

of Parental Alcoholism Upon the Race," is a valuable compendium of some of the latest ascertained facts concerning this question, and the deductions to be drawn from them. The following paragraphs from this chapter are full of warning and instruction.

Influence of Parental Alcoholism on the Nervous System of Children.

The hurt of the evil heritage caused by alcoholism falls upon the nervous system of the next generation.

Owing, first, to the deterioration of the germ cells, and, secondly, to the impoverishment of the system of the mother during the important months of pregnancy, children of such parentage frequently possess an enfeebled nervous organization at birth. It may be possible to recognize this immediately, although even during infancy impaired nerve vitality frequently shows itself in convulsions, meningitis and other debilities.

Moreover, it would appear that it is not only in the case of parents who are habitual drinkers that the offspring are affected thus adversely. In a recent thesis on the subject, the author, a doctor, shows the close connection between the alcoholic condition of the parents and the consequent detriment to the offspring. In these asylums, out of 2,554 admissions, 1,053 (i.e., 41 per cent.) were the offspring of drunken parents, i.e., 933 had drunken fathers, 80 had drunken mothers, and 40 had both parents drunken. Concerning about 450 of these children no information could be gathered, while the remaining 451 were said to have "sober" parents. The investigation did not include, however, the habits of grandparents with regard to alcohol, and by the law of averages it is probable that some of these other children had grandparents who took alcohol freely, influencing thereby the mental development of their grandchildren. During the present century there will be, in England, at any rate, a considerable number of both parents and grandparents who are total abstainers from all alcoholic liquids, and it will be of interest to note whether they possess as offspring children who are idiots and

epileptic, or whether their families can claim freedom from this disorder.

With the four great classes of mental deterioration in children we now propose to deal, indicating where the alcohol factor in the parents appears to have an influence:

- (1) Idiotcy and imbecillity.
- (2) Epilepsy.
- (3) Feeble-mindedness.
- (4) Mental deficiency as shown in school-work.

Epilepsy Often Caused by Parental Alcoholism.

There is very strong evidence to show that parental alcoholism is one of the most frequent causes of epilepsy in children.

Epilepsy and imbecillity often go hand in hand, but if for the moment we deal with epilepsy alone, we find that alcoholic mothers possess a far larger number of children afflicted with epilepsy than do the ordinary mothers of the same social position.

Dr. Legrain personally followed up the descendants of 215 drunkards, and found that in these descendants epilepsy, insanity, and other nervous disorders were extremely common. He also found that the families rapidly died out—a large number of the children dying young.

Feeble-mindedness.

Public attention is at this moment being directed to the "problem of the feeble-minded," and those experts who have devoted most attention to the subject regard alcohol as certainly one of the causative factors in that deterioration of brain-tissue which lies at the real root of the mental inability and feeble-mindedness of so many human beings.

In addition to those whose feeble-mindedness is quite apparent, we have in our midst thousands of children more or less mentally deficient, many of whom are attending our day-schools and are the despair of their teachers, by whom they are known as "dullards." These supply the ranks of the criminal and vicious who fill our reformatories, work-houses and gaols, and their numbers are reinforced by a large contingent of other children who, although fairly bright at their