



A Poisoned Race.

In every club, bar-parlor, railway carriage and other meeting-place of British citizens, there is being discussed to-day the question of imports. We are assailed every morning with a hurtling storm of facts, figures and arguments as to the effect upon national and individual prosperity of the things we are taking in from abroad. Meanwhile there is a question of 'imports' which the financiers leave out of account, but which, if we do not settle—so dangerous and deadly menacing does it become—bids fair sooner or later to settle us. It is the question of the imports to our physical constitution. Much closer to our life and happiness than what we are taking in at our ports is the matter of what we are taking in day by day to our bodily frame, for internal consumption there. Here is a Protection doctrine which is more urgent than any the politicians discuss. Maeterlinck says that after all these thousands of years we have not yet learned the art of eating. What is certain is that we have been and are madmen in the business of drinking.

A correspondent once wrote to Huxley, asking him what he thought of alcohol as a brain stimulant for mental work. His reply was prompt: 'I would just as soon take a dose of arsenic as I would of alcohol under such circumstances.' That was for work. Of its use for play he has elsewhere another word: 'I am as jolly as a sandboy as long as I live on a minimum and drink no alcohol.' Man is indeed a singular individual. He is in charge of an organism made up of millions of separate particles, fitted together in the subtlest fashion, and the whole depending absolutely for its going condition on the well-being and doing of these separate parts. A cycle manufacturer once astonished the present writer by telling him the number of portions that went to the make-up of one machine. But the hundreds in this case are the veriest trifle compared to the components of your frame and mine. When something breaks in our bicycle the excursion is spoiled. But we can get it mended, or buy another, and may promise ourselves a fresh expedition to-morrow. But for the longer excursion we call our life we have only one machine, and its breakdown is a disaster indeed.

We are, in a way, not only the users, but the makers of this machine. We import daily its components. From them we manufacture our skin, our bone, our heart, our brain, our lungs. According to the material imported, so will be our engine, and so will fare the passenger it carries.

We have been from the earliest times a nation of hard drinkers, and we are now drinking harder than ever. During the last fifty years, notwithstanding the efforts of all our churches, temperance associations and what not, the latest statistics show the consumption of alcohol per head of the population as having increased by twenty percent, while prosecutions for drunkenness show an increase of thirty-six percent. We are a poisoned race.

In this matter many of us have been living in a fool's paradise. We had studied the subject in patches, and taken parts for the whole. We saw an enormous improvement in certain directions and imagined it covered the field. In some quarters there has been undoubtedly a vast change for the better.

But the supply of drunkards, drying up in some quarters, is being replenished in others. The area is steadily extending. The women have come into it. One of the most ghastly features of the social life of to-day is feminine drinking. Every man we meet has his story of ruined homes with this as the key to the tragedy. During these last years the thing has come in like a flood. We are under a drink inundation. And it is covering neighbor lands. Some of the most hitherto temperate races are being submerged. France, which once stood so high for the sobriety of its people, is now ravaged by absinthe and has a fatal pre-eminence in alcoholism. Switzerland is no better. We had in our hands

some time ago an appeal by the Catholic Bishop of Fribourg, in which he declared that two-thirds of the canton had gone down the throats of the people. In other words, the peasant proprietors had, through drink, mortgaged their lands to that extent. It reminds one of the saying of Cato of a guzzler who had got through a seaboard estate: 'What the sea could not have swallowed without difficulty, this man has taken down with all the ease imaginable.'

To fight this demon seems like fighting the innermost constitution of things, so deeply has the disease penetrated. To get back to sanity we need to change institutions, customs, social values, literatures, our very language. Intoxication, as Noah's example informs us, seems to have been one of the earliest human achievements, and while man has lost many of the ancient arts he has kept this. Literature is full of it. How many of the old poems are drinking songs? Has any one tried to reckon the amount of liquor consumed in 'Pickwick'? Literature has indeed played us an ill-turn in this matter. It has labored to invest this poisoning business with all the grace of its sentiment and all the vivacity of its humor. We miss the falsity of the thing as we laugh. How we have roared over Pickwick, helpless in his wheelbarrow in the village pound! What should we think or feel if our own father, or husband, or son, were there in that condition?

The battle has indeed to be fought from the beginning. Spite of all discouragements, public teachers must try and persuade their fellow-men to come round to sanity on this matter.

