TEMPERANCE COLUMN.

CONTROL OF INEBRIATES.

One of the pressing questions of the day is, what to do with those who give themselves over to alcoholic indulgence, so as to become slaves to intemperance, a misery to themselves, more often than not a terror and trouble to their families, ending in domestic infecility, ruin, and disgrace. The correspondence on the Savery of Drink, in The Daily Telegraph shows a depth of milery and who which is terrible to contemplate: husbands cursed with drunken wives; wives oursed with drunken husbands; sons with ruined and blasted reputations; daughters sunk into a depth of iriquity which makes one shudder to read; men lost to all sense of manliness and women to all sense of shame, and all the result of the fearful drink crave, which like a consuming fire rages within, and drives its miserable victims to drink, drink, drink, in the vain hope of quenching their terrible thirst, but which alse! only intensifies the evil, and causes the helpless, hapless, drink-sodden men and women to writhe in agony, till stupefaction ensues, and a dranken stupor renders them, for the time, oblivious of everything, Such is the record day by day in the pages of one of the leading daily papers. And this terrible register of sin and suffering to us, who have been in the thick of the fight for many years, is no new revelation.

As if to emphasise what is now being written and suid comes the annual report of the Inspector of Retreats under the Inebriates Act. It was in 1879 that the first of these Acts was placed upon the Statute book for a term of years, and the experience gained by its working led to the measure of 1888, by which the provisions of the earlier Act were amended, and the law affecting the authority to control such persons made permanent.

The law thus created is essentially permissive. In the first place, the local authority may grant to any person, or two or more persons jointly, a license, for any period not exceeding thirteen months, to keep a 'retreat,' and the local authority may from time to time revoke or renew such licence. In the next place, any habitual drunk-ard desirons of being admitted into a retreat provided under the Acts may make application in writing to the licensee of the establishment for admission into the retreat. This application is to be accompanied by the statutory declaration of two persons, to the effect that the applicant is an habitual drunkard within the meaning of the Act. The signature of the applicant is to be attested by two Justices of the Peace, who are also to satisfy themselves that the person in question is one of the kind contem plated by the statute, and they are to enable themselves to state in writing that the applicant clearly understood the compact into which he was entering. With these provisos and saleguards the patient enters the retreat, and is not entitled to leave it until the expiration of the term mentioned in his application. But the term is in no case to excerd the period of 12 months.

Four points are at once noticeable in connection with the Act. The inebriates cannot be detained in a retreat except on their personal application; two justices must be eatisfied that this application is voluntary; they cannot be detained longer than twelve months; and the retreat is under official inspec-

It is a terrible commentary upon our boasted civilisation that such retreats should be necessary. But it is well known to every med cal practitioner that dipsomania is a formidable trouble in thousands of families. There are seven of these retreats now open in England, The localities are Hales Owen, in Wor cestershire; Rickmansworth, in Hertfordshire; East Twickenham, in Middlesex; Walsall, in Staffordshire; Westgate, in Kent; Fallowfield, near Marchester; and Chiswick; and this year a new retreat is to be opened at Saltash. Some of the retreats receive private patients-inebriates who voluntarily become inmates without the intervention of justices, and who consequently cannot be detained if they wish to leave. There appears to be a general opinion, however, among those persons who have the best opportunities of studying the effect of such enforced abstinence from alcohol, that tweive months, in not a few cases, is too short a time to effect a radical cure. Individuals who for five or six years-or it may be for a much longer period-have daily saturated their systems with alcohol, can hardly be expected to recover their normal state, either physically or morally, in a single

[To be continued]

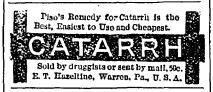


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