

Alcohol in Medicine.

A SUMMARY OF THE CASE.

Miss Willard States It Clearly and Forthly - What is Being Done by the W. C. T. U. - Remarkable Declarations by Medical Associations and High Authorities - A Dangerous Drug and not a Food - Hinders, not Helps Work - An Anesthetic that can often be dispensed with.

The scientific stand-point is probably, after all, the most important from which the Temperance question can be viewed. The theory that alcohol has a dietic value is one of the most dangerous doctrines that we have to deal with. The Temperance cause owes a debt of gratitude to the able men and women who have given time and thought to the discussion of the questions of alcohol as food, and alcohol as medicine. Slowly but steadily, the most advanced and experienced medical men are coming over to the side of total abstinence. Total abstinence is the basis from which Prohibition is evolved. If total abstinence is wrong, or not to be commended, then the legislative suppression of the liquor traffic holds the same position. Some time ago Miss Willard prepared a very careful review of the position which this department of Temperance discussion then occupied. It is full of information, and food for argument and thought. We submit it nearly in full for the benefit of our readers.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union has from the beginning believed that in its battle with the drink curse it must adopt the "DO EVERYTHING POLICY." Into every nook and corner of the awful darkness light must penetrate. Wherever the malaria broods, there disinfectants must be steadily applied. The area blighted by an must blossom with God's grace. The drink curse is entrenched in custom, hence we must follow it into society; it shields itself behind false theories of science, hence we must follow it into the schools (medical colleges included); it is hedged about by the guarantees and safeguards of law, hence we must follow it into the realm of government; it exerts its utmost force to evade penalty, hence by political action we must seek temperance candidates—the officer behind the ordinance, the enforcer back of the law, which without him is but a rusty sword in a palsied hand.

THE INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CONGRESS.

In pursuance of this many-sided policy, the National W. C. T. U. sent a memorial to the International Medical Congress which met in Philadelphia in 1876, and was the most representative medical body ever convened in this country, consisting of over 600 delegates. A paper by the distinguished Dr. Ezra M. Hunt was read before the section on medicine, and its conclusions were quite unanimously adopted by the section, after a most thorough and able debate, and subsequently by the congress itself as a reply to our memorial. The subject of this paper was "Alcohol in Its Therapeutic Relation as a Food and Medicine," and the following conclusions from its well considered premises were filed by the congress as its opinion in the great chancery suit of The American Home versus King Alcohol.

- 1. Alcohol is not shown to have a definite food value by any of the usual methods of chemical analysis or physiological investigation.
2. Its use as a medicine is chiefly that of a cardiac stimulant, and often admits of substitution.
3. As a medicine it is not well fitted for self-prescription by the laity, and the medical profession is not accountable for such administration, or for the enormous evils arising therefrom.
4. The purity of alcoholic liquors is in general not as well assured as that of articles used for medicine should be. The various mixtures, when used as medicine, should have definite and known composition, and should not be changed promiscuously.

THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION SPEAKS.

But this opinion was rendered over nine years ago, and the progress of scientific investigation has been such that one still more favorable to the Temperance reform would doubtless be given were such a convention to be held to-day. In 1882 Mrs. Mary H. Hunt, our National superintendent of scientific temperance instruction in the public schools, addressed the American Medical Association in Minneapolis at its twenty-third session where 700 delegates were present and they passed the following:

Resolved, That we reaffirm our former resolutions on the use and abuse of alcohol and its effects upon the race, and recommend instruction in hygiene in our public schools.

Among those "former" deliverances were the following:

Resolved, That in view of the alarming prevalence and ill effects of intemperance, with which none are so familiar as members of the medical profession, and which have called forth from eminent English practitioners the voice of warning to the people of Great Britain concerning the use of alcoholic beverages, we, the undersigned members of the medical profession of the United States, unite in the declaration that we believe alcohol should be

classified with other powerful drugs; that when prescribed it should be done with conscientious caution and a sense of great responsibility. Resolved, That we would welcome any change in public sentiment that would confine the use of intoxicating liquors to the use of science, art, and medicine.

THE NEED FOR WORK.