The basis of the present position is the world's weak will. As Clement of Alexandria says: 'No one prefers evil as evil.' The mischief is such numbers of men have not will enough to keep them on their feet. In these circumstances we must lend them some. Society will walk of itself in time, let us hope; but to-day it is in need of crutches. Legislation on this question is one of the most imperious of demands.

Meanwhile, and apart from politics, is there not a call for some of us to wake up in this matter? Men drink from sheer vacuity of life. Cannot the churches do more than they are doing to fill up that vacant interior? And as individuals, can we afford to be neutral if we would do our duty to our country? Extreme positions even, under the circumstances, have their reasons. When more than half a boat's crew are leaning far over the side, it will not do, if we would keep the balance, for the rest of us to sit in middle. We want to-day a strong position in face of our children and our sorely-tempted fellow man.

Lamb once asked Coleridge 'Whether an immortal and amenable spirit may not come to be damned at last, and the man never suspect it beforehand?' It is a question which many a man, on that slippery slope which he himself knew but too well, might ask to-day. And for an answer he cannot do better than to determine, again in Lamb's own words, to—

Clasp his teeth,

And not undo 'em

To suffer wet damnation to run through 'em.
—J. B., in the 'Christian World.'

Alcohol and Insanity.

The day of temperance oratory, which partook mainly of pathetic pictures, of 'The Drunkard's Home,' and fervid appeals to stay the 'Rum Giant,' and the 'Liquor Demon,' has almost passed. This is not on account of any weakness in the total abstinence movement, but because that movement has passed its infancy. People are more ready than they ever were to welcome intelligent argument on the subject. From a purely professional standpoint it is interesting to compare opinions on the causes of lunacy recently given by authorities in Great Britain and continental Europe. The German Association for the Investigation of Mental Diseases has found that out of every one hundred cases in State asylums, 73 percent are the result of intemperance, either personal or inherited. Last year 340 persons afflicted with mental disease took their own lives, of whom 298 were drunkards or the children of drunkards. Among these 340 persons were 27 children, all addicted to drink. The 340 persons who killed themselves killed besides 89 persons, of whom 52 were

their own children. The statistics of the past four years show that in 211 cases where a mad woman killed her children her madness was caused by drink. This is startling, especially as the 'temperance' of the beer drinkers of Germany has been preached in season and out of season by those who do not believe in total abstinence.

Dr. Forbes Winslow stated last year that out of the total number of registered lunatics in England, i.e., 113,964, about 36,465 cases are attributable to drink, and draws the moral that 'Alcohol in every form ought to be shunned and avoided... and is responsible for making a sane nation into a mad one.' 'The British Medical Journal' some time ago published a statement from the medical superintendent of the asylum at Carmarthen, in which he places the proportion of cases of insanity among the laboring classes traceable to intemperance at 35 percent, and continues: 'Yet even this is not the whole truth. We must add to this 35 percent the cases of those who owe their insanity to the intemperate habits of their parents.' Dr. Edgar Sheppard, medical superintendent of Colney Hatch in 1883, said: 'For twelve years I have watched the development of the greatest curse which afflicts the country. From 35 to 40 percent is a fairly approximate estimate of the ratio of insanity directly or indirectly due to alcoholic drink.' In Ireland, of the medical superintendents of twenty-two district asylums, twenty agree that in their experiences the most prevalent cause of insanity after heredity is alcoholism.—'Christian Globe.'

An Educator of Scientific Temperance Instruction.

The Hon. H. R. Pattengill, one of Michigan's most widely known and popular educators, in a recent editorial in the Michigan State teachers' paper, 'Moderator Topics,' said:

'Temperance teaching in our schools has been of incalculable benefit. Let the work everywhere be kept up to a high standard. The physiologies of to-day do not overdo the subject one whit. Teachers, don't be sidetracked in your work by the emissaries of saloons. By overwhelming preponderance the scientific and medical experts of to-day stamp the use of alcoholic beverages as dangerous and damaging to body, mind and soul. But we don't need experts to tell us this. Evidences are all about us. Horrible object lessons are all too plentiful. The past winter has been prolific in examples of the effects of alcohol. Teach the subject just as dispassionately, vigorously and thoroughly as you do any other of the school subjects. Let the youth understand that he smirches his reputation by entering a saloon.'

'Many of our great railways and mercantile establishments are barring out all drinkers of intoxicants. Old soakers may be beyond our reach; but teachers, do your level best to save the boys.'

Cigarette smoking is an intellect wrecker. The father who permits it in his boy may as well abandon hope of that boy's future. He is laying the axe at the root of the tree and employing the woodsman to do his work.

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