

There is no writer whose views on this subject have a greater claim to respectful consideration than Sir James Paget, and they have special value because he considers the subject from a very broad standpoint, and treats of the effects of the use of alcohol, not on individuals, but on nations. Deductions drawn in this way are less apt to be erroneous than if drawn from a small number of cases. I need not, therefore, make any apology for quoting him at some length.

He points out that the opinions of medical men are, by a vast majority, in favour of moderation, as opposed to abstinence, and expresses his conviction that the moderate use of alcoholic beverages is generally beneficial. "The beliefs of reasonable people are," he says, "by a large majority favourable to moderation, and this should be regarded as of weight in this discussion. This readiness to fall in with custom goes far to prove that the evidence of the custom being a bad one is not clear. Its habitual use has been for centuries the custom of a large majority of civilized nations—there is a natural inclination among civilized men to drink, and in the absence of any clear evidence to the contrary, there must be a presumption that such a natural taste has a purpose for good, rather than for evil. Natural tastes of all creatures for foods and drinks is a guide for good rather than for evil. Doubtless some persons use alcoholic beverages to a mischievous excess; doubtless many use them to whom even in moderation they are useless or mischievous. But the fact of nearly universal custom is very weighty, and gives a strong presumption to the belief that they are beneficially adjusted to natural necessities. This presumption is borne out by a comparison between the races that do not, and those that do use alcoholic beverages. Compare the Eastern races with the Western. The Easterns do not live longer, nor are they healthier, than the Westerns, and as to working power, there can be no question that the advantage is on the side of those who use alcoholic drinks. And longevity is not the test of the value of the things on which we live. What is most desirable is a national power and will for good working and good thinking, and a long duration of the period of life fitted for these, and facts show that these are more nearly attained by those who drink alcoholic liquors than by those who do not. Again, knowing, as we do, the force of heredity, it is hardly conceivable that if moderation were in any sense mischievous, its evils should not have become evident during a thousand years of the practice. The offspring of thirty generations ought if injured thereby to be below the offspring of thirty generations of abstainers, such as the Mohammedans. But the result is the reverse of this. West against East, North against South, the heirs of the moderate drinkers are better men in mind and body than the heirs of the abstainers. In twenty generations every man has, according to Blackstone, over a million of ancestors. So we see the influence heredity ought to have on each individual. Now if the moderate use is to any degree mischievous, or the evil done to any extent transmissible, what should be the condition of every one of us if a measure of evil had come along each of a million lines, with constantly accumulating and converging force. It would be difficult to find a healthy family born of three successive generations of drunkards. If then healthy families are born after thirty generations of moderate drinkers, how can we fairly charge its moderate use with doing mischief? Is it not fair rather to think it probable that it has been beneficial, and one among the conditions to which we owe the still gradually increasing healthiness and working power of our race? It is a very bad argument to say that because a large quantity of alcohol does a man harm, a smaller quantity will do him some harm though less. The same reasoning has only to be extended to such drugs as quinine, arsenic, strychnia or common salt to show its absurdity. Each of those is a deadly poison in large quantities, whilst properly used quinine cures our ague, arsenic our skin diseases, strychnia is one of our most valued tonics, and common salt is a necessary of life.

"I think that in this, as in all other things lawful yet tempting, the discipline of moderation is better than the discipline of abstinence. It seems un-