.¹¹

The year 1866 also welcomed back many former soldiers, one of whom was Dr. Keeley, as he took a job as the resident surgeon for the Chicago and Alton Railroad. When he arrived in Dwight, Keeley established his medical practice in the office space above Seymour's Drug Store, a local business on the main downtown road that runs alongside the Chicago & Alton Railroad. From his office, he worked as a local physician as well as a

⁸ Timothy A. Hickman, “Keeping Secrets: Leslie E. Keeley, the Gold Cure and the 19th-Century Neuroscience of Addiction,” *Addiction* 113, no. 9 (June 15, 2018): 1739–49, <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.14222>, 1741,

⁹ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 28

¹⁰ Gene V. Glendinning, *The Chicago & Alton Railroad: The Only Way*, 61-65.

¹¹ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 29

“horse and buggy” doctor.¹² His medical route covered over 400 square miles as he made routine trips to the nearby towns. Keeley also met his later business partner, chemist John R. Oughton, who worked for Seymour’s Drug Store. Meanwhile, the large and growing population of returning veterans dramatically impacted the village of Dwight.

Keeley was not immune from the life-consuming effects of alcohol. He was not a drinker like many veterans; instead, he spent his life developing and administering a cure to treat the rampant disease of alcoholism that had surged in the aftermath of the Civil War. A new battle was now beginning to take place between Keeley and morally-minded temperance reformers. These reformers attempted to continue the strategy they had used in the pre-war period. “Reformers worried about the physical and moral health of the men, and they returned to their antebellum strategy of moral suasion to convince soldiers that it was in their best interest (practically and eternally) to stop drinking.”¹³ Keeley would often find himself in opposition with the Women’s Christian Temperance Union who were motivated by a moral view of addiction and sought to solve alcohol via national and local legislation. These oppositional views towards temperance occurred as Keeley found himself engaged in a sectarian conflict between regular and irregular doctors.

Keeley may have had a progressive view of alcoholism for his time, but his business and marketing practices portray a man motivated by a complex combination of factors. His business practices show that his desire to treat patients only ran as deep as the patient's ability to pay for his Gold Cure. Keeley shared many similarities to Gilded Age entrepreneurs who built their fortunes selling commodities in high demand in an increasingly industrial society. The drive for profit is made clear by how Keeley operated within the network of true

¹² “Keeley Celebration Causes Old Timers to Reminisce Over Early Institute Days ,” *Dwight Star and Herald* , August 4, 1939.

¹³ Bever, *At War with King Alcohol*, 7

believers he established in the 1890s to deal with the rapid success of his cure. While there was a grassroots element to the Keeley-based social groups, the leaders had one focus: to make sure to raise as much money as possible to buy the cure. Keeley's marketing strategies carefully portrayed himself as a man of both science and religion. These practices would cause problems for Keeley during his medical career, but they would also help Keeley raise his profile as a doctor with an invaluable cure that appealed to anyone who saw alcoholism as a problem in society. Be it a disease or a moral failing, Keeley's cure did not discriminate.

The story of Keeley and Dwight is the story of America in the aftermath of the Civil War. Keeley's Gold Cure tells more than just the local history of a small village in rural Illinois. It shows how veterans returning home with new addictions in the aftermath of the Civil War shaped the local and national social consciousness, which in turn brought new medical solutions to addiction treatment and provided a galvanizing issue for women to organize around. This unique moment in American history shows how a distinct set of legacies from the Civil War permeated through society, finding a central figure to fixate on. There was a brief but powerful moment in which the social, medical, political, and economic forces all converged upon Dr. Leslie E. Keeley and the small village of Dwight.

The decades I will focus on span from the 1870s to the 1890s, ultimately ending with Keeley's death in 1900. I will contextualize Keeley's story alongside local politics and how national temperance organizations, specifically Francis Willard and the Women's Christian Temperance Union to show the full social landscape and how Keeley became a formidable figure on a national stage. There will be a focus on the impact of Keeley's cure and the first Keeley Institute on local politics and economic realities in Dwight, Illinois. Adding the local history of Dwight into the larger story surrounding Keeley's cure demonstrates the symbiotic

relationship between the small village and the Keeley Gold Cure. A village, after all, is more than just a number of streets and buildings. The lives of the people of Dwight were inextricably linked to Keeley, and their story remains as relevant today as it was in 1891, when the village became known worldwide as the heart of the temperance movement.

Each chapter will focus on Keeley's circumstances in a national and local setting. In chapter one, I will write about the 1870s and describe the development of the Keeley Gold Cure and the national forces that acted upon Dwight. The national temperance movement had many organizations eager to make inroads into local communities to enact laws that banned the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages instead of solely focusing on federal temperance law. Dwight was one of the local communities that found itself at the cross section of national and local influence. The political struggle to win over the village board in the yearly elections was the mission for temperance and non-temperance-minded people in the 1870s. The rising temperance excitement coincided with Keeley's announcement about his cure in 1879.

However, the 1880s were, in some ways, the defining years of Keeley and his cure. In chapter two, I will write about how the 1880s were full of challenges that tested Keeley's constitution and his ability to respond to criticisms from the medical establishment. Many of these persistent questions targeted the scientific theories that Keeley used to develop his cure and his advertising practices. The 1880s were less active in some regards than the 1870s or 1890s, but the decade brought challenges that helped Keeley develop into a formidable figure when his chance to break onto the national stage arose.

In chapter three, I will write about how the 1890s show Keeley's unique ability to harness disparate social forces as he attempted to redirect religious and secular concerns

surrounding alcoholism to his newly constructed ideology of Keeleyism. Keeleyism answers the question of addiction with medical solutions instead of moral condemnations and legal pursuits. Through his network of supporters in the Keeley League, Keeley Womens Auxiliary League, and his magazine *The Banner of Gold*, Keeley became the central figure in an ideology that appealed to many on the grounds of religion, science, and general temperance. The small village doctor soon became one of the most famous physicians in the world, as his cure was taken by tens of thousands and embraced as a solution to alcoholism by many thousands more.

Several historians have done an excellent job detailing the story of Keeley and his institute. Historian William White offers an in-depth analysis of the Keeley Institute in his book *Slaying the Dragon: The history of addiction treatment in America*.¹⁴ White approaches Dr. Keeley by analyzing the Gold Cure and the medical community's response to his Keeley Institutes. White describes the development and establishment of the Keeley Institute in Dwight and the franchise network that Keeley created in the 1890s. Another historian I turned to is Timothy Hickman, who analyzes Keeley through medical and business lenses, providing valuable insight into contextualizing the multifaceted concerns of Dr. Keeley. Hickman documented the establishment of the London Keeley Institute in his work '*We Belt the World*': *Dr. Leslie E. Keeley's 'Gold Cure' and the Medicalization of Addiction in 1890s London*.¹⁵ I hope to build upon the work of these two historians by adding the social context of national and local history.

¹⁴ William L. White, "Chapter Seven Franchising Addiction Treatment: The Keeley Institutes," essay, in *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America* (Bloomington, IL: Chestnut Health Systems/Lighthouse Institute, 2014)

¹⁵ Timothy A. Hickman, "'We Belt the World': Dr. Leslie E. Keeley's 'Gold Cure' and the Medicalization of Addiction in 1890s London," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 95, no. 2 (2021): 198–226, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.2021.0030>

In the larger historical context of the social fallout of the Civil War, I will use a combination of local and national history to contextualize Dr. Keeley and his controversial cure for inebriety in the full scope of the American social landscape. For the local history, I will turn to a combination of local newspaper records and firsthand accounts. The firsthand accounts will come from those close to Keeley and Keeley himself. The local social and political context in which Keeley existed during the formative years of his cure is crucial to understanding his motivations once he enters the national conversation. For national history, I will use two historical works as the backdrop to understanding the social context of Keeley. Megan L. Bever's *At War With King Alcohol: Debating drinking and masculinity in the Civil War* and Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*.

I will build upon the final conclusions of Bever's historical analysis of alcohol in the context of the Civil War, which provides crucial insight into how the social aspects of war led to many soldiers developing drinking habits. As Bever wrote, "Both Union and Confederate medical officials believed that liquor acted medicinally to stimulate men against illness and battle wounds, and their ideas about liquor's usefulness expanded beyond the medical departments and encouraged officers to issue rations to stave off the effects of exposure and fatigue."¹⁶

While these factors contributed to the increased consumption of alcohol, I will focus more on the role alcohol played in soldiers' self-medication for the physical and mental wounds they developed during the war. Many of these habits deeply intertwined military service and masculinity with alcohol consumption in a way that directly opposed the temperance reformers' moral views. The confrontation between soldiers and these "middle-class values" also extended into how soldiers from various regions of the nation

¹⁶ Bever, *At War with King Alcohol*, 14

found common ground when celebrating holidays.¹⁷ The conflicting values between soldiers from different cultures within America and soldiers who were first-generation immigrants all found common ground in drinking alcohol.

Additionally, the gap between available professional medical care and the number of wounded men meant soldiers had to find alternative solutions; as Bever states, “Wounds were horrific, childhood diseases ran rampant through the camps, and, especially early in the war, field hospitals were incapable of providing adequate care. Left to their own devices, many soldiers and officers resorted to folk remedies, and liquor played a vital part in the process.”¹⁸ While physical wounds were certainly a frequent occurrence, they were not the only injury soldiers were using alcohol to medicate. Bever also provides an analysis of the mental and emotional maladies that alcohol was used to treat. “Plenty of soldiers, however, expanded the uses of alcohol beyond the military’s policies to treat themselves for depression. Severe homesickness—known more commonly as “nostalgia”—plagued soldiers in both armies, often causing physical symptoms that accompanied mental distress.”¹⁹ Keeley can be seen as taking up the story where Megan L. Bever ended *At war with king alcohol: Debating drinking and masculinity in the Civil War*. As a field doctor in the war, Keeley was familiar with the medical overuse of alcohol and opiates to treat the devastating effects of war, from mental issues to physical wounds. The legacy of the war and scores of veterans followed Keeley to his new home in the village of Dwight. Keeley may have witnessed the very same men he treated consuming alcohol and opiates at an ever-increasing pace during the war.

Bever’s *At War With King Alcohol* gives a detailed analysis of the relationship between soldiers and alcohol up until the end of the Civil War. The post-war landscape will be

¹⁷ Bever, *At War with King Alcohol*, 36

¹⁸ Bever, *At War with King Alcohol*, 41

¹⁹ Bever, *At War with King Alcohol*, 43

contextualized by analyzing the argument laid out in *This Republic of Suffering*. Drew Gilpin Faust argues that the Civil War radically reshaped Americans' relationship with death, and with this new dynamic emerged a shared republic of suffering that had social, political, and philosophical consequences in the decades following the Civil War.²⁰ As Faust states,

Americans had to identify—find, invent, create—the means and mechanisms to manage more than half a million dead: their deaths, their bodies, their loss. How they accomplished this task reshaped their individual lives—and deaths—at the same time that it redefined their nation and their culture. The work of death was Civil War America's most fundamental and most demanding undertaking.²¹

Faust places Americans processing the death that occurred during the war as the locus of change in post-war America. I will challenge this as I argue that the locus of change resided within the soldiers who returned from the battlefield. More specifically, how soldiers' alcohol consumption in post-war America led to many consequences that are not immediately apparent but, once uncovered, become an undeniable motor of social, political, and philosophical change.

