

TEMPERANCE COLUMN. CONTROL OF INEBRIATES.

[CONTINUED.]

The Inspector finds that the general sanitary condition of the retreats is good, that there was no death in them during the year, and that the health of the patients was good, thus proving that total abstinence of all intoxicants is beneficial. The Fallowfield Retreat was only opened in July last year. It was intended for twenty female patients, and was speedily filled. The Committee of this Institution state that they feel they are undertaking a species of experiment. 'It has yet to be discovered by experience,' they say, 'what are the best methods of dealing with our inebriates, whose terrible number can be estimated from the number of applications made on behalf of women of every grade of society.' But although the Fallowfield Retreat has been open only during a brief period, the Committee are able to assert that 'the methods they have adopted have so far worked successfully, and a marked change for the better has been seen in every case.' At the same time the Committee look upon the law itself as an experiment, and consider that the Acts may be found to need amendment. The kind of amendment contemplated by the Committee includes an extension of the time for detention. Twelve months they say, 'seem all too short a time to recover the moral strength that is needed to meet the abundant temptations awaiting the patient on her discharge.' A more ominous suggestion is that experience may show the necessity of removing certain obstacles now put in the way of relations or magistrates who may desire, 'for the best of reasons,' to consign an inebriate to a retreat against her will and thereby save her from shame, imprisonment and even a dreadful death.' On these and other similar subjects the Committee hope in time to be able to speak with the authority of experience.

Dr. Branthwaite, who controls the Rickmansworth Retreat, Dalrymple Home (see report in our news column, page 446), thinks that the appearance of voluntary patients before two justices should not be insisted upon, or that the intervention of one justice should suffice; that compulsion should be used in the case of inebriates who are too will paralysed to apply voluntarily; and that some better provision should be made for the poorer classes.

This social vice affects all classes. Sometimes the cause is attributed to hereditary tendency; in other cases domestic and business worries, overwork, the influence of special occupations and the absence of occupation, all contribute their quota of patients. Among the 224 patients who have been discharged from one of the retreats there were fifty seven gentlemen of no occupation, twenty four merchants, 20 clerks, 15 medical practitioners, 11 military officers, 9 solicitors, 6 tutors, and 6 clerks in holy orders, 1 banker, 3 barristers, and two stockbrokers. The educated classes, it will thus be seen, are strongly represented in the retreats.

Nearly one fourth of the patients at Rickmansworth had been educated at college. About one half of the patients are women.

It is probable that the seven retreats now established will very soon exceed ten times that number. The Committee of one of the retreats speaks of the 'terrible number' of applications made 'on behalf of women of every grade of society.'

Ten persons of those treated at Rickmansworth proved to be insane, and in thirty four cases either the father or the mother had been drunkards. To what extent habitual and inordinate drinking affects the statistics of insanity has yet to be ascertained. There is reason to believe, however, that to the abuse of alcohol much of the lunacy which prevails may be attributed. Dr. Rhodes alluded to this subject when speaking last week of the number of lunatics now in confinement in Lancashire, though he is not prepared to attribute the extraordinary increase in the number of mad people there solely to intemperance. During the last decennium the total of insane persons there has risen from 4,000 to 6,000, a number which is equal to one in every 485 persons in the population of the county, whereas ten years ago there was but one in every 769 people.

The report strongly supports the view we have taken upon this question, viz., that the only way to reclaim a persistent drunkard is to subject him or her to compulsory restraint, for although good results have ensued in many cases where people addicted to drink have been placed in retreats for the period of one year, sanctioned by the Act, and a much less time in the case of voluntary retirement, the detention is not nearly long enough to effect a permanent cure in bad cases. The Inebriates Acts have, however, clearly shown the lines on which legislation must move, if anything really beneficial is to be done, and we cannot see why drunkards who are a pest to society and often a source of unmixed anxiety to their friends and relatives, should expect better treatment than lunatics, who are often harmless. A persistent drunkard has often a much smaller claim to be at large than many of the people who are now immured in lunatic asylums, on account of harmless mental derangement; and when we read that 94 patients—a small portion, it is true, of the whole number treated—discharged from one particular retreat did well, surely there is some encouragement to proceed. And such retreats should be under Government, who might at the present time utilize some of the empty prisons for such a purpose.

But what a light this report throws upon the drinking customs of England, How the drink enslaves all classes, rich and poor! We are amazed that Christian England does not rise as one man, and demand such legislation as will minimise the evil. But no! Such is the power of drinkdom; so skilfully it is entrenched, so extended its ramifications, that it dominates men's minds, warps their better nature, and blinds their eyes to the awful holocaust

offered up to the god of drink year by year. Men and women, members of the brotherhood of Jesus Christ, let us go to the help of our poor perishing brothers and sisters, and resolve never to rest contented till they are rescued, and free from the terrible thralldom in which they are enchained — *Temperance Chronicle.*

The Executive of the Church of England Temperance Society have just sanctioned a fresh development of the Society's work by launching the 'Church Lads' Brigade.' The idea is that it is possible to help the lads on Church lines, as the Boys' Brigade has done undenominationally. As is well known, there is no more difficult problem than how to keep a hold on boys when they are getting, or think they are getting, too old for the Sunday school and Band of Hope. Just at the time when their characters are being formed they often slip out of the hands which have long carefully guarded them, and drift into bad ways and company, which debase them and lead them to ruin. The Church Lads' Brigade aims at bridging over this time by forming the boys into a military organization, the drill of which will be strictly according to the Infantry Red Book and will be the means of interesting the members. Bible classes, temperance societies, social, cricket, and foot-ball clubs, night schools, &c., will be formed from the members whose physical and moral welfare will thus be thoroughly cared for. They will have a uniform—slight and inexpensive of course—and, dearest thing of all to the hearts of boys, some of the best will hold various non-commissioned ranks. Officers will take the place of teachers. The organization will be parochial, each parish having one or more companies, groups of eight or ten making a local battalion. The battalions will be formed into diocesan regiments. All this may seem to some to be mere trifling; but it is trifling for a noble end. No one who knows anything of the dangers of the streets will hesitate to wish hearty success to the new departure of the C.E.T.S., and to watch its working with great interest.

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