

A COMMON FALLACY AS TO DRINK.

Rev. Arthur Barry O'Neill, C. S. C., in Ave Maria.

In the course of a debate on a High License Bill introduced into the Provincial Parliament of New Brunswick some years ago, one of the speakers stated that he would support the measure, not for the increase of revenue that it would bring about, but because of the practical benefits likely to result therefrom to the cause of temperance. Having incidentally volunteered the information that personally he was a total abstainer, he added: "In fact, gentlemen, I have never tasted intoxicating liquor in my life."

"Theu," interjected a member on one of the opposite benches, "permit me to inform you that you have missed a whole lot of good times." The roar of laughter which greeted this sally, and which seemed to indicate that, in the opinion of the majority of the house, the "point was well taken," merely exemplified the ready assent yielded by most men to any fallacy that tends to gratify their passions. The particular fallacy which in this instance provoked the mirth of the legislators is one of which the world at large has long been the dupe — one which has been incalculably pernicious in its effects on social life, and which it is high time for the advocates of temperance thoroughly to explode.

Among all the considerations which in every age have induced young men to proffer their devotions at the shrine of Bacchus, to take their initial step on a course that has so lamentably often led to degradation, ruin, and the unhallowed grave of the drunkard, no other perhaps has been so potent as the impression that a moderate indulgence in alcoholic stimulants is conducive to one's general well-being, increasing the number of life's pleasures, and enhancing the delight of their fruition. Even granting that the doctrine of hereditary inebriety may still be considered tenable, not three youths in a hundred begin to drink because of the irresistible craving of an inherited appetite for liquor.

The example of companions and associates undoubtedly counts for much in the formation of the drinking habit among the young; but, for a great deal of its effective force, the example is indebted to the opinion, pre-existing in the mind of the young man or boy, that the sparkling glass is the inviting portal to a world of hitherto unknown joys. The craving for happiness is instinctive in man at every age, and the pursuit of real or apparent good is not least eager in youth; and so, because he has acquired the belief that pleasure and gladness and "a good time" await him in the wine cup, the would-be happy young man quaffs his first glass thereby taking a step which, there is no exaggeration in saying, is certainly hazardous and possibly fatal.

The very general prevalence of this erroneous opinion that wine adds something to the joys of existence is explicable enough when one reflects that, prior to the present century, it was invested with all the unquestioned authority of a venerable tradition; and was, moreover, accepted, endorsed, and fostered by perhaps three-fourths of all authors who appealed to the great mass of readers. That it is still held by the majority of men in all classes of society, is in accordance with a psychological law thus stated by Bacon: "If the human intellect hath once taken a liking to any doctrine, either because received and credited, or because otherwise pleasing, it draws everything else into harmony with that doctrine and to its support."

Now, the doctrine that "good wine is a good, familiar creature, if it be well used," is one to which the human intellect took a liking long before Iago so worded it; and the belief that a moderate use thereof gives an added zest to the enjoyment of life was for centuries so thoroughly received and credited that it became an integral portion of popular faith, and permeated the great bulk of popular literature. In nine-tenths of the world's poetry and fiction, from the age of Homer to an epoch still recent, Bacchus is honored with eulogistic tributes, scarcely yielding in impassioned fervor to the rival panes of which Venus is the subject. "The wine-cup, the wine-cup bring hither," is the constantly recurring prelude to every scene of mirth and jollity, conviviality and merriment.

Quaffing the ruddy juice of the purple grape seems an essential element of all genuine festivity; and in a hundred various ways the impression is conveyed that to the luckless wight who ignores the pleasures of the flowing bowl, life must, after all, be a poor affair, and scarcely worth the living. Only in the literary product of these latter decades is there a perceptible falling off in the cultus of the vine-crowned son of Jupiter and Semele; and, inasmuch as all literature is merely the reflex of human life in the era which produces it, this falling off is not the least reassuring or promising among the signs of our times. Not that the glorification of drinking is at an end, but the chorus of its praises is no longer swelled by the multitudinous voices that were wont to give it volume; and in an age which imposes on the "jolly god" the harsher title of King Alcohol, the palmist days in the reign of Bacchus are clearly past and gone.