I do not mean to minimize the impact death may have had on any individual who suffered a great personal loss during the combat of the Civil War. Instead, by focusing on the impact veterans had on society, I hope to highlight the long-term effects that war brought, and the driver of change was not the public struggling to rationalize and mourn the dead. The transformation of American society in the late nineteenth-century Gilded Age was propelled by veterans who returned home from battle as new men with new addictions and the invisible scars of war.

²⁰ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 7-8.

²¹ Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 10.

Chapter One

A Village of Taverns

The village of Dwight, which would eventually become emblematic of the temperance movement, had become an essential local economic hub, yet downtown Dwight was nothing more than a few dirt roads that ran parallel to the railroad. The local economy reflected the state of affairs in Dwight, as saloons outnumbered medical, legal, and spiritual services. Local newspaper editors Dustin & Wassell write, “This year [1875-76] Dwight had one preacher to every 350 inhabitants, one doctor to every 320, one lawyer to every 350, and one saloon to every 250.”²² Copious amounts of alcohol were flowing through the streets and coursing through the veins of Dwight. The arguments in favor of licensing saloons were rooted in economic pragmatism. Dwight was a central hub for the mining towns in the nearby area. Farmers and miners from towns like Braidwood and Coal City would travel to the train station to ship their goods to Chicago and St. Louis. The businesses could be very profitable with this increased demand from folks from out of town and locals. At this time in Dwight, the economic concerns outweigh the concerns over alcohol.

Local temperance speaker and possible early cure collaborator,²³ Frederick B. Hargreaves, wrote, “There were plenty of saloons In those days, and most of them were of a vicious character. Gambling was of public notoriety, doping and slugging in saloons was of frequent occurrence, and all forms of vice flourished.”²⁴ The increased alcohol consumption

²² Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 51

²³ William L. White, “Chapter Seven Franchising Addiction Treatment: The Keeley Institutes,” essay, in *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America* (Bloomington, IL: Chestnut Health Systems/Lighthouse Institute, 2014), 1–17, 13.

²⁴ Fred B. Hargreaves, *Then and Now: Being a History of Dwight, Illinois from 1853 to 1908* (Fred B. Hargreaves, 1908), 49. The accounts of the Keeley cure in this work are not reliable enough to use as a reference for the actual development of the cure. Keeley and Hargreaves relationship deteriorated before the cure was financially successful. His recollection of the development would later be challenged in a 1902 court case in

in Dwight occurred between the 1860s and the 1870s. Hargreaves also wrote about the general state of violence that found its way into the public streets and the unsafe conditions that caused the local women to fear walking unescorted in the streets after the sun had set and the other shops had closed their doors repeatedly. Dwight was plagued by nefarious saloon keepers who would doctor their supply of alcohol with hidden drugs to increase the intoxicating effect of their whiskey and encourage regular patrons to liquor up unknown customers to rob them of their valuables.²⁵

This increased consumption made Dwight fairly representative of larger national trends, which had been in motion since the early 19th century. At the national level, the average American consumed 7.1 gallons of alcohol per year in 1830.²⁶ However, by the end of the 1860s, alcohol consumption had grown to 9.8 gallons per person per year.²⁷ Several factors could be contributing to the increasing consumption. One of the most significant contributing factors to the increased alcohol consumption was the thousands of war veterans who had fought in a new kind of war. Some of the blame could be that alcohol was consumed because it was believed to have had medicinal uses or that purchasing alcohol and supporting local industry made it a profoundly patriotic activity. Another reason was that Americans shared common social practices, one of which was that buying someone a drink or having a drink with someone was seen as a marker of hospitality.²⁸ However, the far more pressing reason was due to the mechanization of fighting during the Civil War, which made the war

which he was found to be misrepresenting his importance to the development of the cure. However, I find his descriptions of daily life in Dwight to be useful in depicting how temperance-minded people viewed this period of Dwight's history.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Jane O'Brien, "The Time When Americans Drank All Day Long," BBC News, March 9, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31741615>.

²⁷ Aaron O'Neill, "United States: Alcohol Consumption per Capita 1850-2013," Statista, June 21, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1081880/us-alcohol-consumption-per-person-per-year/>.

²⁸ Carol Mattingly, *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001), 13.

one of the bloodiest conflicts in Western history. The bloodshed hid the unseen mental damage that was done to those lucky enough to survive the war. While there were various social contributors, the Civil War was a major cause of the increased consumption.

Research today shows that there is a strong connection between increased alcohol consumption to self-medicate symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in military veterans with combat experience. The research shows that combat veterans have a higher rate of alcohol consumption than other cohorts with the same PTSD symptoms.²⁹ I do not mean to inject modern science into a historical analysis of medicine in the 19th century, but the addition of modern science gives a much-needed insight into the problem that was making its presence known, even if the doctors of the time were unfamiliar with modern science. With the lack of medical advancements in the immediate aftermath of the war, alcoholism was seen as a moral issue to be dealt with by legislating a moral solution.

The elections of 1869 gave the temperance movement hope. Temperance candidates were able to win several seats in the local Dwight elections. The village quickly passed one of the initial governing documents, *the Princeton Charter*. The charter featured four sections that took a strong-handed approach to alcohol. The first section sought to regulate the sale of alcohol by punishing those who sold alcohol in all its various forms. Once someone violated the village ordinance, they would be subject to the legal penalty, which ranged from fines to imprisonment.³⁰ Dwight was not yet ready for such a strong-armed approach to alcohol as the local newspaper editors would later say about the initial 1869 temperance laws, “The ordinance shows the radical nature of a temperance reform that sought to be accomplished by

²⁹ Shannon M. Blakey, Jack Tsai, and Eric B. Elbogen, “Drinking to Cope with Posttraumatic Stress: A Nationally Representative Study of Men with and without Military Combat Experience,” *Journal of Dual Diagnosis* 17, no. 2 (March 17, 2021): 101–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15504263.2021.1891360>.

³⁰ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 51

resorting to legal methods. Not only the selling but the giving away of intoxicants to be used as beverages were prohibited by the enactment of heavy penalties for so doing.”³¹ The extreme measures taken by the village board would have consequences in the following elections.

The elections of 1870 and 1871 would usher in a new set of leaders for Dwight, as the temperance movement political leaders in Dwight would lose to the Anti-Princeton Charter Party. To some, the election of 1869 reflected a short-term impulse and not a committed determination to live by the values of the temperance movement.

Prohibition legislation had not proved a success. This was not to be attributed to a lack of reasonable effort on the part of those selected to lead in the battle or to their incompetency, but to the fact that the bulk of the community had, for a year or two preceding, acted more from impulse than from any well-settled principles concerning prohibition as the only method that promises to relieve a suffering people from the curse of drunkenness, and the disorders and oppressive taxation that always attend the traffic in intoxicating drinks.³²

The next three election cycles would show inconsistent support for temperance movement policies. Temperance figures remained competitive in elections, but even when victorious, they felt unable to pass strong temperance policies due to a lack of support from most of the public. Instead, the village board and the citizens generally favored a regulatory approach and would advocate for and implement a policy that began selling alcohol licenses to saloons and merchants. By 1873, all remnants of *the Princeton Charter* had been eliminated from Dwight, and the Anti-Princeton Charter party would now just be referred to as the license ticket.³³

Even though the temperance movement in Dwight had slightly fallen in popularity, a devoted group of supporters maintained social relevance during the expansion of alcohol

³¹ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 38

³² Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 39

³³ *Ibid*, 42

sales. The promise of a cure for alcoholism gave Keeley some helpful supporters in the local population, especially among the religiously inspired, temperance-minded members of Dwight. Even if Keeley and religiously motivated temperance figures held different views towards the cause and solution of alcoholism, they shared a common enemy, which, in this case, was enough to form a coalition to pursue a unified goal.

Social gatherings and their contribution to the Gold Cure

Socially, Keeley was adept at making himself an essential member of Dwight society. As many would later recall, Keeley was a charismatic gentleman with the Irish gift of the gab. Socially, Keeley spent his free time in the 1870s as a member of a local literary club with friend, and prominent Dwight local Samuel Thornton Kemeys (S.T.K.) Prime, who was a religiously devout, local-temperance supporter. Prime would also become an election field reporter and editor of agricultural news for *The Chicago Tribune* in 1891.³⁴ Keeley was part of many lively round table discussions at a local hotel called The McPherson House. The group of young, self-described capitalists would make wagers on local events, often paying their debts by hosting oyster dinners for their friends at the McPherson House. One of the locals was a banker and a future business partner named Curtis J. Judd. Judd and Keeley found themselves compatible in many ways; their business and political views matched the men's views towards alcohol.³⁵

Another supporter was Frederick B. Hargreaves. Hargreaves was a former minister who had become a relatively popular temperance lecturer. During the weaning support of temperance in the early 1870s, Hargreaves supported Keeley by allegedly developing what

³⁴ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 55

³⁵ Wilson Koehnlein, *The Story of Morgan's Point: A Centennial History of Dwight, Illinois* (Dwight, IL: Wilson Koehnlein, 1951), 228-229.

would later become his bi-chloride of Gold Cure. However, the exact nature of their relationship is unclear, as Hargraves's contribution to the Keeley cure would later be contested in a court of law. Hargraves even sought to undercut Keeley by selling his own Gold Cure and making claims that Keeley was not the driving force behind the cure but, instead, an opportunistic thief who used his medical background to steal Hargrave's hard work.³⁶ However, at this time, the two unassuming figures in a small village 70 miles south of Chicago could not even muster the support of a majority of Dwight's tiny population.

The forming medical establishment was moving to regulate the development of medical remedies as part of an overall move to standardize medical practices. In his book *The Non-heredity of Inebriety*, published in 1896, Keeley writes about himself as part of a group of renegade doctors in the medical field, and he embraced a tradition that included figures like Dr. Robert Koch, who discovered the bacteria that caused tuberculosis and provided a new scientific answer to a question that had previously been a mystery to the medical world.³⁷ Keeley viewed Dr. Koch's progress as representative of what he disliked about medical institutions most. "The various organizations among the medical schools formulated their creeds from dogmatic generalities rather than laws discovered from the verification of facts relating to the cause of disease."³⁸ Keeley saw himself as part of a fight against hide-bound medicine that was closed to new discoveries. Instead, he views the growing medical establishment as destructive to those on the front lines of science, including his very own pursuit to cure alcoholism. The medical establishment would not have a rosy view of Keeley, as the methods in which Keeley operated broke many of the new medical creeds, or as Keeley might see them, dogmas.

³⁶ Fred B. Hargreaves, *Then and Now: Being a History of Dwight, Illinois from 1853 to 1908*, 87

³⁷ Leslie E Keeley, *The Non-Heredity of Inebriety* (Scott, Foresman & Company, 1896), 20.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 33

The shroud of secrecy Keeley draped over his cure makes the early experimentation years difficult to track and leaves a void of exact dates, aside from the general decade in which the events took place. According to William White, who interviewed those who were close to Keeley at this time. “The first people exposed to the Keeley cure were a few local alcoholics who were considered ‘bums’ by most of the local folk in Dwight.”³⁹ The nameless “bums” that Dr. Keeley and Hargreaves tested on gave them some excitement about the potential cure, and at some point, they tried to cure a local business owner. Author April White writes, “One of the first patients to receive Dr. Keeley’s new treatment was Pat Conafry, a well-known saloon keeper in Dwight. After a few days of taking a mysterious tonic, Conafry lost his taste for liquor. After a week, he could not drink it at all, but soon thereafter, he got, in Hargreaves’s words, ‘gloriously drunk’ and refused any more medication.”⁴⁰ While the experiment resulted in the patient refusing medication and returning to their alcohol consumption, Dr. Keeley and Hargreaves considered the result of the experiment to be quite successful. White continues by telling of another test subject that was given the cure, this time in the form of a pill: “They also tested a pill that contained gold. Of the patient who received that, Hargreaves recalled, they ‘came near killing the poor fellow.’”⁴¹ The potential harm to his subjects seems to have been only a minor concern to Keeley, as the promise of a cure for alcoholism was too alluring for him to consider the damage to his test subjects.

