

Is Drunkenness a Disease?

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. NORMAN KERR.

This is a question that has not been fully discussed in public as it deserves to be. That disease is often the effect of drunkenness most people know, but that drunkenness is often the effect of disease is a proposition by no means so fully accepted.

Dr. Kerr: I think the physical aspect of inebriety has not been fully recognized either by the State or by the temperance or religious world in this country. In America, on the other hand, Dr. Benjamin Rush, a hundred years ago, distinctly taught that inebriety was a disease, and ought to be treated in special hospitals.

And which do they generally prefer?—As many prefer the prisons to the home.

That does not say much for the homes.—On the contrary, it does.

How do you make that out?—Because they know they will be cured of drunkenness if they go to the homes, and it is because some of them do not want to be cured that they prefer to go to prison.

And the treatment in these American homes. How does it differ from the treatment in English ones?—The treatment in all genuine and intelligently conducted homes for inebriates is much the same. But, I may tell you, there are homes and homes. Some are mere commercial speculations, without any attempt at cure or reformation, indulgence in liquor being winked at, and even encouraged in certain cases.

Where is there such a home in England?—The Dalrymple Home at Rickmansworth. It is indeed the only one licensed under the Habitual Drunkards Act, conducted without pecuniary profit to the proprietor, and publishing its records in scientific form.

But has not the Habitual Drunkards Act been a failure?—Not quite. Although imperfect, it has yet done some good. For example, eighteen gentlemen have voluntarily entered this home for the full period of twelve months each.

Don't you find that few people give their consent to entering?—Yes. The ordeal of declaring oneself a habitual drunkard before two justices of the peace is most formidable, especially to ladies. But in America, and some of our colonies, patients can enter on a simple agreement, and, once they are in the home, the conductor has the power to detain them, abuses being guarded against by frequent inspection.

And the practical results of the treatment in these homes?—In all genuine

and intelligently conducted homes, like the Dalrymple Home, one-third of the patients have been permanently cured. Then you consider, Dr. Kerr, that drunkenness is really a disease?—Undoubtedly. In a very large number of cases as clearly a disease as gout, or rheumatism, or insanity.

How comes this disease generally?—Through certain physical degenerations of body and brain, which may be inherited or may be acquired.

Do you mean that a craving for alcohol is often inherited, just as gout or cancer is?—Perhaps that is hardly the correct way to state the facts. The disease of inebriety, apart from the act of drunkenness, consists either in an unhealthy craving for, or an unhealthy impulse to, intoxication. In some cases the taste for alcohol is inherited, but in the majority of these cases a physical tendency to intoxication is inherited, which tendency, on the application of an exciting cause, such as a glass of liquor, leads to an outbreak of drunkenness, even in cases where people hate the taste of the intoxicant itself.

Do you really mean to say that there are people who hate the taste of liquor, and yet drink to excess?—Yes. I have met very many of them.

If they hate the taste, why do they drink?—Because overpowered by a diseased impulse or craving.

You mean that people who hate the intoxicating agent yet crave for the intoxicated condition which it produces, or that they hate the intoxicant yet love the intoxication?—Precisely, that is just what I mean.

How do you account for that?—Because of a condition of pathological unrest, or a diseased or over-powering mental and physical uneasiness which is impossible to describe, but which demands relief even at the price of adding to the trouble.

What is your remedy?—Absolute and unconditional abstinence from all intoxicants whatever under all circumstances.

What! Even at the Communion would you prohibit wine?—Yes. Fermented wine, intoxicants are so dangerous to many reformed drunkards, and also to total abstainers who have inherited the disease of inebriety. Many distressing cases of relapse have occurred from a sacramental intoxicant.

Dr. Norman Kerr, who, together with Dr. B. W. Richardson, is one of the honorary consulting physicians to the Dalrymple Home at Rickmansworth, then permitted the writer to visit that establishment, which he found to be a country mansion called "The Cedars," standing on a terrace 30 ft. above the river Colne, which flows through five acres of charming grounds belonging to the place. A theatre, billiard room, reading room, tennis lawn, quiet and bowling alley, gymnasium, workshops, and skating rink—all belonging to the house, which has accommodation for twenty patients—showed that amusements were not forgotten as part of the treatment, the result of which may be summed up in the verdict of the Government Inspector as contained in his last report:—"The success of this retreat is very marked."

The Dalrymple Home is really a scientific experiment, on which the future treatment of inebriety in England will largely depend, as Dr. Crothers, editor of the American Quarterly Journal of Inebriety, has pointed out. It is, therefore, interesting to notice that its records indicate an intimate connection between drunkenness and disease. For instance, out of 103 cases treated there the habit of drunkenness has been caused in forty-nine cases by injuries to the nerves, head, or spine. In forty-four cases some complaint or disease was present, dyspepsia claiming the largest number of victims, and insanity coming next; while in forty-three cases a hereditary tendency to inebriety had been traced, and in fifty-nine cases no family history at all was obtainable. By far the largest number of the patients were described as "gentlemen of no occupation," but only in eight out of the whole 103 cases was "want of employment" the exciting cause of the drunkenness, which in thirty cases was attributable to "sociability," in six to "business temptation," in nine to "domestic trouble," in eight to "business and professional worry," in one to "over study," in two to "overwork," in one to "sunstroke," in one to "fear of conscription," in two to "college life," in one to "colonial life," and three to "travelling." So much for the statistics of the Dalrymple Home, to which may be added Dr. Kerr's opinion that changes of climate, loss of friends or fortune, sudden changes of surroundings, and shocks to the nervous system are among the things which sometimes cause sober people to become drunkards. The importance of Dr. Kerr's views need not be insisted upon, seeing that if they are right most of our temperance legislation must be wrong.—Pall Mall Gazette.