That the use, however moderate, of wine, beer, whiskey, brandy, or other intoxicating liquor, increases the joys of any man's life, is an opinion which both the physiological science of our day and the rightly interpreted human experience of all previous centuries pronounce untenable, and its erroneousness is

daily becoming more and more generally recognized. The doctrine that the total abstainer is debarred from the fullest enjoyment of the highest delights afforded by social intercourse, perfect physical health, or intellectual activity, is so far from being correct that its direct contrary is the very truth. There is, of course, no question here of comparison between total abstinence and confirmed drunkenness; one might as well discuss the relative advantages of sanity and lunacy. Nor is there question of the comparative well-being of the teetotaler and the drinker who, although habitually moderate, is once in a while betrayed into excess. The consideration of the abuse of liquor, whether frequent or infrequent, being altogether eliminated from the discussion, the point is simply as to the greater or less degree of joy, pleasure, gratification or happiness experienced respectively by the man who totally abstains from alcoholic beverages and his (otherwise equally conditioned) neighbor who uses such beverages in moderation. Now, upon the question thus fairly stated, the most eminent physiologists and the keenest students of concrete humanity as well, declare that, despite the century-credited fallacy of which we have spoken, the total abstainer is blessed with better general health, is freer from nervous ailments and diseases, has more delicately perceptive physical senses, possesses brighter intellectual faculties, wider mental vision, clearer mind, and sounder judgment; has a more exquisite enjoyment of life, and lives longer, than he who indulges even with strictest moderation in alcoholic stimulants.

If the testimony of most literature is, as has been stated, at variance with this doctrine, it must be borne in mind that the great bulk of that testimony is proffered by special pleaders rather than witnesses unbiased by prejudice and considerations of personal interest. The evidence in favor of abstinence has been relatively scanty, simply because throughout the centuries the abstainers have been inconsiderable in point of numbers, and the non-abstainers have naturally disliked to convict themselves of inconsistency and folly. The testimony is largely one-sided, because in offering their evidence the witnesses have commonly failed to give, if not the truth, at least the whole truth.

The poets who, from Anacreon to our modern lyrics, have wreathed the sparkling goblet with garlands of encomiastic verse have very generally suppressed all mention of the emotions by which they were swayed on the morrow of the goblet's draining. Only occasionally does one of their number, giving utterance to remorseful afterthought, exclaim with honest Cassio: "O thou invincible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee devil!" Or lament with the same sobered reveller: "O God, that men should put an enemy into their mouths to steal away their brains!" The "good times" for which nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand drinkers, from the days of Noah to our own, have been indebted to the wine-cup, have very certainly been more than offset by the "mauvais quarts d'heure" which familiarity with that same cup has added to their experience. And this is true, not only of those who habitually or at least occasionally drink to excess, but of the overwhelming majority of moderate drinkers as well,—of the men who "can take a glass or let it alone," who "know when they have enough," and who "could practise total abstinence to-morrow" (if they felt like it) "without the slightest trouble or hardship."

Let any hundred moderate drinkers, chosen at random from the more intelligent classes of society, calmly and dispassionately review the record of their emotions and sensations during any considerable period of time, candidly attributing effects to their real causes, and it is more than probable that fully eleven-twelfths of their number will be forced to acknowledge that even their restrained indulgence has occasioned them more pain than pleasure, more regret than complacency. The temporary exhilaration produced by wine or kindred stimulants is inevitably followed by a corresponding depression; and the stimulant does not raise the spirits as far above, as the subsequent reaction sinks them below, their normal level. If alcohol is to be credited with the genial glow of factitious comfort which is the immediate result of its imbibition, it should, in all justice and fairness, be debited with the lessened vitality and impaired nervous tone which supervene with rhythmic regularity when that transitory glow subsides. Entering all pertinent items thus impartially on the opposite sides of his account with alcohol, the moderate drinker will find that in his dealings therewith, even in the matter of pleasurable sensations, his losses far exceed his gains.