Some illustrations from personal observation may help to make more clear the reason why the W. C. T. U. is intent upon securing all possible help from the medical profession, and why in eighteen States and Territories it has already successfully labored to provide by statutory law for scientific instruction in the common schools relative to the evil effects of alcoholic and other narcotic poisons upon the human system.

One stormy afternoon in 1882 I went with Mrs. T. B. Carso, President of Chicago Central W. C. T. U., to the Harrison Street Police Station. As is generally known, this society has now a police matron at every station in the city, whose duty it is to look after the women brought there for violations of law, and to minister with sisterly kindness to their needs, both physical and spiritual. We found that many had been imprisoned that day, but the matron directed our attention especially to the most distant cell, where a woman lay curled up on a bench, with an old shawl over her head. She had been brought in drunk some hours before. As we stood there, thinking her to be asleep, and lamenting, in whispered tones, her sad condition, the woman arose, came towards us, grasping with a small white hand the bars of the cell, and spoke to us in a sweet voice, saying, "Do you ladies really care for one so hopeless?" We assured her of our sympathy, and in a talk that followed learned that she was born in a leading Southern city, had graduated from a first-class normal college, and been for years a teacher. One spring, about four years previous to our meeting, worn out with her duties, she went to the family physician, who prescribed an alcoholic beverage as a "tonic." From that day she had gone on, little by little, until now she was a confirmed imberbe, often reforming, but as often falling into sin. Subsequent investigation proved that she was related to a refined and wealthy family in Chicago. They and we have done all in our power for her. She has been at the Martha Washington Home, and for months has kept her pledge, only to fall away from it at last.

I have mentioned this one case out of ten thousand that come to the knowledge of practical temperance workers, because a single illustration is often retained in memory when a generalization may be forgotten, and because this is a type of fully one-half the cases of inebriety among women and perhaps one-third in men, viz. it began by an alcoholic prescription. It is quite probable that the physician whose ignorant advice lead to a pure and cultured woman's first step toward ruin, never knew the fact, and would be unspeakably astounded, not to say afflicted, if it were brought to his attention. I said the prescription was an ignorant one, and am prepared to prove it on the highest medical authority.

Dr. Andrew Clark, of London, physician to the Queen and to Gladstone, says "Alcohol is not only not a helper of work but a certain hinderer, and every man who comes to the front of a profession in London is marked by this one characteristic, that the more busy he gets the less in any amount of alcohol he takes, and his excuse is, 'I am sorry, but I cannot take it and do my work.'"

NOTABLE OPINIONS.

Dr. William B. Carpenter, one of the greatest names in medicine, says "It is the duty of the medical practitioner to discourage as much as possible the habitual use of alcoholic liquors in however moderate a quantity by all persons in ordinary health, and to seek to remedy those slight departures from health which result from the wear and tear of active life by the means which shall most directly remove or antagonize their causes, instead of by such as simply palliate their effects." Sir Henry Thompson, of London, than whom the world's metropolis has not a physician more distinguished, makes the following declaration: "Alcoholic drinks are perfectly useless for any of the conditions of life to which men are subjected save under the most exceptional conditions, which none but skilled observers can declare."

Dr. James R. Nichols, editor of the Boston Journal of Chemistry, says emphatically that "the banishment of alcohol would not deprive us of a single one of the indispensable agents which modern civilization demands. Neither would chemical science be retarded by its loss." In no instance of disease is any form of it a medicine which might not be dispensed with and other agents substituted.

PRACTICAL TEMPERANCE TREATMENT.

Dr. James Edmunds, founder of the London Temperance Hospital, states that the mortality there is "43 per cent. lower than in any other hospital taking the same run of cases. Alcohol is almost never used in the hospital, is not employed in making tinctures, a solution of one part glycerine to two of water, being substituted at a cost one-fifth less than that of alcoholic tinctures, and used in amputations or typhoid fevers with results that demonstrate the superiority of this method.

Chicago is soon to have a Temperance Hospital with Temperance Medical College attached, the only one in America. It has been founded by W.C.T.U. women, led by Dr. Mary Weeks Burnett, our National W. C. T. U. Superintendent of Heredity, and will open in a few weeks. In the Manchester Royal Infirmary, England, the medicinal use of alcohol has

This hospital has been in operation for two years.

fallen off in eight recent years 87 per cent., and the death rate from about 11 to about 7 per cent.

