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WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH OUR ALCOHOLIC INEBRIATES?

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The term inebriate in this paper will refer to all shades and degrees of inebriety. The person who is drinking moderately, or having his first drunk, is inebriated as well as the habitual drunkard. The difference between these two classes of inebriates is only in degree. The proper care of the alcoholic inebriate is a problem whose solution has had assiduous thought and profound study from time almost immemorial. Wise statesmen and broad philanthropists have given it their best energies. The medical profession has not been unmindful of its importance, as evidenced by the great mass of literature upon it published in medical journals, and by discussions at medical meetings. So thoroughly has this field been cultivated that nothing new or startling will be attempted in this paper by way of enumerating the evils of inebriety or recommending a plan for their cure. The continued existence of these evils, apparently without abatement, and a great lack of unanimity of opinion upon the best means to be used for their restriction and suppression, are a full warrant for the discussion of this question at every convenient opportunity; indeed, it calls loudly to the medical profession for an enlightened and persistent consideration, and an answer which will meet the exigencies of the situation.

The alcoholic drink-bill of the nations is appalling. It easily foots up into many billions annually. Concerning the death-rate from alcoholic inebriety it is doubtful if reliable statistics are obtainable. Estimates carefully made on this point by competent writers state that it carries to the grave yearly from 60,000 to 100,000 of our

citizens. The observation of the writer has led him to the conclusion that oftentimes deaths from alcoholic inebriety are reported by attending physicians as due to some other disease out of regard for the sensitive feelings of friends. Even though the above-estimated death-rate may be regarded as too large there is no doubt that the death-rate from this disease is very great, running up annually into scores of thousands; indirectly it is probably responsible for a far greater number than 100,000. It is the foundation of many diseased conditions of the nervous system, liver, heart, kidneys, lungs; indeed, the inebriate is likely to suffer from a perversion of nearly all the solids and fluids of the body. Not infrequently the inebriated life ends in insanity, idiocy, epilepsy, fatty degeneration of the heart, cirrhosis of the liver, paralysis, Bright's disease of the kidneys, phthisis pulmonalis.

The number of yearly arrests for drunkenness in all our large cities points to an increase of this disease. During 1894 in New York City there were made 19,538 arrests for drunkenness, as shown by records of the police department. In Great Britain in 1890 there were 173,036 convictions for drunkenness. In 1892 33,000 women were convicted for drunkenness in the same country. Dr. Crothers has estimated that a million and a half of the inhabitants of the United States are constantly suffering from alcoholic inebriety. It has been estimated that in Great Britain there are 700,000 habitual drunkards.

Oftentimes heredity plays a large part in the life of the alcoholic inebriate. The appetite for