The most instructive and genuinely valuable testimony on this question is clearly neither that of the man who has always been a moderate drinker nor that of him who has always been a total abstainer, but rather that of the man who, at different periods of his career, has figured in each character, and can consequently speak from actual experience of both tipping and teetotalism. There are many thousands of such men in our day,—more thousands, in all probability, than during any previous period in the world's history; and their evidence may be confidently appealed to, as conclusively establishing the position maintained in this paper,—viz.: that, other conditions being equal, the total

abstainer, as such, is happier than, not only the abuser, but the user, of intoxicating liquors. Of the relatively few men who practised abstinence until they arrived at the age of thirty or thirty-five, and then began to indulge in the moderate use of alcohol, not three in a hundred can honestly affirm that their indulging has increased life's sunshine or lessened its gloom; whereas the thousands on thousands who at about the same age entirely abandoned drink are unanimous in declaring that their abstinence has been the source of a notable addition to their peace and comfort, light and joy.

That the foregoing statement is not merely a gratuitous assertion, incapable of proof or verification, any reader may convince himself by personal inquiry. Let him interview such members of total abstinence societies or other temperance organizations as were formerly moderate drinkers. Let him consult any of the two hundred thousand men and women, experienced in all grades of the use and abuse of liquor, who persist in affirming that Dr. Keeley, of Dwight, has cured them of the drink habit, and he will discover that they are a unit in extolling the eminent advantages, from the standpoint of general well-being and happiness, as from every other possible standpoint, to total abstinence over any degree of alcoholic indulgence.

If it be asked why the condition of the abstainer is thus incomparably preferable to that of the drinker, abundantly satisfactory reasons will be found in the demonstrated truths of medical science relative to the action of alcohol on the human system. As physiology has been referred to, in a preceding paragraph, in support of our contention, it will be pertinent to give here a few of the conclusions which have been arrived at, after years of earnest study and patient investigation, by some of the world's most famous medical practitioners.

"Health," says Sir Andrew Clarke, "is that state of the body in which all its functions go on without notice or observation, and in which existence is felt to be a pleasure; in which it is a kind of joy to see, to hear, to touch, to live. Now, that is a state which can not be benefited by alcohol in any degree. Nay, it is a state which, in nine cases out of ten, is injured by alcohol."

"Alcohol, even in small doses, will take the bloom off, and injure the perfection of loveliness of health, both mental and moral."

"It is one of the commonest things in English society," says Sir William Gull — and his words are equally applicable to American society — "that people are injured by drink without being drunkards. There is a great deal of injury done to health by the habitual use of wines in their various kinds, and alcohol in its various shapes, even in so-called moderate quantities. It leads to the degeneration of the tissue, it spoils the health, and it spoils the intellect."

Dr. Ridge found by experiment that the senses of sight, hearing, and touch, were impaired by even so small a quantity of alcohol as is found in a gill of ale. Dr. Norman Kerr declares: "Our mind will be clearer, our thoughts more at command, and our execution of whatever we have to do more thorough, if we totally abstain than if we drink even a little." And the eminent authority, Dr. Lauder Brunton, summarizes the results of scientific research in this matter as follows: "The effect of alcohol upon the nervous system may be described as one of progressive paralysis."

