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THE INEBRIATE POPULATION.*

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What shall be done with the inebriate class of our population? is a question that is daily becoming one of anxiety and importance, to the physician, the economist, and the humanitarian.

The loss to society and the State of the productive activity of this large and ever-increasing class is enormously great. It might not be a difficult matter to arrive at a correct estimate, on this point, but this is not necessary for our present purpose. The question cannot be measured from an economic standpoint solely, nor should it be approached in a purely materialistic manner. It is so inseparably associated with all that makes life valuable, with human ideals and advancement, with the ethical well-being of humanity, that it cannot possibly be regarded in the light of economic science. The mental, moral, and physical development of mankind is entwined in these considerations. I might go further and say, that the continuation of the race itself, in its higher and more valuable attributes, is closely connected with this vital question. For, it must be admitted, that inebriety, in its many forms, is confined to no age, no nation, no race. Down through all the pages of history its course may be traced; at periods, like other endemic diseases, its virulence would seem to abate, only to break out all the more fiercely at another place, or another time.

Alcoholic inebriety stands possibly in the first rank, in the number of its victims. The more general use of alcohol has led,

* Read at meeting of Ontario Medical Association.