Temperance Civil Society and Activism

³⁹ William L. White, “Chapter Seven Franchising Addiction Treatment: The Keeley Institutes,” essay, in *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America* (Bloomington, IL: Chestnut Health Systems/Lighthouse Institute, 2014), 1–17, 2.

⁴⁰ April White, “Inside a Nineteenth-Century Quest to End Addiction

⁴¹ Ibid

With so many saloons in Dwight at this time, it may be hard to imagine that there was a rising prohibition and temperance movement brewing. Still, there was a core of committed believers locally and nationally who were hard at work. These social groups would operate in local chapters as part of larger national organizations to provide members with a network of resources that surpassed what an individual working on a local level could achieve on their own. In 1878, two temperance-aligned social clubs would establish themselves as important groups in Dwight. The Good Templars, a radical international temperance group, and the Red Ribbon Club, a local organization that would advocate for temperance policies, opened chapters in Dwight.⁴² The Red Ribbon club was able to get over 800 people to sign their temperance pledge, although, as Hargreaves writes, “most of these were old temperance people.”⁴³ The temperance pledge was only part of the Red Ribbon Club's approach. Hargreaves writes that the club made rapid progress in 1878 and established a weekly meeting place where temperance education and planning were carried out. As the number of attendees grew, these gatherings turned into a social function to be patronized in and of itself.⁴⁴ With the skyrocketing popularity of the Red Ribbon Club, other temperance organizations also saw the opportunity to enshrine themselves as local institutions.

The Good Templars were highly religious in their approach to temperance, and their ultimate goal in the United States was to pass a constitutional amendment banning the sale and consumption of alcohol.⁴⁵ There were two criteria that all members had to meet: a belief in God and that they take the Templars' lifelong pledge. The pledge read, "No member shall make, buy, sell, use, furnish, or cause to be furnished to others, as a beverage, any spirituous

⁴² Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 59

⁴³ Fred B. Hargreaves, *Then and Now: Being a History of Dwight, Illinois from 1853 to 1908* (Fred B. Hargreaves, 1908), 54.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ William Watson Turnbull, *The Good Templars: A History of the Rise and Progress of the Independent Order of Good Templars* (Arlington, MA: I.O.G.T., 1901), 6.

or malt liquors, wine or cider; and every member shall discountenance the manufacture, sale, and use thereof in all proper ways.⁴⁶ Temperance groups were highly aware that elections were only one way to measure success. Increasing their social footprint would inevitably lead to future success at the ballot box, and the long-term plan of increased social relevance was working. Over the next few years, these clubs would increasingly take overt political and legal action to further the cause of temperance. As the 1870s drew to a close, more temperance groups established themselves in Dwight.

1879 brought in the Women's Christian Temperance Movement (W.C.T.U.), an overtly political group run by women dedicated to the international temperance movement, to the political scene in Dwight.⁴⁷ W.C.T.U. was established in 1874 in Cleveland, Ohio. The organization planned to charter local groups that would take part in the national fight for prohibition by forming their local campaigns according to what they thought would be most persuasive in their communities.⁴⁸ Like the Good Templars, the W.C.T.U. had national ambitions, but W.C.T.U. had a distinct vision that sought to make local progress. As a women's group, the W.C.T.U. was more crucial in some ways than the Good Templars or Red Ribbon Club. Members of the Templars and the Red Ribbon Club could directly impact the political mechanisms in their societies; women, on the other hand, lacked voting rights. This lack of political agency forced women to find creative ways to impact their governments. This alternative approach was essential in the North, as the North was generally more wealthy and less fervently religious than the South. Some branches would focus on inserting scientific temperance curricula into their local education systems, while others would focus on directly

⁴⁶ William Watson Turnbull, *The Good Templars: A History of the Rise and Progress of the Independent Order of Good Templars* (Arlington, MA: I.O.G.T., 1901), 6.

⁴⁷ Ian Tyrrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 2.

⁴⁸ W. J. Rorabaugh, *Prohibition: A Very Short Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 30.

lobbying legislators.⁴⁹ As the president of the W.C.T.U. in 1879, Francis Willard popularized the motto “Do Everything.” By having each branch focus on what was most important to them, the total would amount to an energetic and passionate movement. The timing was right: women nationwide had begun to galvanize around the issue of temperance.

Keeley shared a concern for the social blight caused by alcohol consumption but broke from the temperance movement as he favored non-legal solutions to the issue of inebriety. Keeley saw the solution to alcohol consumption as the general uplifting and sanitation of society, as opposed to governmental interventions.⁵⁰ Temperance groups like The Good Templars were much more religiously minded. Their fight was a kind of holy war against the sinful nature of alcohol consumption, and their goals reflected their desire to purge society of the sin of alcohol. While Keeley and The Good Templars mainly focused on the effects of alcohol on men and their ability to lead an upstanding life or holy life, the Women’s Christian Temperance Movement promoted the cause from a unique perspective that centered the concerns of women.

Keeley, on the other hand, sees a man’s inebriety as a medical condition that causes the man to lack the ability to carry out his societal role. W.C.T.U. held a very different view. In their view, a man’s consumption of alcohol was symbolic of the unique threat women and children faced from the legal apparatus as well as economic realities that made them vulnerable to a man’s consumption. Women's rights were quite limited in the legal realm at this point in American history. One of these limitations would be the ability of women to have an independent financial life separate from their husbands. As Carol Mattingly pointed out, “When women married, their personal property, and to differing extents their real property,

⁴⁹ Ibid, 31

⁵⁰ Leslie E Keeley, *The Non-Heredit of Inebriety* (Scott, Foresman & Company, 1896), 325-326.

their persons, their labor, and their children came under the ownership of their husbands.⁵¹”

For many women, temperance was a vehicle to advocate on behalf of their legal vulnerability caused by their husbands' alcohol consumption presented a problematic reality. Women in Dwight were not immune from this reality, and the flexibility of a group like W.C.T.U. meant that Dwight's women had the agency to pursue these issues as they saw fit.

Another crucial component of the national W.C.T.U. was the concern surrounding the survivors of the Civil War. Veterans returning home from the war were listed in the very first item of the national W.C.T.U. charter. “The war between the states had crippled practically all previous temperance advance and, in addition, had fastened drinking habits on vast numbers of returned veterans.”⁵² The impact of the returning veterans highlights a blind spot that society sometimes has on the realities of war. The fact that most of the men who were consuming alcohol and falling victim to addiction had served during the Civil War was an unpleasant truth. 2.1 million men in the North and South had enlisted to fight in the Civil War.⁵³ While many died in the Civil War, the majority of men returned to their wives as changed men.

Dwight's W.C.T.U. chapter focused on social influence and used public meeting spaces to influence their community. When they arrived in 1879, the existing temperance clubs received them warmly and established a plan of attack. Their joint effort ushered in new conversations in the winter of 1879. They were also asking the larger question of how to create a society without alcohol. Dwight was a bit of a unique village in a northern state. The community was largely made up of first-generation Irish Americans and Irish immigrants.

⁵¹ Carol Mattingly, *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric*, 14.

⁵² Helen E. Tyler, *Where Prayer and Purpose Meet: The WCTU Story, 1874-1949* (Evanston, IL: Signal Press, 1949), 17.

⁵³ Aaron O'Neill, “U.S Civil War Army Sizes 1861-1865,” Statista, February 2, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1009782/total-army-size-american-civil-war-1861-1865/>.

One of the reasons for this is the desire to overcome the “drunken paddy” stereotype that had persisted in the popular imagination.⁵⁴ The winter of 1879 was the start of a new social force. As Dustin & Wassell write, “The discussions and addresses during the winter of 1879 will probably never be forgotten. The entire community was aroused upon the question of temperance as never before.⁵⁵” The social forces brewing in Dwight since the late 1860s had matured into a movement that was ready to take command.

In 1879, the temperance party won a majority in the village's election for the first time in a decade. This time, the hearts of the village were won over by the excitement of temperance. The excitement came with popular support for probationary legislation that had eluded the temperance party in earlier victories. As Dustin & Wassell write, “There was a general feeling that at last the dark night of drunkenness had disappeared and the day of prohibition had dawned and that it would be a long time before its sun would set.”⁵⁶ The newly elected board president, David McWilliams, would be given the task of enacting a village prohibition. While the support of the community was much higher than at any previous time, there was still a fair amount of hesitancy to push a village that had legal sales and consumption of alcohol for years beyond the limits of their support.

The social and political forces that would ultimately lead to the winter of 1879 began much earlier and came from many different people and organizations. At first, a minority of the village remained committed to their long-term goals by keeping the dwindling flame alive. Figures like Frederick B. Hargreaves and Dr. Keeley would continue their work, even as public support seemed to diminish, and their unconventional testing methods earned the ire of the medical establishment. By the mid-1870s, as Dwight was embracing the sale and

⁵⁴ Ibid, 34

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid

consumption of alcohol, nationally formulated agendas that would empower local communities to take the initiative to shape their liquor laws. The Good Templars and the Women's Christian Temperance Movement were prime examples of national and international organizations that sought to make an impact by altering the course of local politics. While the events in a small village's gathering spaces may seem personal, there was a concerted effort to make local politics the battleground for national issues. In this way, Dwight is representative of the larger national trends that became common practice in the 1870s as the returning soldiers made the Dwight that Dr. Keeley moved to in the aftermath of the Civil War a village of many taverns and saloons. Veterans used these local watering holes as meeting places to bond with fellow war veterans who had lived through the same traumatic event.

Chapter Two

A Cure and its Critics

During the temperance craze of 1879, Keeley announced that he had successfully developed a cure for alcoholism. With the help of his brother-in-law Curtis J. Judd and chemist John R. Oughton, Keeley promptly opened up the first iteration of The Keeley Institute. The timing of the breakthrough in research and the announcement of his cure matches perfectly with the rise of temperance and an unstoppable social force. Without more documentation of the cure, it is impossible to know what led to this being the moment the cure had been discovered. Some will see this as a fateful moment when the stars aligned for Keeley and the temperance movement. Others may see this as a calculated move on Keeley's part to harness that rising energy of temperance. Regardless, the cure can be seen as a physical manifestation of the rise of the temperance movement in the 1870s.

During this point in Dwight's history, the village was being affected by a national-level movement. Still, the events of the 1880s would drive towards upending this and, by the 1890s, make Dwight the central hub for national and international temperance attention, as some would begin to refer to it as the Jerusalem of the temperance movement. In the 1880s, Dwight began the transformation from a village of taverns to a village that embraced temperance. The 80s were a challenging decade for Keeley, but a decade that was in many ways crucial for the long-term success of the Keeley Cure.