Now, whether the thesis which we have advanced be considered fully established or only partially proven, this much at least has been made manifest: that the transition from moderate drinking to total abstinence is not a change from a better to a worse condition or state. And this is a point which, with all respect be it said, the advocates of temperance may well emphasize considerably more than they are accustomed to do. In view of the respective advantages of the two conditions, is there not a certain unnecessary stress laid upon the "sacrifices" made by the moderate drinker who becomes a total abstainer, and a certain undue prominence given to the idea of the "self denial" involved in his abstinence? Does not frequent use of these terms imply a lingering suspicion that, after all, the man who absolutely quits drink is going, in the graphic phrase already quoted, "to miss a whole lot of good times"? If, as we hold to be evident and as all total abstainers certainly believe, the true doctrine is the direct opposite of this, why not state the case more logically, and employ somewhat apter terms in the statement? Two facts that need to be emphasized at this stage of the temperance battle are: that even the most moderate drinker has contracted, or is contracting, a habit certainly injurious to his health and happiness; and that the moderate drinker who, abjuring alcohol, becomes a total abstainer, displays, not heroic sacrifice and self-denial, but merely common prudence and genuine self-love.

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OUR HOLY FATHER AS AN EX-AMPLE OF ZEAL AND DEVOTION.

Do Catholics realize the magnitude of the work the Catholic Church has to do in the world and the tremendous responsibility that rests upon each one for his share of the great work? We fear not. Look at our Holy Father Loo XIII., that grand old man, who towers majestically above all who are called great in this world: sitting in his exalted Seat and surveying the nations with a keen perception of the evils of the time and the needs of the age in which we live, longing and laboring incessantly for the temporal as well as spiritual good of the people. With a wisdom well nigh superhuman he comprehends the great fact that the Catholic Church, as the true and only valid representative and embodiment of Christianity on earth, is the only savior of society and hence he is laboring for two important objects, first the union of all Christians in one grand comprehensive efficient and authoritative organization; and, second, the conversion of all outside the pale of Christianity, Jews, Pagans, Turks, Infidels and heretics. The zeal, the energy, the comprehensive wisdom and the never-failing, untiring and self-sacrificing devotion with which he is laboring for the accomplishment of these great ends are such as to command the admiration and homage of the whole world. His great heart is in his work. Even in his old age when the faculties of ordinary men are crippled and confined, he rises to the magnitude of the work; his whole soul is absorbed with an intense, a burning enthusiasm which might well consume a younger and vigorous frame. He is indeed *Lumen in Cælo*, a burning and a shining light, a chosen messenger of God for the enlightening of mankind and leading them into the way of truth and peace.

But our object is not to write a eulogy of our holy and beloved Pontiff. Reading, studying and meditating upon his character as revealed in his history and in his numerous encyclicals, briefs and official communications to the Church and the results which are daily being developed, we have been stirred to the very depths of soul, and the thought has spontaneously been suggested, What are we — what are all Catholics — doing to respond to this noble enthusiasm of the great leader of the chosen hosts of God's elect? Have we ever risen to comprehension in any degree of the magnitude of the work of the Church and the responsibility which rests upon each one of us for our share in the great work? Have we a real living faith in the truth and power of our holy religion? Do we love the Church and take a deep and absorbing interest in her prosperity? Have we a sincere compassion for the souls outside of what we believe to be the true Fold of Jesus Christ?

If I would seem as if we had but to cast an eye over what is called the Christian world outside the Church to be filled with a genuine sympathy and yearning compassion for the multitudinous sects of so-called Christians who are groping after the truth with no certain infallible light to guide them. Becoming more and more convinced of their fatal mistake in adopting the disintegrating principle which has resulted in the divisions which now plague them, and seeing clearly the necessity of unity in order to fulfill the desire and the prediction of the great Head of the Church, they are casting about with the greatest anxiety and perplexity for some efficient plan of union, but without the slightest hope, we will not say of organic but of even confederate union which will at all satisfy the demands of logic, of common sense or of true Christian principle. To us who have the only true, efficient principle of unity, who feel an infallible certainty that our feet are planted upon the eternal, impregnable Rock of ages, the condition of these our left handed brethren is indeed most pitiable. And when we consider that it is nothing but an old hereditary prejudice, as absurd as it is unfounded and unjust, that keeps them from returning to the unity of Holy Mother Church we may well be roused to an earnest zeal and enthusiasm for their conversion and pray that the good Lord will remove the scales from their eyes and that they may be led to see and embrace the truth.

