

THE EVENING TIMES, ST. JOHN, N. B., TUESDAY, AUGUST 28, 1906.

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**THRESHOLD OF ERA OF TEMPERANCE PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT**

**Very Striking Address by Famous British Surgeon---His Profession is Hostile to Alcohol---Remarkable Evolution in Medical Practice---Changed Attitude Toward Use of Alcohol as a Drug---Physical Regeneration of the Race at Stake.**

(Toronto Globe, Thursday.)  
Switching heat, which made dignity and comfort impossible, failed to spoil the luncheon by the Ontario branch of the Dominion Alliance yesterday, which was a notable event in the week's programme of the British Medical Association. The luncheon was attended by five hundred persons, and was held in the university gymnasium. It drew together many noted local temperance workers, as well as distinguished physicians from Britain, the United States, and the continent of Europe. The declaration by leaders of medical thought that alcohol is becoming a back number in medicine and surgery, were applauded by the large audience.

**A FAMOUS BRITISH SURGEON.**  
Sir Victor Horsley, surgeon of University College, London, was flatteringly received. He said they were probably well aware of the attitude of the medical profession toward alcohol on this side of the water. Only a fortnight ago the French-speaking practitioners passed a strong resolution on the subject. And the inquiries of Mr. Spence had shown that the medical profession in Canada was hostile rather than friendly towards the drug they called alcohol. (Hear, hear.) He was there to give an account of the attitude of the medical profession in the old country. That was equivalent to saying what was the attitude of the association. Years ago the association asked the education department to take a more active step to promote the hygiene and temperance of the nation.

**HOSTILE TO ALCOHOL.**  
"I would like to say at once," said Sir Victor, "that the profession at home has the same hostile attitude on the whole towards alcohol that you have, and I will prove it to you, and I mean alcohol not only as a beverage, which is indulged in to too great an extent, but they have found out what alcohol's real value is as a drug, and that is, in my opinion, at any rate, practically nil. (Applause.) When I was a student alcohol was the traditional remedy in surgery for blood-poisoning and other operations, and for an infectious disease like pneumonia. What is the position now? That on all these points 'alcohol' is being no longer used."

Sir Victor then turned to a chart which he had prepared and had hung on the wall, showing the decline in the use of alcohol and the increased use of milk in the great London hospitals in the last 40 years. That showed what the medical profession in London, at any rate, was doing with regard to the use of alcohol. In 1862 the expenditure on milk in those hospitals was \$15,000 a year. That expenditure had been constantly rising until in 1902 it was over \$40,000. The expenditure on alcohol in the same hospitals in 1862 was \$40,000 a year, and for the

next decade it remained stationary. In 1882, when the speaker was a student, it had decreased and milk increased until both were about equal. About that time antiseptic surgery became general, and during the last twenty years alcohol had gone down until the expenditure in 1902 was only \$15,000, so that in London alcohol was not being valued as a drug as it had been 40 years ago.

The same was being proved with regard to the country. The Royal Infirmary at Salisbury 25 years ago spent \$1,500 on alcohol, and yet year only \$33. It had been a gradual evolution of action on the part of the profession in their use of alcohol as a drug.

**WHAT THE SURGEON HAD DONE.**  
Personally he believed that the movement really began with the surgeons. It was no credit to them, but to the great man to whom they owed everything—Lord Lister—(applause)—and was one of the innumerable benefits resulting from his discovery of the great principles of antiseptic surgery. When he was a student it was the custom to give three or four ounces of alcohol to every patient entering the theatre for an operation. The quantity had diminished, but still it was given as a custom. It was a custom they were getting rid of. Then for the post-operative condition alcohol had practically disappeared and was being replaced by a whole armament of drugs better for the purpose. Very little examination into the general practice would show the same thing about a year ago Dr. Hancock, a well-known practitioner, said he had not used alcohol for seven years in general practice.

**THE GREAT REFORMING AGENCY.**  
"Personally," Sir Victor went on, "I believe that the medical profession is to be the great reforming agency of every nation—(applause)—because medical men, as our president told us yesterday, are the real witnesses of social life. Three years ago the medical profession throughout the United Kingdom issued a petition to the government asking them to introduce the compulsory teaching of domestic hygiene and temperance in the elementary schools. The letters were sent out to the profession on Friday night, and on Monday morning we had 15,000 answers from medical practitioners. So that you see the medical profession that every country should be taught the elements of domestic hygiene and temperance is overwhelmingly in favour of the proposition, or that it will have a powerful effect on the government in this particular."

**A PROFESSOR FROM CAMBRIDGE.**  
Prof. G. Sims Woodhead of Cambridge University said that a year ago he had attended a meeting of that character in Cape Town, and he could not help thinking that, wide apart as they were in the matter of miles, when it came to the great problems they had to deal with they were all standing on very small and very common ground. (Applause.) "He felt, too, that in regard to alcohol medical men must take the lead, for they knew what it was doing, and any medical man who was worth his salt was looking not merely to the immediate illness or indisposition of any of his patients, but he was looking ahead for the welfare of all. (Applause.) For that reason he was exceedingly glad that such a change had come over the medical profession as shown by Sir Victor's illuminating diagram."

Prof. Woodhead referred to the uncertainty with which the British Medical Temperance Association was regarded at first, but it was now meeting with general encouragement. After close study of the question the members had reached a different conclusion than that formerly held as to the value of alcohol as a drug.

**ALCOHOL NOT BENEFICIAL.**  
Sir Victor had spoken of the changed attitude of surgeons toward alcohol. He believed an equally strong change of opinion was taking place in connection with the treatment of various diseases were now satisfied that it exercised a deleterious effect upon the resisting power of the patient. In an old case of pneumonia it might be beneficial, but in most cases it had been found to do more harm than good.

"Men have been working away quietly in the laboratories," said Prof. Woodhead, "and have been trying to arrive at the actual value of alcohol in certain of these conditions, and I may state generally that almost every experimenter who has taken up this question has come definitely to the conclusion that alcohol interferes with the production of what we call the condition of immunity; it interferes with that condition as a result of which we recover from various specific infective diseases, and if alcohol interferes with the production of that condition in animals, then we must assume that it interferes with the production of a similar condition in the human being. Therefore I feel very strong evidence that that until very strong evidence can be brought forward that alcohol has a definite effect in improving the condition of the patient—and we have no evidence of this at present—we ought to hold our hands as regards alcohol and use these many drugs of which Sir Victor has spoken as substitutes, at any rate in the meantime."

Prof. Woodhead appealed to the young or medical men to study the question, but it was not a question of any locality, but one that demanded the highest refinement of the human race, and therefore it was one in which they might all be proud to take a part. (Applause.)

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