Keeley appeared to have the wind in his sails as he entered the 1880s, but the optimism would soon prove to have been shortsighted. The temperance question in Dwight was put to rest by the election of temperance political leaders who would hold office for the

remainder of the century. This decade was not nearly as stable for Keeley. The 1880s were a decade of complications as he faced several hurdles that hindered the growth of the Keeley Institute. His medical license was revoked by the state of Illinois early in the decade due to his advertising strategies. This opposition from the medical establishment continued as Keeley became seen as a quack who was exploiting the medical illiteracy of the general population. Doctors were concerned with the contents of the cure and the lack of transparency that came with Keeley's insistence on keeping the formula a secret. They were justified in this concern as the first formulation led to many adverse reactions in Keeley patients. Even Keeley was alarmed by this and decided to reformulate the cure to avoid further harm. Needless to say, the 1880s were a difficult time but a necessary time, as responding to the challenges and pointed questions from the medical establishment made Keeley a much stronger version of himself by the end of the decade.

The medical establishment's first point of contention with Keeley was the medical science behind his cure. The medical theory behind the Keeley bi-chloride of Gold Cure was homeopathy. Today, homeopathy is still a contentiously debated field of medical science, and during the 1870s, many doctors believed the theory held scientific merit. German doctor Samuel Hahnemann founded the study of homeopathy in the early 19th century. His theory stems from the idea that an illness or disease can be treated by a substance that produces similar but less severe, symptoms in a healthy individual. This practice would permeate through the medical world with the slogan "like cures like."⁵⁷ Critics of the idea were not hard to find. The medical establishment found homeopathy to be dubious. The difference between homeopaths and regular doctors was not just the question of how to effectively medicate a symptom. Homeopaths' approach to patient care was fundamentally different from that of

⁵⁷ Irvine Loudon, "A Brief History of Homeopathy," *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, December 2006, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1676328/>.

regular doctors. Homeopaths like Hahnemann and Keeley were interested in a holistic approach to medicine, which meant lengthy consultations with patients where their symptoms were discussed in the context of their entire being. On the other hand, mainstream doctors felt that medical science progressed by tracing the pathology of disease by observing symptoms in patients and performing autopsies to understand the clinico-pathological correlation. In other words, regular doctors were more concerned with making concrete observations connecting symptoms with the cause of death, while homeopaths were more concerned with understanding the symptoms in the context of the entire life of the patient.

One of the main techniques behind homeopathy is the administration of diluted tonics. Hahnemann's concept was that medically valuable substances should be modified to induce the weakest possible reaction in the patient. Some of Hahnemann's cures called for a dilution of 1:100,000,000 between the active ingredient and water. Critics claimed the issue was that the dilution of the key components rendered them entirely ineffective, and the resulting solution was not medically viable. However, he would further claim if the dilution occurred during a period of vigorous shaking, the positive effects of the substance would still be transferable to the patient. This process is referred to as potentization. The foundational theories of Keeley's cure are well understood, but the recipe of the cure remains unknown.

According to a former Keeley franchise operator, the cure was a concoction of known homeopathic substances. The former Keeley physician released a booklet after the closure of his branch that claims the cure consisted of 30 grams of Gold and sodium chloride, 4 grams of strychnine nitrate, 1 gram of atropine sulfate, 2 ounces glycerine, and 16 ounces of extract of cinchona. However, a chemical analysis by an anonymous British chemist found the chemical composition of the cure to be about 61 percent water, 6 percent sugar and mineral salts, and a

little over 27 percent alcohol.⁵⁸ Even with these potential recipes, it is impossible to say with any certainty what the Keeley formulation was, as he contested the results of any chemical analysis. What is clear is that the medical foundation of the Keeley Gold Cure was indeed homeopathy.

In *The Non-heredity of Inebriety*, published in 1896, Keeley discusses his cure in the medical debate surrounding homeopathy. His book lays out the medical theories behind his cure, theories which he intends to use to convince a medical and temperance audience of his cure's validity. In his view, the regular doctors were becoming dogmatic and attempting to entrench their opinions as the only acceptable medical theories. Keeley's challenge to forming establishments during this time is far from unwarranted. Keeley was one of many doctors who promoted the idea that alcoholism was a disease in the 19th century. Despite the pushback from regular doctors, their argument was far ahead of the establishment groups like the American Medical Association, who would not endorse the medical theory of alcohol addiction until the mid-20th century.⁵⁹ In the meantime, regular doctors would continue to see addiction as a moral failing, which left the treatment of alcoholism to either religious institutions or doctors who were willing to stray from the accepted dogmas of the regular establishment.

Alcoholism treatment facilities existed before the opening of the Keeley Institute in the 1880s. The first alcohol addiction treatment facility in America opened in Binghamton, New York, in 1864 by Dr. J. Edward Turner. The New York State Inebriate Asylum used the

⁵⁸ 1. "The Keeley 'Gold Cure' for Inebriety," *British Medical Journal* 2, no. 1645 (July 9, 1892): 85–86, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.2.1645.85>.

⁵⁹ Aug 16 and Tanya Albert Henry, "Court Listened to AMA on Defining Alcoholism as a Disease, Not a Crime," American Medical Association, August 16, 2019, <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/court-listened-ama-defining-alcoholism-disease-not-crime>.

asylum method of treatment, which was modeled after the state-run, what were then called insane asylums.⁶⁰ This approach towards treatment shared many concepts with the later Keeley Institutes but also differed greatly, as to be treated at the New York State Inebriate Asylum was essential to be incarcerated for an entire year. However, they both approached addiction as something that could be treated with medical intervention. The rules for the New York State Inebriate Asylum stated that to receive treatment at this facility, one must “ Be committed by the Courts, or sign a written contract to remain in said Asylum for one year.”⁶¹ Such a long-time requirement and legal commitment made receiving treatment a daunting task, not to mention an unappealing one.

The Keeley Institute offered a much more approachable method of treatment. According to White, “There was no confinement, and the requirement most often emphasized was the need to be in line four times a day for injections of the Keeley remedy. In between, patients were left to commune among themselves with a minimum of staff supervision.”⁶² The ease of receiving treatment was no doubt helpful to the Keeley Institute when compared to the asylum methods. The ease with which patients could come and go also helped to benefit the village of Dwight and the local businesses, especially when the Keeley Institute was at its zenith of success.

The Political and Social Context of Temperance, Religion, and Medicine

⁶⁰ William L. White, “Selected Papers of William L. White,” 2002-Addiction-Treatment-in-the-United-States, accessed January 25, 2024, 2
https://www.psychiatry.org/getattachment/b03f3cf9-2a52-47d9-82ba-d3b1bfa49ca6/ips_syllabus_2014.pdf.

⁶¹ *The Charter and By-Laws of the N.Y. State Inebriate Asylum.: Amendments of Charter and Special Acts. Rules and Regulations Adopted by the Board of Trustees* (New York: Press of Wynkoop & Hallenbeck, 113 Fulton Street., 1866).

⁶² William L. White, “Chapter Seven Franchising Addiction Treatment: The Keeley Institutes,” essay, in *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America*, 5

For all practical purposes, the political question in Dwight rests here for this thesis, and the role Dwight plays from here on out is that of a social microcosm of the larger American society and as a unique example of a commodity-based boomtown whose economy is largely affected by the Keeley Institute and the massive influx of patients that would arrive in the 1890s. The village's transformation from an alcohol-fueled den of the Devil's drink into a once again peaceful village was attributed to the implementation of strict prohibitory laws, which had been fought for by many local and national social organizations.

The political dynamics of Dwight became less tumultuous for the temperance parties in the 1880s. Despite a close election in 1880, largely due to the confidence of the temperance party, which acted as a kind of sedative to the fervor that had been building up, the temperance parties won every election in the 1880s and into the 1890s. As Hargreaves puts it,

From 1881 to 1905 temperance reigned supreme in Dwight and not only were saloons barred out and kept from doing business in any form, but it was also found possible to stop the sale of liquor in any form. The friends of temperance gained all that could be gained by the closing of the saloons and the village soon became noted for its orderly behavior and law respecting qualities.⁶³

The reason for the solidified support was part of the larger national trend towards temperance support and the importance of the Keeley Institute and the pursuit to eliminate alcoholism.

One of the reasons for this political solidification around temperance was the outside influence of newly elected W.C.T.U. president Francis Willard. As a leader, Willard brought with her new energy to the union in 1879 when she was elected as president. By all accounts, Willard was a highly charismatic leader with a magnetic personality that helped her form a core of supporters that would turn into a formidable loyal base.⁶⁴ Willard and Keeley were

⁶³ Fred B. Hargreaves, *Then and Now: Being a History of Dwight, Illinois from 1853 to 1908* (Fred B. Hargreaves, 1908), 52

⁶⁴ Helen E. Tyler, *Where Prayer and Purpose Meet: The WCTU Story, 1874-1949* (Evanston, Illinois: Signal Press, 1949), 57.

similar in this special ability, as many first-hand accounts of Keeley describe him as a charismatic figure who won over every room he was in. Both figures were able to channel their magnetic personalities towards promoting their ideological quests against the abuse of alcohol. Willard was an advocate of the complete criminalization of alcohol as a means to prevent the abuse of alcohol, and she also called attention to the fact that women were receiving abuse from their alcoholic husbands. Keeley, on the other hand, was attempting to shift the conversation from banning alcohol to curing alcoholism. In Keeley's view, the law was unable to affect real change, and the only person who had the real solutions to alcoholism was Keeley.

Willard used the 'do anything' approach, which freed up local organizations to maneuver their way around local politics, changing the conversation surrounding alcohol. New issues that had been rising in the American consciousness, such as women's suffrage and raising the marriage age for girls, were also deeply important to the do-anything platform.⁶⁵ Willard saw these issues as deeply connected.⁶⁶ However, she was also careful not to alienate the more conservative members of the W.C.T.U. This was a goal that would falter in the 1890s, but in the 1880s, the W.C.T.U. an alliance between its most liberal and its most conservative members, was holding strong due to the steadfast leadership of Willard. The leadership she exemplified during this period is also similar to the approach that Keeley was trying to take with various factions within the temperance movement.

Dwight, in the 1880s, was a Christian town and the social clubs that made temperance popular did so using moral arguments derived from the teachings of Christianity. Keeley may

⁶⁵ Baker, Jean. 2009. *Frances Willard and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (Critical Documentary Essay)*. Alexandria, VA: Alexander Street Press.
https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C4703764.

⁶⁶ Helen E. Tyler, *Where Prayer and Purpose Meet: The WCTU Story, 1874-1949* (Evanston, Illinois: Signal Press, 1949). 62

have been a man of faith, as he is often portrayed in his media profiles during the most successful years of the Keeley Institute, but he makes it clear that he believes religious or moral solutions to intemperance were entirely insufficient, even arguing briefly in his book that if he were to endorse a religious solution to alcohol he would be much more tempted to spread the ideas of Mahomet, or Muhammad as the prophet of the religion of Islam.⁶⁷ By comparing the effectiveness of Islam to the ineffectiveness of Christianity, Keeley opens up a window into how he sees religion as a mechanism to implement a moral order in society. With that in mind, it could be that Keeley found temperance organizations useful because he hoped to make use of their ability to reach a large portion of America on deeply held moral beliefs.

