



Temperance Department.

KILLED BY ALCOHOL.

The Harveian Medical Society of London, which was largely instrumental in securing the legislative suppression of baby-farming, has now instituted an enquiry into the mortality caused by alcohol, and has sent out a large number of forms requesting the experience of recipients in this matter. The following is part of a paper read by Dr. Norman Kerr before this society on February 6th :

When a few years ago, I instituted an enquiry into the causes contributing to the mortality in the practice of several medical friends, it was with the avowed object of demonstrating and exposing the utter falsity of the perpetual teetotal assertion, that 60,000 drunkards died every year in the United Kingdom. I had not long pursued this line of enquiry before it was made clear to me that there was little, if any, exaggeration in these temperance statistics; and, when asked to present the final results of my investigation to the last Social Science Congress, I was compelled to admit that at least 120,000 of our population annually lost their lives through alcoholic excess—40,500 dying from their own intemperance, and 79,500 from accident, violence, poverty, or disease arising from the intemperance of others.

Though proposing to discuss only the direct fatality in persons killed by their own indulgence, it may not be altogether irrelevant to ask your consideration of the following facts:—1. The Government returns of the sickness and mortality of the European troops forming the Madras army in 1849 show that the percentage of mortality was amongst total abstainers 11.1 per thousand, amongst the careful drinkers 23.1, and amongst the intemperate 44.5. 2. If all drinking, limited and unlimited, be taken into account, and if all our 16,000 practitioners had a similar experience to myself, the records of my own practice point to a minimum annual mortality from alcohol of 200,000. 3. If the opinion expressed by Dr. Richardson, than whom we have no higher authority, that our national vitality would be increased one-third were we a temperate nation, be well founded, we lost in 1876, through alcohol, 227,000 lives. 4. The death-rate in the General Section of the United Kingdom Assurance Company, from which drunkards are excluded altogether, being fully 17 per cent. higher than in the Abstaining Section, this ratio, applied to our whole number of deaths in Great Britain and Ireland, supposing we had no drunkards amongst us, gives a probable annual mortality from what Sir Henry Thompson calls "drinking far short of 'drunkenness' of more than 117,000.

But to our immediate subject, the deaths caused by the excessive drinking of the "slain by drink." After endeavoring in every possible manner to eliminate the doubtful cases, and cases for which there was no complete evidence, I have been unable to bring the deaths from alcoholic excess below 40,500. That this number is greatly under the truth I have not the slightest doubt. It is generally difficult, often impossible, to ascertain the truth as to the habits of the intemperate either from themselves or from their friends, and I have no hesitation in avowing the belief that a careful and well-ordered investigation will reveal a fatality from intemperance little, if at all, short of the teetotal tradition of 60,000. Indeed, from a more searching analysis of the causes of recent deaths, I am inclined to believe that even this number will yet be found inadequate to express the whole mortality amongst the victims of personal excess. Not long since, the unconscious husband of a lady dying in the prime of life had to be informed by his clergyman that she was dying from secret dipsomania, the spirits she drank having long been surreptitiously conveyed to her by her own daughter.

In his interesting and valuable paper read before this society, Dr. Morton put the mortality among the intemperate much higher than I had ventured to do. The latest returns I have been able to procure show in England and Wales 510,315 deaths in 1876; 93,509 deaths in Ireland in 1877; and 76,946 deaths in Scotland in 1873. Therefore, if Dr. Morton's estimate of 39,287 deaths of persons dying from their own intemperance in England and Wales be extended to embrace the Irish and Scotch returns, there will be a total death roll at all ages of 52,640. Though a certain proportion of these deaths occur in very young people, when we recollect that Dr. Morton's

returns comprise little more than half their due proportion of deaths in workhouses and no deaths at all in hospitals, we at once see how closely his results correspond with what we have all been accustomed to look upon as the exaggerated figure of 60,000.

