

Compulsory abstinence from alcohol would not produce the same result as voluntary abstinence. Abstinence to be valuable must be a *sign of moral improvement*. It is SAFER, BETTER, to leave the poor to face temptations—trying to fortify them against these temptations by education—by giving them *correct scientific knowledge*—principles and views of their moral obligations to themselves, their families and society at large, at the same time holding before them the spectacle of temperance and its results in the case of the more comfortable classes. Moderate drinkers in general are in no danger of becoming habitual drunkards. It is persons wanting in prudence and of intemperate constitution that are exposed to that danger; and keeping people in leading strings has never been a success. And as to the plea of example—it is no more a duty to refrain from alcoholic liquors as an example to the intemperate, than it is a duty to refrain from marriage as an example to people who make improvident marriages with its accompanying miseries.

The brave Bishop of Peterboro' says of course it is competent in a community to make laws as to what I shall eat, and what I shall drink; but such a community is not free, and freedom is the immediate jewel of the soul; give me liberty or give me death. The craving for stimulation and for stimulants—in one or another of their innumerable forms—is not a local, unusual, arbitrary or statutory thing, but a rooted and universal passion of human nature. Just look at the high rate of crime, insanity and idiocy existing among the water-drinking Hindoos, the Arabs and Turks—and at the low rate in Ireland and Scotland, where alcohol is largely consumed.

The use of alcohol contributes largely to social pleasures, and therefore to the amelioration of the human lot, and has been explicitly approved by the founder of Christianity—who the Bible informs us created wine after men had well drunk.

The Dunkin Act gives the governing body a power to which it has not the least right or claim, a power of declaring the *absolute truth* of a doctrine, of laying down a law upon a question of private morals with which it has no more concern than a question of private creed.

There is not the slightest evidence to show that alcohol causes more immorality than eating to excess, than ostentation, idleness, vanity, or a hundred other errors of judgment or inclination with which statesmen in all free countries decline to interfere. The right of freedom includes the right to judge upon such points, even to judge wrong. A man may drink tea or smoke tobacco until he has shattered his nerves, lost his employment and become a hopeless invalid, but the State has no right to interfere. We have no more right to use compulsion to make a man better, than we have to compel him to be wiser. No more claim to make him take less alcohol than to compel him to indulge less in the mental dissipation of reading incessant telegrams from the seat of war, which will be all contradicted to-morrow.

The whole matter is one as entirely beyond the province of the state as religious belief itself. The Dunkin Act clearly shows the lengths to which the advocates of total abstinence are prepared to go—the utter contempt in which they hold freedom, humanity, and the welfare of the state in comparison with their crotchety hatred of a particular kind of food. The headlong reformer with any particular hobby—be it a Dunkin Act, or any other Act, who fixes his attention upon some special phase of stimulation, and would eradicate it root and branch, is soon found to be himself involved in something not very unlike what he so zealously condemns.

One thunders against the whole tribe of alcoholic stimulants, from ethereal wine to acrid whiskey, and never touches, tastes or handles them—the pipe will do for him. Another counterblasts tobacco—content with abundance of strong coffee; another decries all these together, inspired by the stimulus of concentrated potions of tea. Still another ingests, perhaps, only vegetables and water, and fulminates from the pulpit or platform against all those gross material indulgences, yet is lifted into the seventh heaven of enjoyment by the stimulating incense of flattery and praise which comes up from admiring auditors, and without which life to him would be "stale, flat, and unprofitable." Others get from music, pictures, theatres, fashion, novels, newspapers or travel, a quieter form of excitement, which, though often running into dissipation, is less harmful than ordinary narcotic over stimulation. How far the ball room, the pulpit, the political campaign, the teetotal platform, or a religious revival may be the equivalent of a drinking spree, we will not pretend to say; but that they are all marked by a common character—the stimulation of pleasurable feeling—carried to a pitch of excitement which ends in reaction, more or less exhausting, is not to be denied.

As regards relief from the mischiefs of over-stimulation—alcoholic or otherwise—the Dunkin Act cannot accomplish it. We shall do well to remember that the evil of alcoholic stimulation does not exist alone; it is part of the general imperfection of human nature, and the social state which accompanies it. Nor is it to be remedied alone. The evils that result from the craving for stimulants and the gratification of it to an injurious excess, will probably only be removed with the slow and general improvement of character and amelioration of social conditions. As soon as people know better their own nature, and the true conditions of its unfolding, and begin to regard the subject with a more sacred respect; in proportion to the growth of a scientific conscience—man will become a higher law to himself—and some of the grosser vices of conduct may be expected gradually to disappear.

The gross superstitious and idiotic absurdities to be found in Christianity, and the folly of drunkenness, both of these evils which now afflict humanity, will probably disappear together.

The habit of stimulation is not confined to special communities, but pervades alike the civilized and uncivilized races all over the world, varying in different types of humanity but common to all. Some races take to opium, others to hashesh, others to alcohol. It is this deep basis of the propensity in human nature that gives to the subject its mystery and its perplexity.

The rationale of stimulation is indeed not so puzzling. Food builds up and maintains the vital activity of the whole animate creation in its *working* state, but that is not enough for man. He leads a life of high and complex feeling—subject to wide fluctuations, while his intellect furnishes him with the means of influencing his emotional states. He therefore seeks those agencies which act to arouse pleasurable emotions, and these are stimulants.

From the days of Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, down to those of Father Mathew, Gough, Murphy and Rine, there have never been wanting prophets to denounce and predict the awful consequences of indulgence in alcoholic liquors. Yet in every civilized community in the world of the present day some form of alcohol is regarded as necessary to the comfort and happiness of the social gathering. The sovereigns of the world at their feasts, and the humblest denizens of huts and cabins have alike recognized its presence as an assuager of sorrow and the active agent in the development of those feelings which render human intercourse agreeable and pleasant.

Medical men of all ages have prescribed it for a variety of diseases. The daily experience of a large proportion of mankind who take small quantities of alcohol from day to day is, that whilst they experience its exhilarating effects, they are not aware of any depression. There is a very numerous and learned class of the community in all parts of the world—one of the scientific professions—the large majority of whom, together with their families, make alcoholic beverages an article of daily consumption, and the doctors are a scientific body who have made it the study of their lives what to eat, drink and avoid.

Among a host of others, Dr. Todd, Dr. Ray Lankester the translator of the Natural History of Creation, by the great German Philosopher, Ernest Haeckel, and others, tell us that the action of alcohol in disease is to suspend the disintegrating process engendered by morbid actions, and thus to give time for new and healthy actions to set in. The opinion of the great bulk of the medical profession is to be relied on and that would lead us to regard alcohol as equal if not superior to any other known remedy for the purpose of combating disease.

Perhaps of all substances used by man as food, alcohol confers the greatest amount of pleasure, the most intense gratification. What painting is to the eye, and music to the ear—sweet and pleasant—liquors are to the taste. In all nations and in all climes man has indulged in the pleasures of the palate. According to Christianity, wine and strong drink was the promise of the prophet of God to his people for obedience to his laws. The Psalmist thanked God for the wine that made his heart glad. Christ wrought his first miracle on earth in creating alcohol for the pleasure of the guests at a wedding feast, to show the important relations in which alcohol stands to man.

At all events the bigoted, fanatical prohibitionist is in the position of the hero of Butler's, Hudibras—"who compounded for sins he was inclined to, by damning those he had no mind to."

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