The launch of Keeley's cure came at a crucial time when the medical practice in Illinois was becoming an increasingly regulated field. In stark contrast to the developing regulatory practices, the pre-1877 medical world was so unregulated that almost anyone could open up a medical practice with no oversight whatsoever.⁶⁸ The days of unregulated medical practices had ended, and new legislation was enacted to remedy the uncontrolled state of medicine. The Illinois State Board of Health was established in 1877 to regulate physicians and midwives. Crucially, the board was comprised of doctors from a wide range of medical disciplines, including regular doctors and homeopaths. The motivation behind this was to prevent the idea that irregular doctors were being subjected to attacks from regular doctors. The sectarian nature of the conflict between these two medical factions was not what the state sought to regulate; instead, the state was more focused on removing doctors who were entirely unqualified to practice medicine. To obtain a medical license in Illinois, a doctor would now have to have a medical degree from a medical college in good standing.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Leslie E Keeley, *The Non-Heredit of Inebriety*, 252

⁶⁸ Sandvick, C. (2009). Enforcing Medical Licensing in Illinois: 1877-1890. *The Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 82(2), 67-74. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2701151/>

⁶⁹ Ibid

While having a medical degree was required, possessing one did not mean a doctor could escape the regulatory jurisdiction of the then-newly established board. The ambiguity of the law allowed for a large amount of discretion for the board to target doctors who were determined to be in violation of the statute and the board's code of ethics.⁷⁰ The board took issue with the advertising practices of Keeley, and with little due process, and in 1881, the Illinois State Board of Health revoked Keeley's medical license. Keeley's practices fell into one of two areas in which the Illinois State Board of Health had the authority to operate. However, Keeley also benefited from the regulatory laws. His position in society as a licensed physician gave his cure an aura of legitimacy. Even if the board had revoked his license, he would still have the appearance of a reputable medical professional.

Keeley's advertising practices were similar to those of snake oil salesmen. The grandiose claims were just the tip of the iceberg, as Keeley would even go as far as publishing fake testimonials to assure readers of the effectiveness of his cure.⁷¹ It is important to note the difference between Keeley and the run-of-the-mill snake oil salesman. Even at this early stage of the Keeley Institute, Keeley was writing about larger medical issues that were affecting society. In addition to his treatment for alcoholism, he also launched a cure for opium addiction. His cure for opium addiction was accompanied by a book he wrote about the influence of opium on American society.

Keeley's *The Morphine Eater (1881)* laid out legitimate complaints about the overuse of opiates to treat pain in the Civil War and the following years. During the Civil War, opiates were used to treat a wide range of medical conditions, ranging from gunshot wounds to

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ April White, "Inside a Nineteenth-Century Quest to End Addiction - JSTOR DAILY," www.daily.jstor.org, December 14, 2016, <https://daily.jstor.org/inside-a-nineteenth-century-quest-to-end-addiction/>.

diarrhea.⁷² After the Civil War, many doctors continued to issue prescriptions for opiates, which contributed to a health crisis among Civil War veterans.⁷³ His book made the case that medical professionals should not issue prescriptions for opiates, but he also appealed to temperance-minded people to include laws restricting opiates in their push for legislation targeting alcohol. He offered this prediction for the future to explain the magnitude of the concern he has about the potential risks of increased opiate usage. “If it increases in the next twenty-five years in the same proportion in which it has during the last quarter of a century, it will be the greatest curse of the age.”⁷⁴ Keeley's method differed from the quackery of his day because Keeley was noticing and reacting to things the medical establishment had not yet noticed or was completely ignoring. Further, unlike many snake oil salesmen, he was not selling a tonic that would cure every disease known to man; he was targeting very specific diseases. There were real issues within society that Keeley was addressing. Issues that he sincerely may have wanted to address to make the world a better place, even if, in the process of doing so he became wealthy beyond his wildest dreams.

Illinois Governor Joseph Fifer eventually restored Keeley's medical license.⁷⁵

However, The Keeley Institute was not in the clear yet. His medical license allowed him to administer his cure to patients, but administering his cure is where the next complication arose. Several patients had adverse reactions to the cure. Keeley believed this to be caused by the build-up of heavy metals in some patients' bodies; Keeley took his cure off the market in

⁷² Becky Little, “How Civil War Medicine Led to America’s First Opioid Crisis,” History.com, December 7, 2021, <https://www.history.com/news/civil-war-medicine-opioid-addiction>.

⁷³ Melissa Grafe, “The ‘Great Risk’ of ‘Opium Eating’: How Civil War-Era Doctors Reacted to Prescription Opioid Addiction,” Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library, January 12, 2020, <https://library.medicine.yale.edu/blog/great-risk-opium-eating-how-civil-war-era-doctors-reacted-prescription-opioid-addiction>.

⁷⁴ Leslie E. Keeley, *The Morphine Eater: Or, From Bondage to Freedom* (New York: Arno Press, 1981), 187.

⁷⁵ William L. White, “Chapter Seven Franchising Addiction Treatment: The Keeley Institutes,” essay, in *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America* (Bloomington, IL: Chestnut Health Systems/Lighthouse Institute, 2014), 1–17, 2.

December of 1885 to reformulate it. With the help of an unknown Irish chemist, Keeley reformulated his cure into one he believed would not lead to adverse reactions in patients. According to historian Timothy Hickman, "The company identified gold chloride as the active agent of the cure, but because of its side effects, Keeley and Oughton suspended operations in 1885. They re-formulated the medication, and in 1887, they re-launched the therapy as the "bi-chloride of gold cure."⁷⁶ This version of the cure was given to the patient in a combination of four daily shots and two doses of oral syrup. The adverse reactions caused by the earlier version of the cure are what regular doctors worried about and why they were so critical of hucksters like Keeley. As America saw itself as a land of opportunity and freedom, regulators were not able to reign in the dishonest actors in the medical marketplace.

For a doctor like Keeley, the unregulated marketplace in America was heaven. Compared to his European counterparts, he was able to operate with almost no restrictions. European governments faced the uprising of the quack beginning in the 18th century. The quack in Europe operated in much the same way that Keeley operated in 19th-century America; even their method of advertising took a similar form: "the preferred method of publicising such products was through advertisements in the ever increasing number of national and provincial newspapers."⁷⁷ The quack doctor presents many problems for society. Aside from the apparent sham medical cures and tonics they sell, they also use the growing media landscape as an outlet to act as a predatory force that takes advantage of people who are already dealing with a lack of care and financial stability. Their promises are often nothing more than false hope sold to those unable to seek legitimate medical care or those who had

⁷⁶ Timothy A. Hickman, "'We Belt the World': Dr. Leslie E. Keeley's 'Gold Cure' and the Medicalization of Addiction in 1890s London," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 95, no. 2 (2021): 198–226, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.2021.0030>, 1.

⁷⁷ Chantal Stebbings, "Tax and Quacks : The Policy of the Eighteenth-Century Medicine Stamp Duty," *Studies in the History of Tax Law* 6 (July 2013), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474200820.ch-008>, 2.

conditions for which there was no known medical solution. European nations felt that reigning in the quack was a priority, and several different methods were used to accomplish this, including regulatory taxation that made quackery unviable.⁷⁸

The 1880s challenged Keeley in many ways. The criticisms levied against him by the medical establishment and the revocation of his license set him back. However, going through these setbacks in the 1880s ultimately made Keeley a more formidable version of himself when he got his opportunity to gain recognition on a national and international stage. A strong-willed, charismatic Keeley entered the new decade with a reformulated cure, ready to face any challenge thrown at him by the medical establishment and to seize on any opportunity to make his bold claim to have the only legitimate cure for alcoholism.

⁷⁸ Chantal Stebbings, "Tax and Quacks : The Policy of the Eighteenth-Century Medicine Stamp Duty," *Studies in the History of Tax Law* 6 (July 2013), 3.

Chapter Three

Temperance Town

“The year 1891 is one which the residents will long remember. It was this year that the little prairie city sprang into prominence the world over on account of the great discovery of Dr. Leslie E. Keeley. ‘Dwight’ and ‘Keeley’ became household words and the fame of our honored townsman was great.”⁷⁹”

Patients Arrive, and Keeley’s Big Break

After reopening in 1887 with a new cure, the Keeley Institute treated a steadily increasing number of patients. The patients were diverse in occupation, ranging from self-labeled capitalists, veterans, and everything from cooks to inn-keepers. The patients were overwhelmingly male, but women were also treated in the Institute. However, aware of the social stigma women may face, Keeley limited the public exposure of the female patient's inebriety. Female patients were sequestered from the male patients, often receiving treatment in their private lodging, and when treated at the Keeley Institute, they would use separate entrances and parlors. The treatment would be paid for by the patients directly and would cost between 100 and 200 dollars for the four-week treatment, with an additional 21 dollars a week for housing. The men would stay in the Livingston Hotel, built by the Keeley Company in 1891. The women would stay in the Keeley-run “Ladies Home,” a three-story house about two blocks from the Keeley Institute. The housing provided by the Keeley Institute was just one option for patients. Unlike the asylum system, patients were free to live outside the Keeley Institute's confines.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 84.

⁸⁰ William L. White, “Chapter Seven Franchising Addiction Treatment: The Keeley Institutes, 3-10.

Each patient's treatment at the Keeley Institute was designed to make the patients feel comfortable and free of coercion to foster an informal atmosphere.⁸¹ One way that Keeley tried to accomplish this was to provide the patient with alcohol upon arrival at the Keeley Institute. Patients would be shown to the Keeley Institute bar, where they would be allowed to drink as much whiskey as they wanted, which most patients would take advantage of for the first three or four days. Interestingly, the only place the Dwight government allowed to serve alcohol was the Keeley Institute. Keeley fit into a legal loophole that allowed alcohol to be used by medical doctors for the treatment of patients.

The most important treatments would be the injections and the oral tonic given to patients multiple times daily. Each day, patients would line up to receive injections at 8 a.m., 12 p.m., 5 p.m., and 7:30 p.m. The injections contained either a blue, red, or white colored solution tailored to the individual patient. The patients would also take an oral tonic every two hours during all waking hours. The Keeley Institute sometimes hosted as many as a thousand patients at a time.⁸²

So many patients had been requesting the Keeley Gold Cure that Keeley expanded his business.⁸³ Keeley was a self-proclaimed capitalist, and he felt like his business being limited to Dwight was restricting his ability to profit from treating as many patients as possible. Seeking to expand into new markets, Keeley licensed the Keeley Institute name to franchise owners in other states to meet the skyrocketing demand. The first non-Dwight Keeley Institute opened in Des Moines, Iowa, in June of 1890.⁸⁴ The Des Moines franchise was just

⁸¹ William L. White, "Chapter Seven Franchising Addiction Treatment: The Keeley Institutes, 5.

⁸² Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 89.

⁸³ Timothy A. Hickman, "'We Belt the World': Dr. Leslie E. Keeley's 'Gold Cure' and the Medicalization of Addiction in 1890s London," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 95, no. 2 (2021): 198–226, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.2021.0030>, 2.

⁸⁴ Barclay, George A. "The Keeley League." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 57, no. 4 (1964): 341–65. 343. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40190444>.

the start, as by the end of 1891, there were 25 Keeley Institutes and a total of 75 by the end of 1892.⁸⁵ A Keeley franchise owner would have to meet two general criteria in addition to the \$50,000 buy-in fee.⁸⁶ They would have to be responsible business owners, and they would have to attend a four-week training program in Dwight to learn how to properly administer the Keeley Gold Cure.⁸⁷ After graduating from the training program, the franchise owner would have to assume all the financial obligations of the franchise. This would include the institutes' day-to-day operating costs, physician training, and pay. The Keeley Company would not charge the franchise branches a royalty fee, but the franchises were required to buy only Keeley's Gold Cure for each patient.⁸⁸

Editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, Joseph Medill, heard of the Keeley Institute's success. He was interested in covering a story about a small-town doctor who was curing patients of their addiction to alcohol. He opened his newspaper pages to former patients interested in sharing their first-hand experiences with the cure.⁸⁹ One first-hand account comes from Charles F. Chase, then editor of the newspaper *The Cass County Democrat*. Chase wrote a letter to the editor titled *Manly Confession of a Cured Drinker*, in which he wrote,

I gladly contribute my mite, not for the purpose of exposing the scars gained in battle with King Alcohol to the gaze of a skeptical public, but rather with the hope that it may fall before some poor devil afflicted as I was afflicted and lead him to that release from the thralldom of appetite, to secure which he would at this moment gladly give his good right arm.⁹⁰

The connection between masculinity and alcohol was a contentious topic in the post-Civil War landscape. The language Chase uses is in line with the version of masculinity promoted

⁸⁵ William L. White, "Chapter Seven Franchising Addiction Treatment: The Keeley Institutes, 2.