Dr. Wakley was of opinion that from 10,000 to 15,000 persons died from hard drinking in London alone every year; Dr. Lankester held that alcoholic excess accounted for one-tenth of the death rate, i.e., for 68,000 deaths; while their talented successor in the onerous post of coroner for Central Middlesex, our esteemed associate Dr. Hardwicke, both at Cheltenham and at our last discussion on the subject here, emphatically declared his belief that the deaths from personal alcoholic excess amounted to much more than 40,000 yearly.

One county coroner has stated that intemperance was, directly or indirectly, the cause of nearly all the cases brought before him; and another that, during twenty years, excluding inquests held on children (many of these, too, arising from the drinking of mothers) and accidents in collieries, nearly nine-tenths of all the inquests he had held were on the bodies of persons "whose deaths were to be attributed to drinking;" Drs. Parkes and Sanderson, in their report on the sanitary condition of Liverpool, said that drink and immorality were the two great causes of the mortality; while Dr. Noble, of Manchester, gives it as his deliberate opinion that one-third of our disease is caused by intemperance, and another third by moderate drinking.

Permit me to add that the moderation of my own estimate of 120,000, directly and indirectly, and 40,000 directly cut off from amongst us every year by the excessive use of alcohol, though it has been freely criticised by the press throughout the country, has not only not been seriously disputed, but has been endorsed by Dr. Hardwicke, Dr. Nurn of Bournemouth, Dr. Hamilton, of Kendal, and a host of coroners and medical officers of health.

Dr. Farr himself seems to have awoke to a perception of the truth, for, though in his letter to the Registrar-General he had dwelt with complacency on the small number of deaths caused by alcohol, towards the close of the discussion, over which he so ably and courteously presided at Cheltenham, he admitted that perhaps 30,000 to 40,000 might die from drinking in England and Wales every year.

It is incumbent on the medical profession to disabuse the public of the idea that the Registrar-General's returns afford any indication whatever of the real number of deaths from intemperance, and I rejoice to know that our active and zealous associate, Dr. Danford Thomas, has dealt a destructive blow at this utter and most pernicious delusion. Many officers of health have repeatedly called attention to this subject. In his annual report for 1875, the medical officer for Heaton Norris says it is very rare for deaths to be registered as occurring from drinking, because a not unnatural feeling prompts the medical attendant to certify the death as having been caused by the secondary disease, rather than by the drinking itself. The medical officer for Bolton, in his annual report for 1875, says that, if the causes of the diseases from which persons died were certified, a very great number of deaths would be found to have been caused altogether, or chiefly, or in part, through alcohol.

Not one of over a hundred practitioners whom I have asked mentions alcohol, unless in very rare cases, in his certificates of death. Three members of a family with whom I am acquainted died from intemperance, one at the age of 36 from alcoholic phthisis, the second at 40 from alcoholic gout, and the third at 32 from the effects of an accident while drunk. In none of these cases did alcohol appear in the certificate.

With all our efforts we will never be able to lay bare anything like the whole mortality from intemperance. At an inquest held recently on a young man aged 19, who had died from alcoholic apoplexy, it came out that the father had long been a habitual drunkard, and, of his other sons, one aged 24 was an idiot, and the other had died at 21 from disease of the brain. Few episodes of our professional career are so painful as when we helplessly contemplate the idiots, epileptics, and criminals begotten by intemperate parents.

It has been objected that to concurrent factors ought to be truly ascribed many of the deaths commonly credited to alcohol. I believe this to be erroneous. The phthisis or the rheumatism of the intemperate is, more often than not, the direct product of the vitiation and devitalization of the blood by alcohol poisoning; and even when a person is laboring under an hereditary disease, he can often, if sober and careful, go on with tolerable vigor to old age, whereas alcoholic indulgence may so exhaust his nervous energy and irritate his vital organs that his hereditary foe, which alone gets the credit of killing him, may be forced into rapid and premature growth in the hothouse of alcohol. By all means ascribe to non-alcoholic concurrent factors their due

influence in the causation of death, but bear in mind that every person who dies, before he otherwise would have done, through alcoholic excess, must be regarded as an alcoholic premature death.