Felix L. Oswald, one of the most learned writers living, whose articles in the Popular Science Monthly have attained national celebrity, says in that magazine. "I will venture the prediction that before the middle of the twentieth century the internal use of drugs will be discarded by all intelligent physicians. Medical science is one thing, and medical dogma is quite another." As Dr. Edmunds wisely says. "Forty years ago the fathers of the very men who now prescribe brandy, wine, and also for almost all diseases, prescribed calomel, bleeding, and starving instead. They did this conscientiously, too, no doubt, but then, as now, the tendency of their medicines was to kill rather than cure."

WHAT THE W.C.T.U. IS DOING.

Far be it from me, a non-expert in medicine, to attempt anything more than to cite two opinions of leaders in the noble profession of medicine, which I do in order that the reasons, based on expert testimony, why the W.C.T.U. opposes the use of alcoholics in medicine may be clearly understood.

We use in our teaching of the young, Dr. Sewall's plates, made by that distinguished physician after he had studied with Dr. Beaumont the stomach of Alexis St. Martin, and had during the period of forty years dissected the bodies of 300 drunkards, some of whom had been distinguished statesmen in their day. The awful object lesson presented in these plates should be carefully considered by every medical student, every doctor and every druggist in the land.

The cumulative testimony of the best scientists explodes the medical dogmas that alcohol is either a food or a producer of heat, or that it increases the efficiency of the heart's action.

THE FACTS OF THE CASE.

In his admirable volume of medical lectures recently published, Dr. Davis gives a resume of the experiments that have revealed these wonderful truths, which have in the old theory of dynamo in exploding them the forces. Leading scientists in France, Germany, England, and America, though working separately, have reached substantially the same conclusions. Why the truth has been evolved so slowly is rendered apparent in the following statement of this same unimpeachable authority, Dr. N. S. Davis, former President of the American Medical Association, a physician and scientist of fifty years' experience. He states it in the preface to his recent standard work on "The Principles and Practice of Medicine." He says, "Having thus determined, experimentally, that alcohol is neither food nor a generator of force in the living body, the question recurs, what are its positive effects when taken in the ordinary manner? I answer simply those of an anesthetic and organic sedative. Like ether and chloroform, its presence diminishes the sensibility of the nervous system and brain, thereby rendering the individual less conscious of all outward and exterior impressions. This diminution of sensibility, or anesthesia, is developed in direct ratio to the quantity of alcohol taken, and may be seen in all stages, from simple exemption from all feeling of fatigue, pain, and idea of weight, exhibited by ease, buoyancy, hilarity, etc., to that of complete unconsciousness, and loss of muscular power. It is this anesthetic effect of alcohol that has led to all the popular errors and contradictory uses which has proved so destructive to human health and happiness. It has long been one of the noted paradoxes of human action, that the same individual would resort to the same alcoholic drink to warm him in winter, protect him from the heat in summer, to strengthen when weak or weary, and to soothe and cheer when afflicted in body or mind. With the facts now before us, the explanation of all this is apparent. The alcohol does not relieve the individual from cold by increasing his temperature, nor from heat by cooling him, nor from weakness and exhaustion by nourishing his tissues, nor yet from affliction by increasing nerve power, but simply by diminishing the sensibility of his nerve structures, and thereby lessening his consciousness of impressions, whether from cold or heat, or weariness or pain. In other words, the presence of the alcohol has not in any degree lessened the effects of the evil to which he is exposed, but has diminished his consciousness of their existence, and thereby impaired his judgment concerning the degree of their action upon him. It is this property of alcohol to produce that sense of ease, buoyancy, and exhilaration, arising from a moderate diminution of nerve sensibility, that gives it the fascinating and delusive power over the human race which it has wielded so ruinously for centuries gone by. But while the presence of alcohol diminishes the sensibility of the nervous structure it also retards all the molecular changes, thereby diminishing the activity of nutrition, secretion, elimination, and the evolution of heat, constituting a true organic sedative."

MORE EXPERT OPINION.

Let me give, in conclusion, the authoritative language of this Nestor among physicians, for it is a harbinger of the new departure in medicine for which all temperance women toil and pray. He says: "I speak the more positively on this subject because for more than thirty years past I have faithfully tested the correctness of the sentiments I have given you in relation to the therapeutic effects and uses of alcoholic liquids in an ample clinical experience both in hospital and private practice, and during that time I have found no case of disease and no emergency arising from accident that I could not treat more successfully without any form of fermented and distilled liquors than with."