The Canada Temperance Act.

RESULTS OF THE VOTING SO FAR:

Table with columns: PLACE, VOTES POLLED (For, Against), MAJORITIES (For, Against), DATE OF ELECTION. Lists results for various Canadian locations from Fredericton to Charlottetown.

N.B.—In the preceding table a place that has voted more than once has the different votes indicated by the figures (1), (2), (3) after the name of place. Figures printed in italics are for first or second votes in places in which a later vote has been taken than that so printed. Names in heavy faced type are of cities, others of counties.

SUMMARY.

Nova Scotia has eighteen counties and one city, of which thirteen counties have adopted the Act. New Brunswick has fourteen counties and two cities, of which ten counties and two cities have adopted the Act. Manitoba has five counties and one city, of which two counties have adopted the Act.

It is more than eight years since the Scott Act was first voted upon and adopted in different localities, and NO COUNTY OR CITY HAS YET REPEALED IT, although many votings have taken place on the question of repeal.

PRESERVE THIS PAPER. YOU WILL NEED THESE TABLES FOR REFERENCE.

HEALTHIER THAN BEER.

An Industrious Laborer Who Makes Oatmeal His Substitute for Malt.

"No beer, thanks." "It will do you good, after working in the street all morning," said the foreman of a party of laborers from the Public Works Department to one of the most intelligent of his workmen, during a nooning on an up town street the other day.

"I'd rather drink what I've got in my bucket." "What's that?" "Oatmeal and water." "What do you drink that for?" "To keep cool, same as you drink water."

"It doesn't rest you like beer, though." "Try it once and see. When I began drinking oatmeal in my water, the wife had almost to make me take it. I used to drink a glass of beer every noon, two before supper and 'work the growler' before going to sleep at night. That cost about twenty cents a day. Now I save all that and get along just as well as before. I don't know what there is about the meal, but when I have had a drink of it I don't care for beer or anything else to drink. You'd better try it yourself."

"Oatmeal in water," explained a physician to a reporter who had overheard the above recorded dialogue, "is one of the best drinks in the world for a working man, especially in warm weather. It is nutritive, satisfying and agreeable to the stomach. For laborers it makes a useful addition to the diet, costs but little, and repays the small outlay in the form of increased ability to perform labor, either physical or mental."—N. Y. Mail and Express.

Children's Dress.

There are, of course, several ways in which this question can be regarded. There is the point of view of fashion, and that of common sense. It is a pity that the first of these considerations should ever exist apart from the second; but unfortunately, especially for girl children, it does, and as a rule it is in the earliest infancy of these that the compression which is to make them "good figures" begins, to be followed as soon as they can stand on their feet with preparations for making them "neat"—and deformed. It is as a rule useless to preach dress reform to adults. But all women who have taken to heart the lessons of physiology may help to save children from the mistakes that follow a blind adherence to fashion. At present besides the serious blunders already spoken of in connection with the dress of little girls, there is a fashion of cutting away the thicker woolen stuff of which the dress is made in front, in order to "let in" a puff of thin silk or lace; that is, in a country where diseases of the respiratory organs are painfully common, it is the custom to make the clothing thinner rather than thicker, over the chest, thus inducing colds which may ultimately develop into bronchitis or phthisis. Children's dress is a matter with which fashion should have little to do. Health and comfort should at any rate be the primary, if not the sole considerations.—The Hospital.

JOURNALISM BOOMING.

A Lot of New Periodicals. The Free Lance is a new candidate for public favor in the line of temperance journalism. It is published at Newbury, Wisconsin, and if number one is a fair sample of the issues that are to follow the Free Lance will deserve a warm welcome and support.

The Light of Home is a little eight page monthly, edited by A. H. Lewis, Plainfield, New Jersey, and published by the American Sabbath Tract Society, Alford Centre. It is devoted mainly to the dissemination of arguments and facts in relation to the Sabbath and Sabbath observance.

Another I.O.G.T. journal is to the front under the title The New England Good Templar. It is published by K. H. Lord at Upper Stillwater, Maine, monthly, and is of eight page form, and full of rousing campaign matter, including an unusually large number of selections well adapted for lodge work. It deserves success.

The Canadian Sentinel is another eight page monthly, published by Mrs. J. H. Cowie, Moncton, N. B., devoted to "Sabbath reform, liberty of conscience, Bible truth, temperance, and items of general interest." The Sentinel talks out, as might be expected, in favor of the Scott Act. We wish our good friend, the publisher, a large measure of success.

The Cadets' Advocate occupies a special field in journalism being published in the interests of the Cadets of Temperance, an organization with which many of our St. T. friends are already familiar, but of which, unfortunately, we hear very little in Canada at the present time. The Advocate is in the form of an eight page, 32 column paper, well gotten up, full of matter of value and interest, and is published at the low price of 25 cents per year, by Messrs. Hart & Kitch, at 224 1/2 Townsend St., Philadelphia.

A monthly magazine to be called Our Day will shortly be published by a syndicate of moral reform workers, prominent among whom are Joseph Cook and Frances R. Willard. It will, no doubt, be of high interest and value.

Your Name on this Pencil Stamp, 25c. with Indian Ink, Act's terms & conditions. Agents are selling hundreds of these at... Leading Importers & Wholesale Dealers.