It has been urged, in our own ranks, that if all these statements as to excess in alcohol being so frequent a cause of death be true, "the world's grey fathers," to whom distilled spirits were unknown, ought to have lived longer than we do. And so they did, if the recognized version of the Sacred Record be reliable, Methuselah and his contemporaries being favored with, not to put too fine a point on it, lives somewhat more prolonged than the average duration of life in this our day and generation.

It is from the general practitioner that we must endeavor to acquire the information which alone can enable us to accurately estimate the alcoholic mortality. Dr. Morton's calculation was founded on returns furnished by twenty medical men, mine was based on the records of my own practice for sixteen years and the practice of twelve other medical men for shorter periods; but the weak point of both estimates is that they are constructed on very limited premises. What is wanted is to secure returns from at least 500 medical men in different parts of the kingdom—cities and towns as well as rural districts being duly represented,—and to sum up the figures thus obtained. This would afford a very fair criterion of the experience of the profession, and the ratio might be applied to the total number of those actively engaged in practice.—*League Journal.*

OPIMUM TRAFFIC WITH CHINA.

The facts connected with the opium trade have been briefly summarized thus:

1. The British Indian Government, by the growth and manufacture of opium, has assumed the position of a vast trading company, and has entered into the arena of commercial speculation with all the eagerness and anxiety of ordinary traders.

2. All the profits of this trade in opium go to enrich the Indian Treasury, and the prospects of British trade are injured to the extent of the amount spent by the Chinese on the Indian drug.

3. Hence it follows that the British Indian Government is enriching itself at the expense, at first, of course, of the Chinese, but actually of British manufacturers, and, therefore, ultimately of Great Britain itself.

4. This opium trade is further injurious to British trade, and prevents the growth of a legitimate commerce with China, by identifying the prejudice of the Chinese against us, and thus strengthens them in their opposition to all Western improvements, and to a more liberal intercourse with Western nations.

So much for the commercial side of this question; next as regards the moral aspect of the opium trade, which is far darker even than the former. There is abundant evidence to sustain the following points:

1. That from the earliest years of our intercourse with China the Chinese Government has uniformly protested against and opposed the introduction of opium to their country.

2. That while the British Government originally acknowledged opium to be a contraband article of trade with China, and warned persons dealing in it that any loss incurred in consequence of the interference of the Chinese must be borne by the parties who had brought that loss on themselves, yet it nevertheless undertook a war with China mainly for the purpose of defending the interests of those engaged in this (at that time) unlawful and contraband trade.

3. That our Government has compelled the Chinese, by the force of our superior arms (against the earnest and repeated protests of the highest officials in the Empire), to admit opium as an article of commerce subject to special import dues, and that we have repeatedly prevented the Chinese from imposing heavy restrictive import dues on opium, a measure which has been anxiously desired by Chinese statesmen in order that they might then be at liberty to deal with the habit of smoking opium, which is rapidly spreading among the people. That therefore we have most unlawfully interfered with the internal economy of this vast though inferior country.

4. That the opium trade has not merely been a barrier in the way of an extended commercial intercourse, but forms one of the greatest obstacles to missionary success.

If the above be a correct summary of the facts connected with the opium trade, it follows that both commercially and morally it is utterly indefensible.—*Leisure Hour.*

If a man or woman wants to drink beer because he or she likes the taste of it, that is one thing. If the idea is to show everybody that the drinker is "not a temperance fanatic," that is another thing. But for any one to use that stuff on the ground of its tonic effect or its nourishing qualities is simply absurd. "Wouldn't porter or lager beer help me as a tonic?" asked a gentleman, of a distinguished

