

Temperance Column.

OUR GREATEST BULWARK.

The Church of England Temperance Chronicle, the organ of the C.E.T.S. says:—

The health question is the central pivot round which the strongest arguments for drinking intoxicating liquors revolve. When a man calmly takes up the position that he cannot abstain because he is fully persuaded that to do so would imperil his health, he is the master of an almost impregnable position. At any rate, until we can thoroughly convince him of his mistake, the most enthusiastic of us would hardly wish him to take a pledge of Total Abstinence. In the early days of the movement the pioneer workers found this difficulty vastly more insuperable than is happily the case to-day. Then the Temperance Reformer could cite instances of individuals who were doing a fair share of work on Abstinence, they could even address evidence of the satisfactory recovery of Abstainers from sickness or accidents, without resorting to the use of alcohol, but these examples were generally looked upon as exceptional, and the knowledge of them rarely travelled beyond the range of the immediate locality in which they occurred.

To-day all this has been changed. That noble institution, the London Temperance Hospital, which we venture to designate the greatest bulwark of the Temperance Reform, has indisputably established that alcohol is diet, or as a drug in the treatment of diseases and surgical cases, is of infinitesimal value. The work of the Hospital has clearly passed beyond the region of mere experiment. The thirteenth annual report has been presented to the public, and although a power of administering alcohol is left in the hands of the visiting staff when they think it needful, during the existence of the Hospital alcohol has just been given in only three cases, but in no case with the desired benefit to the patient. Down to April 30 last, 3,486 patients were admitted, and the deaths were 183, which gives a mortality of 6.7 per cent., a rate which we believe compares most favourably with other hospitals. The Out-Patients have numbered 22,790, many of whom have paid repeated visits. Surely, if example is better than precept, the testimony of all this vast body of sufferers dealt with on the non-alcoholic treatment (with the three exceptions already mentioned) should be sufficient to convince the most stubborn that the connection between the taking of alcohol and the retention of good health is very remote indeed.

Perhaps it will be helpful to some waverer if we reproduce a statistical table issued by the Board of the Hospital, giving certain comparative particulars relative to the series of Typhoid cases treated at the Hospital.

The Medical Officers, Dr. Ed-

munds, Dr. Lee, and Mr. A. Pearce Gould, in presenting the above table to the Board, added the following comment:—"There was clear evidence that the effects of the alcohol that had been used were such as not only to retard recovery, but to induce a tendency to relapse, and to fatal terminations. The processes of repair are seriously different in such cases from those of otherwise healthy persons, and there was a marked contrast between the rate of convalescence in cases of Total Abstainers, as compared with that of those who had indulged in alcoholic drinking."

We need scarcely point out that the variety of the occupations of the several patients, and their ages present an irresistible argument which must carry convictions to all but the most prejudiced minds.

On Hospital Saturday the Temperance Hospital was visited by a large number of Colonial friends, who were evidently much impressed by what they saw and heard. The building has been constructed on the most approved principles, and in the matter of sanitation and the perfection of its arrangements is admittedly one of the finest Institutions in the world. About £49,000 has been contributed to the Building Fund, which leaves about £6,000 to be provided. Accommodation now exists for one hundred and twenty beds and these will be provided as soon as the income justifies the necessary annual expenditure, which is reckoned at £6,000. It deserves to be noted that, though the Hospital bears the name of London, its patients come from all parts of the United Kingdom, and even from other countries; and that, though Temperance indicates its particular method of treatment, it is not confined to Total Abstainers.

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