

## TEMPERANCE COLUMN.

### DOCTORS AND TEMPERANCE WORKERS.

The position which the doctor takes up with regard to the medical use of alcohol must always be a subject of great importance to Temperance workers. It is heart-breaking work when a man has been induced to break with what is to him the besetting sin, and we are beginning to be rejoiced by the sight of well clothed children and a happy home, to be told one day that the doctor has been called in in consequence of some trifling illness, and that the doctor has told him some beer will do him good, and so we have seen the work of years undone in a day, perhaps for ever.

On the other hand, how thankful we have felt when, in the case of a man of weak resolve, the fate of home, wife and children hanging in the balance, the doctor has said, 'Beer will do you no good.' We have felt that those few words of the doctor have done more to strengthen that weak man's will than any words of ours if we had talked for a week.

Temperance workers may be pardoned if, feeling the tremendous weight of the doctor's words, they have sometimes been a little impatient, and expected more than they have any right to expect.

It must be remembered that the medical body as a whole is fully abreast with the general public opinion of the day.

A few years ago the following memorandum was signed by 2,000 members of the medical profession in the United Kingdom: 'That the most perfect health is compatible with total abstinence from intoxicating drinks. That persons with perfect safety discontinue them all at once. That total abstinence from alcoholic liquors of all sorts would greatly contribute to the health, prosperity, morality, and happiness of the human race.'

Temperance workers cannot ask medical men to take up a stronger position than that.

Again, three hundred leading London physicians and surgeons signed the following memorandum: 'I fully agree with the principle that alcohol is not necessary or desirable for children as a dietary, but should only be used by them under medical advice.' That, again, seems all that we have a right to ask for.

Further, a medical man who has had many years' experience as the responsible medical officer of a large public school, Dr. Clement Dukes, of Rugby, said in a speech at Zion College, which has been published in pamphlet form by the O.E.T.S.: 'Without doubt alcohol is detrimental to the young, both immediately and remotely, and should be absolutely omitted from their diet.' No Band of Hope worker can ask a medical man to give him stronger support than that.

Further it must be remembered that even when medical men have adopted opinions such as those I have quoted they would have almost

insuperable difficulties to surmount if they tried to act upon those opinions in their practice.

The majority of the patients whom our doctors have to attend to, as a matter of fact, belong to the 'moderate drinker' class, and the world is hardly prepared at present for a race of doctors excluding alcoholic beverages from their dietary. In cases of intemperance I am free to confess the doctor often puts the parson to shame by the plainness of his speech.

But when a medical man attends a total abstainer, he should, in this case at all events, feel he cannot order alcohol with a light heart.

Knowledge of human nature must tell the doctor, people do not give up the use of alcoholic drinks without some strong motive. How does the doctor know, how can he know, that the motive which induced the patient to become a total abstainer was not the discovery that he could not use alcohol without danger, and if that should be so, the ordering of that man drink means forcing him into alcoholism. In that case to poison him off at once would be the more merciful course.

If we are justified in saying, and I think we are, that alcohol never can be used without a certain amount of risk, how much greater must that risk be when, from the foregoing consideration, the person to whom alcohol is prescribed is an abstainer.

[To be continued.]



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