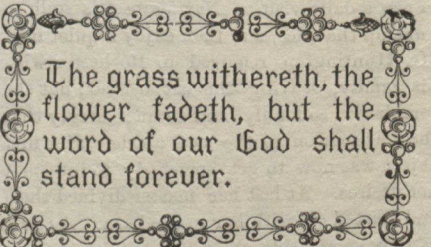
physician who had informed his patient that he needed a tonic of some kind. "Unquestionably there are tonic qualities in porter or beer," was the reply; "but if that is what you are after, I could give you in a teaspoonful of another mixture all the tonic you would find in a gallon of beer—without the four quarts of swash." And now some of the London papers are making an estimate of the relative quantity of German beer and of bread or beef required for purposes of nourishment. The *Lancet* quotes Baron Liebig's analysis of Bavarian beer, which showed seven hundred and thirty gallons of that drink to "contain exactly as much nutriment as a five-pound loaf, or three pounds of beef." From this it would seem that to gain from beer the nourishment equal to a quarter of a pound of beef and four ounces of bread, a person must drink nearly two thousand half-pint glasses of beer. Anything less than this would be an approach to abstinence from nutriment for a single day. So if beer-drinkers are after a fair amount of nourishment, they ought to buy their beer by the hoghead—and drink it by the barrel.—*S. S. Times.*

IN ONE of Mr. Mackay's letters from the Nyanza Mission he remarks that "drink is the curse of Africa." Wherever grain is plentiful he has found drunkenness. "Every night every man, woman, and child, even to the suckling infant," may be seen "reeling with the effects of alcohol." "On this account chiefly," he adds, "I have become a teetotaler on leaving the Coast, and have continued so ever since." Whoever would introduce civilization into Africa, he says, must be total abstainers. Mr. Mackay, on unpacking and arranging the goods at Kagei, found that everything needed was in the collection. Nothing had been lost, nothing broken, although the goods had been transported over 700 miles by porters; and everything had to be so distributed at the Coast that no package should exceed a man's load, or seventy pounds. He says the vessel, "Daisy," will not be strong enough for general use on Lake Nyanza, and that a new and larger vessel will have to be built. The Lake, like the Sea of Galilee, is a sea of storms. Sudden storms arise, and lash the usually calm waters into mighty waves.—*N. Y. Independent.*

LIEBIG'S CURE FOR INTEMPERANCE.—The *Scientific American* contains an account of an experimental test of Liebig's theory for the cure of habitual drunkenness. The experiment consisted of a simple change of diet, and was tried upon twenty-seven persons, with satisfactory results. The diet proposed is farinaceous, and, in the case reported, was composed of macaroni, haricot beans, dried peas and lentils. The dishes were made palatable by being thoroughly boiled, and seasoned with butter or olive oil. Breads of a highly glutinous quality were used, care being taken to prevent their being soured in course of preparation. In his explanation of the theory, Liebig remarks that the disinclination for alcoholic stimulants, after partaking of such food, is due to the carbonaceous starch contained therein, which renders unnecessary and distasteful the carbon of the liquors.—*Ex.*

SIR WILFRID LAWSON, writing in the *Nineteenth Century* on the use of intoxicating drinks, says: "No one favors excess. But though no one favors excess, it is admitted on all hands that, as a nation, we do exceed, and that £140,000,000 (seven hundred millions of dollars) per annum is far too much to be spent on a brain poison by the people of the United Kingdom. If drink were merely a harmless luxury, the above sum would be a startling national expenditure; but when we reflect that the consumption of this drink is, by the almost unanimous testimony of our judges, police, prison and poor-law authorities, and all those in a position to know the habits of the people, pronounced to be the main cause of crime and pauperism, it becomes truly alarming."

AT THE ANNUAL meeting of the *National Temperance League* its supporters rejoiced over several facts of interest. Branches of the League had been organized in 215 ships of the Royal Navy and in the government training ships. An admiral from Sheerness and an army chaplain from Aldershot testified to the decrease of drunkenness in the army and navy. The passage of the Irish Sunday Closing Bill was mentioned as a matter of special congratulation, as well as the increased interest in temperance work among England's aristocracy.



The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever.