

Somerset counties, and found that a most marvellous change had been wrought since I had lived there before. No one can tell what a blessing the Maine Law was to those communities. Public opinion sustained it, and I believe that if the moral men in the community had continued to sustain the law, and had kept up public opinion on the subject, there would have been no intemperance in the country at this day. Drunkenness was as rare in those counties in Maine as murder, forgery or theft. But men began to find fault with Neal Dow, and to quarrel about the law, and intemperance again crept in. Public sentiment has been deteriorating, and now we are nearly back to where we were in 1816.

ALCOHOL AS A DISEASE-PRODUCER.

From the Weekly Record.

That alcohol is a fruitful cause of disease is now generally acknowledged, and medical men in large practice have abundant opportunities for studying the morbid effects of intoxicating drink. This is so much the case that "Alcoholism" is now a recognized term in medical nomenclature, and it is spoken of as "acute" and as "chronic." In Dr. Marcet's work on "Chronic Alcoholism," there is a good account of that form of disease, and of its existence among persons who have no idea that they are guilty of excessive indulgence in strong drink. But what is called "acute alcoholism" is only to be seen among those persons who go beyond the bounds of what is popularly called moderation. The *Lancet* of last Saturday contained an article on "Some Effects of Acute Alcoholism," by S. H. Ward, M. D., physician to the Seaman's Hospital. The Doctor says:—

"By the 'effects of acute alcoholism,' I mean those induced either by a single intoxication, or by repeated intoxications extended over a few days, and occurring in individuals who for some time previously had been comparatively abstinent. There is no class of the community in whom we have the opportunity of studying such effects so well as in sailors. Under discipline, which is tolerably strict, at least in the better class of merchant ships, during the several months they are at sea, as soon as they come ashore a large number plunge at once into reckless debauchery. Those who have not had the opportunity of studying the habits of sailors would scarcely credit the large quantity of alcoholic drink consumed by them in a short time. One sailor who came under my care admitted having drunk thirty-six glasses of rum in twenty-four hours; a second smiled when I asked him

if he had taken as much as a quart of gin per day; a third had for four days been imbibing indifferently ale, rum, porter, and whisky; a fourth, ten days after he had been discharged from the 'Dreadnought,' cured of a protracted attack of dysentery, was brought back in a state of *delirium tremens*, having in the interval spent £75 in drink and dissipation. Beer is taken by these men in almost unlimited quantity, and seems to be regarded by them as a cooling beverage to be taken for the purpose of quenching thirst. When we consider the great amount of alcohol taken in these cases, the wonder is that, as a rule, we have no more serious result than the phenomena of ordinary intoxication, and the transient comatose state in which they terminate. Occasionally, however, the coma merges into complete paralysis of the cerebral faculties and death; or it may clear off, leaving the individual afflicted with cerebral symptom of a more or less serious and protracted character; or the repetition of intoxication for a few days may induce a state of cerebral congestion, and a series of symptoms intermediate between those of phrenitis and *delirium tremens*."

Dr. Ward then gives a number of illustrative cases.

The *Medical Times* of last Saturday contains a report of a lecture by H. Bence Jones, M. D., F. R. S., on "Bright's Disease," in which is described some of the "chronic" effects of alcohol. There are many persons who imagine that so long as intoxication is avoided, no evil consequences flow from the use of alcoholic liquors. A better acquaintance with the nature of such liquors would teach these persons that alcoholic liquor, when taken in quantities far short of what will produce drunkenness, can derange the functions of life, produce numerous diseases, and cause premature death. The great fact that alcohol is an enemy to the healthy human body, and is able to inflict serious injury even in small quantities, cannot be too widely known. This is the point to which the skillful physician should specially direct his attention—viz., the morbid effects of small doses of alcohol, or, as it is termed by the non-professional public, "moderate drinking." Dr. Bence Jones in his lecture describes the action of alcohol as follows:—

"Let me for a moment follow a dose of alcohol through the system. It passes through the stomach, and in going through is to a small extent oxidised. The greater part escapes, and enters the circulation, acting there on the oxygen, fibrin, albumen, and blood globules to a

small degree. In a few minutes a part passes, still being oxidized, into every secretion, as, for example, into the lungs, kidneys, liver; whilst another part passes into every other texture; and on each substance in each texture, the alcohol produces its chemical action, still continually undergoing oxidation, so that in a few hours one part has entirely escaped, and another part has been entirely oxidised in the blood and textures. What has the alcohol during this time done? It has acted chemically on oxygen and on the textures with which it has been in contact. The first action has little to do with the strength of the alcohol. Weak or strong, it combines with oxygen; increased oxidation, increased circulation, increased secretion, increased effusion of lymph, altered nutrition result. The second action depends on the strength of the alcohol. Strong alcohol acts chemically on albumen, fibrin, cellular tissue, &c. It has a powerful attraction for water, and it shrivels up cellular tissue, hardens fibrin, and precipitates albumen by its chemical properties.

To no organs of the body is more alcohol taken than to the kidneys and liver, and in no organs are the mechanical results of its chemical action more manifest, and the consequences of the altered structure more apparent; and the increased oxidation, the increased flow of blood, the altered nutrition, are identical in kind with the first actions of inflammation; and when the series of actions are repeated over and over again for years, the result is the same as might have been produced in a shorter time by an ordinary inflammation when no alcohol whatever had been taken.

"Dr. Christison states that three-fourths of all the cases of Bright's disease which he saw were produced by the habitual long-continued abuse of drink. Very great occasional excess did not act so strongly as long-continued smaller excess.

"No doubt the alcohol acts on the vessels and ducts; but not so powerfully as on the interstitial texture, with which we are at present occupied."

Alcohol is not only inimical to the healthy action of the body, but it can derange the intellectual powers, and make men forget their duty to themselves and their families. It is certainly the greatest enemy to the health and happiness of the community with which we are acquainted. And every means should be employed to make its dangerous properties known. At the same time the consoling truth—that abstinence from alcohol is perfectly practicable, and that it promotes all the best interests of man—should be everywhere published.