As I do not like to exhort, let me add just here the words of Dr. Greene, of Boston, when addressing his brethren of the

medical association in that city. He said, in closing an essay on "Alcoholic stimulants as medicines":

"It needs no argument to convince you that it is upon the medical profession, to a very great extent, that the rum-seller depends to maintain the respectability of the traffic. It requires only your own experience and observation to convince you that it is upon the medical profession, upon their prescriptions and recommendations for its use upon so many occasions, that the habitual dram-drinker depends for the seeming respectability of his drinking habits. It is upon the members of the medical profession, and the exceptional laws which it has always demanded, that the whole liquor fraternity depends, more than upon anything else, to sustain it from the opprobrium and just punishment for the evils which the traffic entails upon society, and it is because the rum-seller and the rum-drinker hide under this cloak of seeming respectability, that they are so difficult to reach, either by moral suasion or by law.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER.

As a result of thirty years of professional experience and practical observation, I feel assured that alcoholic stimulants are not required as medicines, and believe that many, if not a majority of physicians today, of education and experience, are satisfied that alcoholic stimulants, as medicines, are worse than useless, and physicians generally have only to overcome the force of habit, and the prevailing fashion in medicine, to find a more excellent way, when they will all look back with wonder and surprise that they, as individuals and as members of an honored profession, should have been so far compromised."

I have gathered these significant facts for the thoughtful consideration of both Doctors and Druggists, whose relations to the temperance reform are so similar as to be susceptible of treatment in the same general discussion. May I say in conclusion, to all physicians and medical students on behalf of the homes of America

HONORED FRIENDS.—You will lay aside my respectful and sisterly message to go out among the homes and take your sacred place at the bedside of the people. Your advice, implicitly believed in and obeyed, will shape many a destiny for this world and the next. There are beloved sons and daughters of gentle mother hearts who will have clear or clouded brains because of temperate habits confirmed or intemperate habits begun under your auspices. And so, while I pray God's blessing upon your own lives, I earnestly invoke His spirit as your guide, that, reverently studious of His laws written in our members, and obedient to His health decalogue, your work and influence may mightily reinforce the army of temperance men and women who fight "for God and home and native land."

HEREDITARY DISEASES

Much has been written respecting the heredity of disease. A long list of maladies have been included in the list of diseases which may be transmitted by heredity, chief among which are consumption, gout, rheumatism, insanity, scrofula, various forms of skin diseases, diseases resulting from immorality, and various nervous disorders. Consumption and insanity probably figure more largely in the matter of heredity than do others. Thousands of people live all their lives under a cloud, because their father or mother or some more distant relative suffered or died from one of these maladies. Doubtless many people are actually frightened into consumption or driven to the madhouse, simply by apprehension of a malady which they would have escaped, if they had had no knowledge of the influence of heredity, or had been unaware that a possible influence of this sort existed in their particular cases. That a father, mother, or other relative has died of consumption, or has been insane, should never be looked upon as a necessary cause of either of these maladies. Heredity should be looked upon simply as a predisposing cause, whose influence may be escaped by a proper mode of life. A man who has a predisposition to consumption or insanity or any other so-called hereditary disease, need not necessarily suffer from the malady to which he is predisposed. All that is necessary is that he should carefully avoid the exciting causes by which the particular malady in question is produced. However strong the predisposition to any malady may be, the action of some particular exciting cause is necessary to bring about the development of the malady. In this enlightened age, when public and personal hygiene are so thoroughly understood, the influence of heredity may be almost ignored. At any rate, its sole influence should be to lead a person with a known hereditary predisposition to a somewhat more careful mode of life than he otherwise might follow. Hereditary tendencies may be extinguished by carefully following necessary health rules, and by observing proper hygienic precautions.—Mother's Magazine.

The Central Canadian, published at Carleton Place, states that a terrible scene was enacted at Perth on Tuesday, when a young man of wealthy and honored parents made an attempt to slay his father with a carving knife. He was arrested by Constable Stone and lodged in the jail. Drink is his besetting sin.

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