⁸⁶ *ibid*

⁸⁷ *ibid*

⁸⁸ Timothy A. Hickman, "'We Belt the World': Dr. Leslie E. Keeley's 'Gold Cure' and the Medicalization of Addiction in 1890s London," 2.

⁸⁹ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 85

⁹⁰ "Manly Confession of a Cured Drinker," *Chicago Tribune*, March 24, 1891, 7.

by the temperance movement. Bever wrote about the tension between the competing views of masculinity. She wrote, “Temperance reformers continued to promote an evangelical and middle-class version of masculinity that privileged self-control and complete sobriety.”⁹¹ This directly opposes the version of masculinity that soldiers adopted during the Civil War. Bever states, “Men in the armies sometimes favored solidarity and camaraderie over pious self-control, and by making room for “rough-ness” and drunkenness, they redefined masculinity for themselves.”⁹² Chase's militaristic language to describe his battle with alcohol is interesting, as phrasing addiction in this manner may have been an attempt to close the gap between the competing forms of masculinity.

After reading accounts from former patients, Medill sent a reporter to Dwight to cover the story, and the reporter wrote about the amazing cure upon his return to Chicago.⁹³ Still skeptical of the claims, Medill sent another reporter to corroborate his account. The second reporter returned from Dwight with a message from Keeley. The message said, “Send me six of the worst drunkards he can find, and in three days I will sober them up and in four weeks I will send them back to Chicago sober men; and unless of their own volition, they will never seek liquor. At any rate, they will never have need or for.”⁹⁴ Medill later told the details of what happened after the challenge. Medill states that he went to bars in Chicago to find the most severe cases he could find. He then found about a half-dozen men to send to Dwight. He sent them to Dwight individually, with a few weeks between each patient. After promising results, Medill sent a few close acquaintances to Dwight to receive the treatment. His acquaintances returned to Chicago in the same state as the other men. Sober and rehabilitated

⁹¹ Bever, *At War with King Alcohol*, 6

⁹² Bever, *At War with King Alcohol*, 58

⁹³ Barclay, George A. “The Keeley League.” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 57, no. 4 (1964): 341–65. 346.

⁹⁴ Barclay, George A. “The Keeley League.” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 57, no. 4 (1964): 341–65. 347.

versions of themselves, cured of any addiction they had before leaving. Medill said in an 1894 interview in the *Banner of Gold*, “I felt it to be a duty which I owed to humanity to make known the virtues of the Keeley Cure as fast and as far as in my power.”⁹⁵ After Keeley’s challenge, Medill was now certain of the cure as the answer to the question of alcohol addiction.

The coverage of Keeley after this sounds like the reporting from a newspaper editor who saw his role as more of an activist than that of a reporter. In the article titled *Daily Life in Dwight: The Village in which King Alcohol is Knocked Out Forever*, Keeley, his cure, and Dwight were painted as a perfect team to combat king alcohol.

The great and good physician who has given the best comes before the world fitly framed in by the pretty little village of Dwight, where his work began and from which he has sent out a perpetual stream of sunshine on innumerable homes. There, where men who had lost all hope, heard from his lips the first promise of a cure, and there they will look back to see him always as they last saw him, with a smile of trust upon his lips. And the last thing they forget in life will be Dr. Keeley and the work he did for them at Dwight.⁹⁶

This excerpt is representative of the *Chicago Tribune’s* coverage of the cure in 1891. With such a glowing review, it is easy to see how word spread to a national audience eager to find a cure for alcoholism. Today, the claims of “perpetual streams of sunshine” sound far from objective, but they capture the excitement surrounding Keeley and Dwight as a potential solution to the decades-long issues with addiction in the aftermath of the Civil War.

Newspapers from major cities across the country were now promoting Keeley as the creator of a miraculous cure for alcohol addiction.⁹⁷ Keeley was more than happy to embrace this portrayal of his cure. If anything, the national media was far less grandiose about the

⁹⁵ *ibid*

⁹⁶ “Daily Life in Dwight: The Village in which King Alcohol is Knocked Out Forever,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 04, 1891, 9.

⁹⁷ *ibid*

Keeley Cure and Keeley as the brilliant man behind this new weapon in the fight against the hostile forces of nature. Keeley was now known on that national stage. While regular doctors would continue to ask the same questions as they were asking in the 1880s, Keeley was a much more formidable foe in the 1890s.

Keeley's media coverage foisted him onto the big stage, and the temperance societies across the country were now aware of an alternate solution to those proposed by Willard and W.C.T.U.. The immense volume of press interest in Keeley became the ire of Willard. Her view was that Keeley was, at least to some degree, a media creation designed to thwart the efforts of the prohibition and temperance movement that she had helped build over the years. Willard spoke at a meeting of the W.C.T.U. in Evanston, Illinois, which was reported in *The Chicago Tribune* on September 21, 1891,

The Keeley cure is being boomed by the press for political purposes. Dr. Keeley's cure has merit in it and is a good thing, but it is held up and emphasized by the newspapers beyond it's true value for party ends. Watch and see if it is not boomed more and more from month to month until the close of the coming Presidential campaign. Both of the great political parties will exalt moral suasion, local option, Keeley cure, anything, in fact, except prohibition, which is the one bitter pill that they cannot swallow.⁹⁸

The movement at large was struggling to maintain the skyrocketing excitement of prohibition that swept the nation in the 1880s. Especially in the movement's radical wings. Willard and the W.C.T.U. were considered part of that radical wing, which was increasingly perceived as having lost touch with the practical, grassroots approach to reducing liquor sales touted by moderates who were open to all solutions.⁹⁹ Earlier editions of *The Chicago Tribune* paint Keeley as the opposite of the temperance lectures as an article published on February 10th, 1891, stated, "Dr. Keeley has reformed more drunkards than all the temperance lecturers now

⁹⁸ "W.C.T.U. on Dr. Keeley: Spirited Discussion at a Meeting in Evanston," *Chicago Tribune*, September 21, 1891, 5.

⁹⁹ Ann-Marie E. Szymanski, *Pathways to Prohibition: Radicals, Moderates, and Social Movement Outcomes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 1-5.

strutting and fretting before the imbibing public.¹⁰⁰” The media seemed to find a contrasting image between Keeley and the temperance lecturers. Keeley was a man of results, while the radical elements of the temperance movement were lost in pursuit of ideological purity.

Despite her concerns over the media’s motivations to create Keeley to draw away energy from prohibition, Willard was clear that she was not hostile to the idea of the Keeley Cure and went even further to state that the cure fit into the W.C.T.U. and their do-everything policy. Even further to her point about the media’s ability to create narratives to drive desired outcomes, Willard stated, “Those who say that the Women’s Christian Temperance Union or the women suffragists are unfriendly to the Keeley method are misinformed. I do not think they can find a line or an utterance in opposition that we have ever made. If so I would like to have them bring it forward.”¹⁰¹ The relationship between Keeley and Willard would continue to be a hotly debated topic, but they each plowed forward with their agendas.

Leaders in the temperance movement at the national level began to see a path forward, with Keeley’s cure as a crucial piece of the puzzle. Among the most notable figures was the Brooklyn-based temperance minister Reverend T. DeWitt Talmadge. Talmadge was known as a firebrand minister who traveled the nation, giving “fire and brimstone” sermons about the evils of alcohol. A large audience read his sermons as they were widely published as a syndicated column in newspapers around the country, including in Dwight’s local newspaper.¹⁰² The village of Dwight hosted Talmadge when he visited the Keeley Institute and spoke with Keeley and his patients about the famous cure. According to a local

¹⁰⁰ “Many Cures Effected: Victims of Liquor and the Opium Habit Treated” *Chicago Tribune*, February 10, 1891, 1.

¹⁰¹ Apathy and Neligence: Miss Willard is not opposed to the Keeley Cure,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 04, 1891, 9.

¹⁰² “Research Guides: Reverend Talmadge: Topics in Chronicling America: Introduction,” Introduction - Reverend Talmadge: Topics in Chronicling America - Research Guides at Library of Congress, accessed February 11, 2024, <https://guides.loc.gov/chronicling-america-reverend-talmadge#:~:text=Despite%20Rev.,famous%20pulpit%20orat or%E2%80%9D%20in%20history>.

newspaper, Reverend Talmadge was very happy with what he saw and even invited Keeley to visit his Brooklyn parish to spread the word of Keeleyism. An offer that Keeley took the Reverend up on. Keeley spoke before Reverend Talmadge's Brooklyn congregation and touted his radical solution to alcohol addiction. Keeley may have had a great deal of overlap with Talmadge ideologically, but even if they disagreed on many key aspects of temperance, mainly the legal aspects, Keeley found a great benefit to connect himself with the incredibly popular temperance figure.

The popularity of the cure was not just limited to temperance movement figures; members of the federal government had also begun to look into a possible partnership with Keeley. Concerned with the increased consumption of alcohol by veterans of the Civil War and the Mexican War, then Surgeon General John B. Hamilton wrote to Keeley in 1892 in hopes his cure could be used to cure veterans. Hamilton referred to veterans who took up residency in 28 national and state veterans' homes. Keeley offered to train the physicians of these homes and provided them with the same Keeley Cure used in the Dwight Keeley Institute. In addition to the Keeley Cure being introduced into the federal and state-run veterans homes, over 1,500 enlisted men were treated with the Keeley Cure in Fort Leavenworth and Fort Riley in Kansas.¹⁰³ The government seemed to be aware of a connection between the Civil War veterans returning home and the increase in alcohol consumption, but it is not clear if the government had any idea how deeply rooted the issue was within the American veteran population.

The cure was not just popular in America. Keeley had also found a high level of interest in European supporters, and he departed from New York to meet with his supporters in London. Keeley traveled to secure a 100,000 pound investment to open a Keeley Institute

¹⁰³ Barclay, George A. "The Keeley League." 341-65. 348.

in London. During the trip, an article in the *British Medical Journal* accused Keeley of dishonesty about the financial investors, accusing Keeley of seeking the investment on his own behalf. The article was also critical of the content of his cure.¹⁰⁴ The article claims that a lack of gold in the cure is likely correct. Fred Hargraves, an early partner of Keeley's, writes that the gold was removed from the cure as early as the 1880s.¹⁰⁵ It is possible the marketing of Keeley's Cure was attempting to capitalize on the public's perception of gold during the late 19th century.¹⁰⁶ However, not everyone in England was as antagonistic to Keeley as the regular doctors were. Many people were interested in the Keeley Cure. The English public was also introduced to a more well-rounded discussion of the Keeley Institute, which would open in London in December of 1891.¹⁰⁷ However tumultuous Keeley's European trip was, his arrival in Dwight would give him an idea of how popular Keeley had become in America during his time abroad.

