

Temperance Column.

THE TREATMENT OF FEMALE INEBRIETY.

By NORMAN KERR, M.D., F.L.S., President, Society for the Study of Inebriety; Chairman, British Medical Association Habitual Drunkards Legis. Com., &c.

(Continued.)

The injury to the drunkard herself is terrible—cleanliness, truth, honour, affection, duty, are all offered up at the shrine of Bacchus. Weary, wasted, and worn, wretched in spirit, broken in heart, ruined in soul, a waif on the ocean of human life, tossed on the tempestuous and furious sea of inebriety, she has made shipwreck of all that is beautiful, and true, and good.

For her own sake, for her family's sake, for the country's sake, is there no hope for such? The world replies, "No," and passes unheeding by. The Church preaches that as long as there is life, there is hope for every sinner, but practically deals only in rebuke and denunciation. The State says neither "Yes" nor "No," and treats her as a hardened and incurable criminal with a cell, bread, and water.

But there is hope for her—she is not beyond redemption. A new era has dawned for the inebriate. In the past, so few female inebriates have been permanently reformed, that many good men believe such an event to be an impossibility in a woman. The cause of former failure has been ignorance. As the lunatic was at one time declared by learned theologians to be possessed of a devil by way of punishment for her sins, so has the inebriate been preached at from a thousand pulpits, as given over to demoniac drunkenness, the unavoidable penalty of moral depravity, and of a vicious disposition. This may or may not be true of a small minority of mad women and toppers, but modern science has shown that in insanity and inebriety there is frequently a diseased condition, a departure from bodily and mental health, a disorder of the physical system, of organs, and of functions.

Here is the auspicious omen for the poor, battered, despised, demoralised female victim of alcohol.

The Society for the Study of Inebriety, of which I have the honour to be President, is hard at work in the investigation of the diseased states productive of inebriety, and has already done something in enlightening the public mind on the undoubtedly abnormally morbid conditions favourable to inebriate manifestations.

The philosophic profession of medicine has expounded the great truth that there is a physical aspect of Intemperance, the operation of unhealthy influences, of transmitted tendencies to intoxication, of inborn feebleness of resisting power, of innate weakness of will, of inherited susceptibilities to the fell and deceptive power of narcotics. The Christian and the philanthropist have learnt from

the physician that female inebriates can be cured, that they have a body as well as a soul, a casket as well as a jewel, and that no dimness can ever wholly destroy, though it may obscure the lustre of, the gem of Divine life within.

The burdensome weight of alcoholic heredity crushes many a woman to earth. No law is more marked, none more inexorable. There are not a few brave souls who, though they have successfully lived a life of Abstinence, have achieved this only by a gallant and persistent struggle during the whole term of their sojourn on earth. Other disordered bodily states, nervous shock, such as sudden bereavement or worldly ruin, injuries to the head and other injuries, have all acted as causes exciting to a paroxysm of inebriety in constitutions with an alcoholic transmitted inebriate predisposition.

The first condition of cure and reformation is Abstinence. The patient is being poisoned, and the poisoning must be stopped. Were it arsenic instead of alcohol, no one would dispute this. So long as the drinking of intoxicants is indulged in, so long will the bodily, mental, and moral mischief be intensified and made more permanent. The Abstinence must be absolute. On no plea of fashion, of physic, or of religion, ought the smallest quantity of an intoxicant be put to the lips of the alcohol slave. Alcohol is a material chemical narcotic poison, and a mere sip has even in the most solemn circumstances been known to relight in the fiercest intensity the drink-crave, which for a long period of years has lain dormant and unfelt.

(To be continued.)

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