But what appeals, if possible, with even greater force to our compassion, our zeal, and our prayers is the powerful tendency to lawlessness, anarchy and corruption of morals which are being everywhere developed in society. Every man is a law to himself and the stiletto and the revolver are at once his instruments of protection and revenge. But the grand danger lies in combination of the bad elements of society when force is opposed to force and it becomes a question of numbers, as to which shall triumph.

Where is the hope of society? Not certainly in legislation. What does the anarchist care for law or for interests of society? Not in a godless, secular education. Such an education only adds to power to the depraved enemy of society. No, reason, experience and all history proves that our only hope is in the moral power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ brought to bear upon the minds and hearts of men by an authority recognized as divine, and which binds the conscience, as with links of steel, to the throne of God the Maker and Ruler of the Universe. There is no power on earth that can do that but the Catholic Church.

We are not now reasoning with outsiders — we are simply recalling to the

minds of our own brethren — of Catholics everywhere and of all classes and conditions — the recognized principles and teachings of their faith, with the purpose of grounding upon them an earnest appeal to their faith, their loyalty and their zeal. Would to God we could stir their hearts with something of the enthusiasm and persevering devotion of our Holy Father in his efforts to build up the Church and save society as well as the souls of men from impending doom!

Let us not be discouraged with the idea that we are powerless to stem the tide of corruption and disorder. With God all things are possible. Have faith as a grain of mustard seed and you shall remove mountains. Let no feelings of tenderness or sympathy with the overshadowing of Protestantism with which you are daily associated cause you to falter in your zeal and effort for the holy cause. Protestantism is powerless in this more than herculean task. But are there not good men among Protestants? Oh, yes, plenty of them of every shade of opinion. But they are isolated, individual, disintegrated and powerless as an organized body. They lack continuity, consistency and unity of faith and that divine authority which links us with Jesus Christ and His holy Apostles. The world does not respect them, does not care for them, certainly does not fear them. They fear the Catholic Church, and they respect, though they hate it. They hate it because they do not understand it. It is their best friend if they did but know it, but they have been taught that it is their worst enemy. It is for us Catholics to convince them of their mistake.

Let us then all wake up to our individual responsibility. Let us preach to them and at least set them a good example of Christian integrity, Christian zeal and devotion in every relation of life. Let us be ready for every good work and always careful to let our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. — Catholic Review.

The Sisters in a Chicago Pest-house.

There was a pretty general feeling of alarm in Chicago some weeks ago over the prospect of a small-pox epidemic. Cases were quite frequent, and more than once a panic was narrowly averted. The health authorities took the matter vigorously in hand; a contagious disease hospital, or pest-house, was fitted up and placed under the care of a resident medical force and twenty Catholic Sisters, who managed the establishment and nursed the patients.

When a case of the dreaded disease was brought to light the fact was immediately reported to the health officer, who promptly caused the removal of the person afflicted to the isolation of the pest-house. The number of inmates quickly reached and, indeed, exceeded the capacity of the hospital. Yet the faithful nurses, whose identity was concealed by the religious garb, with a self-forgetfulness and heroism rarely encountered outside of Catholic charitable institutions, loyally and tenderly devoted themselves to the victims of the leathsome disease placed under their care. The inmates of the pest-house were recruited from all ranks, but the majority, as may be supposed, came from the hovels of the very poorest classes in the community. Black and white persons, varying in age from infancy to a period beyond the Scriptural allotment, and representing all conditions of humanity and various nationalities, were turned over to the tender care and keeping of the angels of mercy, self-consecrated in God's name to the alleviation of human anguish and affliction.

The record of the noble women who have nursed the inmates of the Chicago pest-house will only be revealed when the glorious scroll of human virtue and self-sacrifice is unfolded in eternity. — Cleveland Universe.

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