The Keeley Institute Impact on the Material Condition of Dwight

The local newspaper reported about Keeley's return to Dwight in 1892. Keeley was met with exuberance from the local population and the patients treated at the Keeley Institute in Dwight. "Dr. and Mrs. Keeley came home from Europe in November, and when they arrived in Dwight, a sight met the doctor's eyes that we feel sure he never can forget. Over one thousand men met him at the depot and gave such a welcome as few men ever received."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Timothy A. Hickman, "We Belt the World" 9.

¹⁰⁵ Fred B. Hargreaves, *Then and Now* (1908), 89

¹⁰⁶ Timothy A. Hickman, "We Belt the World" 12.

¹⁰⁷ Timothy A. Hickman, "We Belt the World" 14.

¹⁰⁸ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 89.

The 1890s were a time of vast infrastructure development in Dwight. Electric lights, sewer systems, water treatment facilities, and paved streets were built with tax revenue and a series of private investments from Keeley himself. The improvements to Dwight were well received by its citizens in the 1890s, as Dwight became synonymous with Keeley. Former patients wrote songs about the town to show their gratitude, and the saying “I’ve been to Dwight” was popularized by Keeley groups as a way to greet other reformed souls.¹⁰⁹ Greeting fellow cure recipients with a familiar line helps paint a picture of Keeleyism as more than just a cure for alcohol. In addition to social customs, Keeleyism was also a movement that advocated for vast infrastructural improvements, which added a new dimension to the goals he was trying to achieve while also creating a distinct difference between Keeleyism and the temperance movement at large.

For Keeley, one of the solutions to alcohol addiction in society was the improvement of the standard of life that both eliminated the necessity of alcohol as a method of treating water and, by improving the quality of life, eliminated the impulse to consume alcohol as a form of coping with a world full of poisons. In his book, he wrote about sanitation and its importance. “The lax sanitation of the great cities of America causes pollution of the water, soil, and air of the land. People drink polluted water, breathe polluted air, and live over polluted soils. As a consequence they are poisoned.”¹¹⁰ Keeley went even further to say that the roots of alcohol addiction can be found in the material condition of society. “I believe the great cause of learning to drink is sickness and poor sanitation, and that this is what makes prohibitory laws difficult or impossible.”¹¹¹ The Keeleyite's view of why alcohol was

¹⁰⁹ Timothy A. Hickman, “Keeping Secrets: Leslie E. Keeley, the Gold Cure and the 19th-Century Neuroscience of Addiction,” *Addiction* 113, no. 9 (June 15, 2018): 1739–49, <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.14222>, 1741.

¹¹⁰ Leslie E Keeley, *The Non-Hereditary of Inebriety*, 136

¹¹¹ *ibid*

consumed gave sanitation and ideological component that added to the actionable items on the Keeleyites agenda.

Keeley's concern with sanitation also provided a window of opportunity for those who would like to pull Keeley away from Dwight. The village paper reported, "Outsiders tried every way to get The Leslie E. Keeley Co. to move away, but the company purchased the Hahn farm, the McPherson house property, and other places, and the people made up their minds the company would stay."¹¹² Another reason Keeley decided to stay was the town government's insistence that they would improve the sanitary conditions of Dwight. The agreement was made before Keeley took his international trip, and he expected a decent amount of progress to be achieved before his return.

Keeley realized his issues with Dwight's sanitation in 1891 were much more serious in 1892. The population increase was not met with infrastructure improvements. The village board took Keeley's concern seriously and implemented a plan to improve the sewage systems and worked with the Keeley Co. to make improvements.¹¹³ Despite Keeley's concern about sanitation, the situation in Dwight had been steadily improving since Keeley became an internationally known figure.

The height of Dwight's economic boom was in 1892. A year that began with so much anticipation from the local population, as the previous year showed the new reality of the village. Business was good for all local businesses, especially the Keeley Institute.¹¹⁴ This, in turn, bolstered the coffers of the local government as the Keeley Institute was generating a third of all tax revenue collected by Dwight by 1893, not to mention that the institute brought in many patrons to local businesses and homes. In addition to The Livingston and the Keeley

¹¹² Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 86-87

¹¹³ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 89.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*

women's house, patients often took up residence in the houses of the local townsfolk.¹¹⁵ In some way, each business was impacted by the success of the Keeley Institute, and, like most boom towns, the pace of expansion far exceeded the reality of the situation.

Land value was one of the most impacted areas of the boom, as reported in the local newspaper. “The price of property went away above reason and still there were plenty of buyers and sellers.”¹¹⁶ *The Chicago Tribune* echoed this sentiment in 1891, as the paper highlighted that the value of land had quadrupled since the Keeley Institute found success.¹¹⁷ The speculative investments in Dwight would be incredibly profitable for everyone, aside from the last person to buy the land at the inflated value. As the newspaper continues, “The last owner got left for the time being. After the boom subsided, as it were, people began to count the cost but found it not great.”¹¹⁸ However, the most desirable properties in Dwight kept their value well into 1895, which is when the local newspaper account of the Keeley boom ended.¹¹⁹ The subsiding boom referred to would not happen until the end of 1893. For now, the village was celebrating its newfound prosperity. It is easy to see why, as 1891 brought in new blocks lined with newly constructed brick buildings. Many of these still stand today, including the historic Chicago and Alton Dwight train depot. Other additions were various hotels and the Dwight Opera House that added to the increasingly wealthy appearance of Dwight.

In 1891, infrastructure development came fast to Dwight. The village was now home to electric lights and a water works system. These improvements were popular, as the Star and

¹¹⁵ William L. White, “Chapter Seven Franchising Addiction Treatment: The Keeley Institutes, 5.

¹¹⁶ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 84.

¹¹⁷ Daily Life in Dwight: The Village in which King Alcohol is Knocked Out Forever,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 04, 1891, 9

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 96.

Herald noted that the citizens regarded the electric lights as “good.”¹²⁰ However, the appeal of the improvements was not limited to just the practical benefits of the infrastructure. A sense of pride also came with the image of Dwight having the same amenities as world-class cities. “In the night the streets were almost as light as day, and the hundreds of electric lights in The Leslie E. Keeley Co.'s buildings and other business houses, gave our city the look of prosperity and enterprise.”¹²¹ These improvements to Dwight’s infrastructure put it well ahead of other rural villages, some of which did not have electric lights until well into the 20th century.¹²² While the additions to the village were well received, they did not address the sanitation issue Keeley hoped would be solved.

As prosperous as 1892 was for Dwight, 1893 marked the beginning of the bust that followed the economic prosperity that resulted from Dwight and Keeley's international recognition. The townsfolk were still proud of what their rural village had achieved. As the village's newspaper states,

In two years our little prairie village has blossomed into a city in importance and the main business streets, with the handsome buildings and new passenger station presented a prosperous appearance, and many were the compliments paid Dwight by people passing through on the Alton trains.¹²³

While the economic boom had turned into a bust by 1894, the people of Dwight were able to keep their heads held high, and their pride remained intact as they remained proud of what they had accomplished in such a short amount of time.¹²⁴ The village had become

interconnected to Keeley and played a major role in hosting social organizations to popularize

Keelyism.

¹²⁰ Dustin & Wassell, History of Dwight, 84.

¹²¹ Dustin & Wassell, History of Dwight, 96.

¹²² 1. www.usda.gov, May 20, 2016,

<https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2016/05/20/celebrating-80th-anniversary-rural-electrification-administration#:~:text=Thanks%20to%20hard%20work%20and,significant%20date%20for%20farm%20families.>

¹²³ Ibid

¹²⁴ Dustin & Wassell, History of Dwight, 101.

Keeley League (men and women)

Social groups on a national and local level formed the backbone of the temperance movement. While many groups touted temperance, none dedicated to promoting Keeleyism existed. With so many receiving the Keeley treatment in the friendly confines of Dwight, a social group was soon started by a group of men who were excited to begin their new alcohol-free lives. Many Keeley patients drank cold water from a pump outside the schoolhouse just a short distance from downtown Dwight. On April 6, 1891, Samuel E. Moore, a Pittsburgh native, brought a tin cup, a chain, and a staple to the schoolhouse to make a more permanent drinking system. Moore and a few other Keelyites held a ceremony at the schoolhouse. According to author George Barclay, “In an impromptu ceremony, another patient, Dr. Ben C. Miller of Chicago, drove the staple into a wooden upright alongside the pump, pumped the first cup, handed it to Moore, and named him president of a club of patients and graduates. The idea took hold immediately. After in-formal discussions, the patients formed the Bi-Chloride of Gold Club.”¹²⁵ This small gathering around a water stop at a local schoolhouse marked the beginning of a crucial component of the Keeley machine that developed in the following years.

The group soon spread to many Keeley franchises nationwide, reaching 50 clubs with over 25,000 members by the end of 1891.¹²⁶ One of the strengths of a social organization that emerges from a centralized facility like the Keeley Institute is that the former patients, excited with the zeal that emanates from someone who feels they have a new lease on life, returned to their local communities.¹²⁷ In this way, former patients were the best proliferators of

¹²⁵ Barclay, George A. “The Keeley League.” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 57, no. 4 (1964): 341–65. 349. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40190444>.

¹²⁶ Dustin & Wassell, *History of Dwight*, 84.

¹²⁷ Barclay, George A. “The Keeley League.” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 57, no. 4 (1964): 341–65. 350.

Keeleyism. The mission of the Keeley Club was clear: raise money for those with addictions, but without the meanest to pay for the Keeley Gold Cure.¹²⁸ In a short time, the groups became so numerous in geographic area and membership that a national convention was planned and held in 1892 in Dwight.

Keeley became an American folk hero to many, and the national convention conveyed this folk hero status with their words and decorations. Decorations ran along the newly paved roads and sidewalks of Dwight. The most telling decoration for the convention was the many large-sized photographs of Keeley that lined the streets.¹²⁹ One night, businesses in Dwight held a Chinese lantern launching ceremony rivaling the excitement many may have felt in seeing the freshly installed electric lights. Other decorations included everything from bunting and flags, but Dwight did have a financial incentive to portray Keeley in a larger than life manner, as their economic reality had merged with Keeley's. However, the folk hero status of Keeley was not limited to the borders of Dwight, as a song written by T.E. Barry for Keely upon a visit to Lexington, Massachusetts, on April 22, 1893,

Then hail Dr. Keeley, who gave us salvation,
Hail him ye mothers and sisters and wives,
Hail him ye children, your fathers are men now,
He brings back the joy that went out in your life.
He's greater than all the world's greatest heroes,
They fought only men, and could only once die,
But the curse of intemperance always defied us,

¹²⁸ Barclay, George A. "The Keeley League." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 57, no. 4 (1964): 341–65. 350.

¹²⁹ Barclay, George A. "The Keeley League." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 57, no. 4 (1964): 341–65. 353.

Now this subtle foe, by his aid, we defy.¹³⁰

The song titled “Hail to the Cheif” shares a name with the song played before the President of the United States made a public appearance, which showed the deep respect and important role that Keeley played for a large number of people. The festival was a resounding success, and the Keeley club was renamed The Keeley League.

