

has need of a faith of this kind, because his first experience of professional life undoubtedly tends to drive him in the direction of a narrow pessimism.

The preventible character of the great majority of ills of humanity and the fact that they are self-inflicted will be abundantly shown if we consider a few of them. Prominent among the social questions upon which you should be competent to speak is that of intemperance. I do not give this matter a first place in the list of medico social problems because I consider it to be the most important, but because at the present time it occupies so large a share of public attention. What, then, does science tell us about the effect of alcohol when used as every day drink?

You will notice, I do not enquire what are the peculiar ideas of certain enthusiasts concerning this matter, but rather what is the result gained by calm, scientific investigation of the effects of alcohol on mind and body? And in the same spirit, I answer, science condemns, as perfectly unjustifiable, the use of alcoholic beverages by those in perfect health. Manifestly this is not the place to consider at length the arguments for and against—if you would study the question in all its bearings, let me advise you to read carefully Dr. W. B. Richardson's treatise "On Alcohol:" (a) but I would merely say that the conclusions arrived at, many years ago, by Carpenter still hold true. "It is," said he, "through the medium of the water contained in the animal body that all its vital functions are carried on. No other liquid than water can act as the solvent for the various articles of food which are taken into the stomach. It is water alone which forms all the fluid portion of the blood, and thus serves to convey the nutritive material through the minutest capillary pores into the substance of the solid tissues. It is water which, when mingled in various proportions with the solid components of the various textures, gives to them the consistence which they severally require. And it is water which takes up the products of their decay, and conveys them, by a most wonderful and complicated system of sewerage, altogether out of the system. It would seem most improbable, then, that the habitual admittance of

any other fluid—especially of one which, like alcohol, possesses so marked a physical, chemical and vital influence upon the other components of the animal body—can be otherwise than injurious in the great majority of cases: and where a benefit is derivable from it, this will depend upon the fact that the abnormal condition of the system renders some one or more of the special actions of alcohol remedial instead of noxious, so that the balance becomes, on the whole, in favour of its use." (b) You will observe, then, that the use of alcoholic beverages in health is a scientific inconsistency which you should not only yourself never be guilty of, but you are, it seems to me, also bound to discountenance the custom among your friends and patients. It will not be necessary for you to consider the undoubted facts that, directly and indirectly, strong drink is the curse of many a man's moral debasement and physical ruin, that the habit is as useless as it is pernicious—these are, more properly, weapons to be handled by the press and by the pulpit; it is enough for you to know simply that there are unanswerable psychological and physiological reasons why men should not drink. And, before leaving the subject, I am obliged to confess that it is much easier to condemn an evil than to suggest an effective remedy for it, and so shall we find that prohibitory liquor laws, temperance societies and agitations, public lectures and private warnings, produce effects that are, to say the least of them, very discouraging, because the roots of this modern upas tree grow deeper into the soil of society than most of us imagine, and they derive their nourishment from sources little suspected. But you must neither be disheartened because of this, nor should you allow yourself, on account of it, to neglect any opportunity or abandon any attempt to lessen intemperance and its consequent evils. It is not that your efforts to put down drunkenness will be of no avail, but simply that you are almost certain to underestimate the magnitude of the work, and to hope for a temperance harvest before the seed is fairly sown.

Closely connected with useless indulgence in alcohol is the intemperate employment of food. Who shall calculate the vast amount of personal

(a) Six Cantor Lectures.

(b) Use and abuse of Alcoholic Liquors, pp. 170 and 171, W. B. Carpenter, M.D., F.R.S.