A big addition was made when the Keeley League chartered a new division of their organization on January 9th, 1893. The Women’s National Auxillary Keeley League ratified its constitution during a special meeting of a provisional council.¹³¹ The first article of the constitution lists furthering the cause of temperance with a combination of abstinence, education, and medical approaches.¹³² However, the article clarifies that the organization's primary plan of action is to raise funds for the Keeley Gold Cure. The article also mentions one avenue for raising funds would be to sell Keeley's literature and with the Keeley League’s publication *The Banner of Gold*.¹³³

The Banner of Gold

The first issues of *The Banner of Gold* were printed in 1890 and served as Keeley’s centralized hub of activity and coordination. *The Banner of Gold* often makes larger-than-life claims about the great doctor and his ability to command the attention of anyone who enters a room with him. The staff of the Banner of Gold was made up of loyal followers of Keeley and the larger ideology of Keeleyism. The workers at the Banner of Gold cooperated with Keeley

¹³⁰ T.E Barry, “Hail to the Cheif”, 1893

¹³¹ “Women’s National Auxiliary Keeley League,” *The Banner of Gold*, March 18, 1893.

¹³² *ibid*

¹³³ *ibid*

to write articles for the magazine and develop relationships with temperance organizations on a local level. Keeley and his gang of Keelyites were focused on maintaining a public image, portraying him as a man with many different faces.

Keeley's *Banner of Gold* magazine was a medium used to manage his public image to the public and to facilitate his private networking within the larger temperance society. The first example is a reaction to a story run in the newspaper *The Chicago Herald*, which wrote about the diminishing financial prospects of the Keeley cure, especially the Keeley Institute's impact on Dwight's local economy. This example shows how Keeley used his publication to maintain his image while combating negative news in national and local media.

On December 19, 1893, Keeley instructed an employee of his to conduct interviews with the business owners of Dwight. The article in *The Chicago Herald* painted a picture of Dwight and the Keeley Institute that was not flattering to either party. In the correspondence, the article "Dwight and Its Woes" is described as challenging the financial stability of the Keeley Institute and the local village government of Dwight. The reports of financial instability motivated Keeley to use his own publication to combat these charges. The Keeley journalist went to each business in Dwight and established two things: had they been interviewed by the reporter from *The Chicago Herald*, and if they thought the Keeley Institute was an economic benefit to their business overall.

One of the most in-depth interviews was from a banker named David McWilliams. In his interview with the Keeley journalist, he challenges the article's claim that Dwight could not pay the interest on its bonded debt and lays out the financial situation in Dwight as quite stable.¹³⁴ In addition to the interview with McWilliams, the journalist interviews each business

¹³⁴ "Untitled Correspondence Regarding 'Dwight and Its Woes' Published on December 17, 1893" (Dwight, Illinois, December 20, 1893).

owner in Dwight. The owner of a Dwight hardware store, B.A. Buck responded to the question of the importance of the Keeley Institute to Dwight's economy with the answer, "They have been and are a great benefit to the town. It would mean ruin to the town to have them leave."¹³⁵ All but one owner claimed not to have been interviewed by the reporter from the Herald, and, like Buck, they all see the Keeley Institute as an economic benefit to their business.¹³⁶ Keeley's concern over stories such as *The Chicago Herald* shows how aware he is of the value of his public image. Keeley likely knew that the article contained a more than fair assessment of the diminishing finances of the village and his business, as his own profits were diminishing from the boom of 1891.¹³⁷ To acknowledge that the Keeley brand was losing its strength would, in a way, be admitting that Keeley was not the revolutionary figure he purported to be. Projecting an image of strength was crucial,

The second example is a letter from one of Keeley's employees, showing how The Banner of Gold managed his private relationships with leading temperance figures. The letter is from W.C.T.U. president Francis Willard. In the letter, Willard relayed some of the very same concerns she had with the coverage of her organization in *The Chicago Tribune*. Willard felt The Banner of Gold had unfairly attacked her organization for insufficiently endorsing the Keeley Cure.

Keeley and his staff at *The Banner of Gold* were not scared to use the power of the Keeley image to cudgel stubborn temperance figures into line. A letter from December 3rd, 1894, captures the power of the Banner of Gold to achieve their goals by using brute force when dealing with alienated potential allies. The letter, written by a gentleman named William E. Bringham, relays the feelings of the president of the W.C.T.U. Francis Willard held towards

¹³⁵ Ibid

¹³⁶ Ibid

¹³⁷ Ben Scott, "Keeleyism: A History of Dr. Leslie Keeley's Gold Cure for Alcoholism" (thesis, 1974), 63.

Keeley, his staff at the Banner of Gold. In the letter, Willard describes her many local branches and their hesitancy to endorse the Keeley cure. “Our ladies feel that they have been so bitterly and unwarrantably attacked by the Keeley organs that they are hesitant to do what I think they really would like to do.¹³⁸” The hesitancy Willard describes is due to the Banner of Gold running what she describes as unfair criticisms of the W.C.T.U. National and local branches. As she says, “We feel this way, that our work is primarily that of prevention and that we are not necessarily called upon to subscribe to other methods, but we are willing to do even that as soon as the over-enthusiastic Keeleyites take a just view of us as a whole.”¹³⁹ It is abundantly clear in the message conveyed by Willard that she is concerned with the attacks from *The Banner of Gold* and the idea of partnering with a force within the temperance movement that was opposed to her ultimate goal.

The distinction she draws here is important. Willard and her organization are primarily a movement of abstinence and prevention, whereas Keeley is focused on curing the effects of alcohol. Willard’s organization swept into Dwight in 1879 and helped motivate the townsfolk of Dwight to enact prohibitory laws. What we see now is the opposite. The organization Willard runs implemented a policy of local influence from a national organization. Dwight and Keeley were once subject to the will of outside forces, but for a brief period of time in the early 1890s, even the most powerful and influential figures of the national temperance movement were no match for Keeley and, by extension, Dwight’s influence.

The End of The Boom

¹³⁸ “An Important Interview with Miss Frances E. Willard” William E. Bringham to Dr. Leslie E. Keeley, (Lexington, Mass, December 3, 1894), Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, The Keeley Collection, Keeley Personal Correspondances, box tbd.

¹³⁹ *ibid*

All great things must come to an end, or so the saying goes. This saying was all too true for Keely, his cure, and Dwight. The Keeley Institute would go into a steady decline starting in 1893.¹⁴⁰ The decline stemmed from several factors. According to White, “The loss in confidence came from a recognition of higher-than-proclaimed relapse rates among Keeley patients, a public backlash against Keeley's exaggerated claims of success, and the relentless medical criticism of the gold cure.”¹⁴¹ Keeley’s self-promotion and grandiose claims worked to propel him into international fame, but as time went on, his arguments were less and less effective at convincing the general public of his ability to defeat the scourge of alcohol addiction. Keeley became a millionaire during the boom, and Dwight was forever improved, if not ultimately forgotten by the national and international media, soon after the luster of Keeleyism wore off. However, the local newspaper states that the townspeople never lost their friendliness and liberal spirit, even during the hard times.¹⁴²

In 1900, Keeley died from a heart attack while staying in his Los Angeles winter home. When his body returned to Dwight, the townspeople devoted several days to transporting the coffin to the cemetery in formidable winter conditions. The difficult transit required Keeley’s body to be carried on a sled through many feet of snow, but the people of Dwight were more than happy to fulfill the last wish of the doctor who made their village what it is now. The Keeley Institute in Dwight continued to operate with medically approved addiction treatments until the 1960s when it was permanently closed.

¹⁴⁰ William L. White, “Chapter Seven Franchising Addiction Treatment: The Keeley Institutes, 14.

¹⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁴² Dustin & Wassell, History of Dwight, 84.

Conclusion

The legacy of Dr. Leslie E. Keeley is challenging to define. There are many legitimate criticisms of his business practices and his monetization of medicine. For example, his use of temperance societies to raise money to purchase his cure presents many ethical dilemmas for today's readers. Another ethical area of contention is how he was willing to use humans as test subjects for a cure that had not been thoroughly tested on non-human subjects. However, it is important to remember that Keeley was operating at a time when the ethical lines in medicine were not yet firmly established. In fact, Keeley's entire career took place during a fiercely contested sectarian battle between competing medical practices, which made any idea of a centralized set of ethics difficult to put into place.

While Keeley could be credibly seen as a quack, it is important to highlight that some of the aspects of his cure were indeed groundbreaking and persistent in the medical treatment of addiction to this day. As William White writes, "Keeley's creation of a supportive atmosphere in which addicts were treated with trust and respect and encouraged to support one another predated modern uses of the "dynamic milieu" by nearly a century."¹⁴³ Keeley's real contribution to the history of medicine is found here. Acknowledging the social aspects of medicine and fostering a warm environment for his patients gives his treatment a lasting legacy.

Another crucial component of the cure was to see those who were battling addiction as curable. The stigma that had followed alcoholism in the post-Civil War era was a hindrance to those who were willing to seek treatment, as White states.

¹⁴³ William L. White, "Chapter Seven Franchising Addiction Treatment: The Keeley Institutes," 17.

Keeley was remarkably successful in enticing large numbers of alcoholics and addicts into treatment. By declaring that their condition was a product of disease rather than vice, by promising to alleviate the physical discomfort of sobering up, and by allowing them freedom from constraint, the Keeley Institutes brought unprecedented numbers of alcoholics and other addicts into treatment.¹⁴⁴

With the alternative view of alcoholism casting the disease as a moral failing and thus portraying those unable to transition back to civilian life after the war as morally unfit for society, it is easy to see why Keeley was able to attract a large number of patients willing to take his gold cure. Highlighting the positive aspects of the cure is not an attempt to remove criticism of Keeley. The intention is to show that Keeley was not entirely wrong for challenging his time's rigid mainstream medical practices, especially when mainstream practices were rooted in outdated moral frameworks.

This moral view of alcoholism was forwarded by the temperance movement as well as the mainstream medical practitioners. The temperance movement continued and eventually achieved its goals on a national level. The ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919 and its implementation in 1920 are the ultimate legacies of the temperance movement. Francis Willard was a key figure in converging the temperance movement with political parties. Beginning in the 1890s, she began a more concerted effort to inject temperance policies into the national political conversation. While her efforts in the 1890s were somewhat unsuccessful, her legacy lives on as a crucial figure in popularizing laws banning alcohol nationally.¹⁴⁵ However, the political aspects of the movement can sometimes cause the finer details to be overlooked.

In *This Republic of Suffering*, the central claim is that the locus of change is America's handling of the mass death of the Civil War. I believe the story of Keeley and the veterans he

¹⁴⁴ William L. White, "Chapter Seven Franchising Addiction Treatment: The Keeley Institutes," 16.

¹⁴⁵ Jean Baker, "Frances E. Willard, 1839-1898," Northern Illinois University Digital Library, accessed February 18, 2024, <https://digital.lib.niu.edu/illinois/gildedage/frances-willard>.

cured refutes this argument. Keeley's cure and the story of Dwight, is a vehicle for injecting the social realities spurred on by the returning veterans in the post-Civil War era. Society was without a doubt affected by the loss of many in the war, but the social change and anxiety that followed the war were affected by those who returned from combat and tried to reintegrate into society. If death were the locus of change in society, it is hard to imagine the rise of the temperance movement or Keeley happening on such a large, national scale. Keeley's financial success and motivations show that there was a national impetus for an answer to a question that many felt needed to be solved. The question that foisted itself upon American society in the post-war era was how to treat alcohol addiction in the hundreds of thousands of veterans who returned to their homes and reshaped the American social and political landscape.

As we have seen from the story of Keeley and Dwight, the medical practices that made soldiers capable of fighting in battle beyond their physical and mental limits had long-lasting implications once the men reentered society. Death is, without a doubt, a major cost of war, but after the cannons fall silent and the men return to their homes, the legacy of war is embodied within those who return from the battlefield.

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