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Is Alcohol a Poison?

Sir Frederick Treves, physician to King Edward having recently said that alcohol is a poison, a writer in the *Montreal Gazette* has undertaken to prove the learned doctor mistaken, contending that alcohol is not a poison, because it is composed of three harmless elements—carbon, hydrogen and oxygen united according to the laws of chemical combination. To this the *Montreal Witness* responds that "This reasoning would at once place prussic acid among the non-poisons. It is composed of the three harmless elements, carbon, hydrogen and nitrogen united according to the laws of chemical combination. It is, moreover, not only made in the laboratory of the chemist, but also in the laboratory of nature occurring as it does in the seeds of the bitter almond and other fruits. Again, the same reasoning would still more emphatically place methyl alcohol among the non-poisons, as it consists of the same elements as common or ethyl alcohol, but united in different proportions by strict and very beautiful laws of chemical combination. The very poisonous character of methyl or wood alcohol, however, has very recently been prominently brought to the attention of the public. As a matter of fact, methyl or wood alcohol and ethyl or common alcohol are simply the first and second respectively of a whole series of alcohols known to organic chemistry, every one of which is composed of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen, and all of which possess more or less poisonous properties. Professor Reimsen's 'Organic Chemistry' is perhaps the most widely used text book on the subject in the universities of this continent. Speaking of the ordinary alcohol he says: 'Its effects upon the human system are well known. It intoxicates when taken in dilute form, while in large doses it is poisonous. It lowers the temperature of the body from 0.5° to 2° (half a degree to two degrees) when taken internally, although the sensation of warmth is experienced.' The degrees of temperature here spoken of are in the centigrade measurement, in which each degree is equal to one and four-fifths degrees of Fahrenheit. Alcohol is a poison. It has its place and use in medicine just as prussic acid has its place and use in medicine, that is, under the control which a scientific knowledge of its properties implies. The *Gazette* correspondent says that it is a gift of God. It is. So is prussic acid. Both are of supreme interest, for instance to the chemist, when they are placed in breakers and respond by their behavior to the exacting questions of the experimenter. And the chemist's admiration for the wonderful process by which nature elaborates prussic acid in seeds, fruits and even barks is not lessened by the fact that man's first step in the manufacture of the same article is to make prussiate of potash by means of fusing together iron filings and carbonate of potash with claws, horns, hoofs, hair, old boots and any animal refuse that will afford nitrogen—the acid being afterwards liberated from the prussiate by the stronger acid known as sulphuric. But prussic acid is a poison, and is treated as such. The science of chemistry cannot be brought to the aid of the thesis that alcohol is not a poison. It is dead against it."

Crop Prospects in the Northwest.

Wheat in Manitoba and the Northwest has now got a good start and the prospect for the crop of 1905 is reported as being exceptionally good. In the Northwestern States injurious frosts have been experienced, but so far the crop in the Canadian Northwest has escaped injury. There is of course plenty of time between now and September for something to happen to ruin the crop. But our Northwest Canadians are not given to borrowing trouble, and we will all hope that their optimistic expectations may be fully realized. In this connection it may be noted that the movement of population into the Northwest from the neighboring States continues in unabated volume. The *St. Paul Farmer*, a leading agricultural paper of Minnesota, says in a recent issue. "Again this year, as for the last four or five years, hundreds and thousands of farmers from the Middle States are moving into the Canadian west. If anything the movement has opened earlier this spring than usual. During the month of February 920 tickets were sold from points on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway system to western Canada via Minneapolis and St. Paul. The little town of Norton, Kansas, which has only 600 people, sent seventy of them

into Manitoba and the Canadian Territories last month. These farmers care for the land that is now worth \$50 to \$100 an acre, a few years ago because they are dissatisfied with the opportunities there during the next few years will be as good as, or better, than they were in Oklahoma a few years since. Splendid land may be homesteaded in Western Canada or bought for a few dollars an acre, land that will multiply in value in the next five or ten years."

Russia and Mongolia.

Suspicion has been aroused in reference to Russia's intentions in the direction of Mongolia. It is reported, on the alleged authority of the Russian Foreign Office, that official Russia has just announced to China that she now considers herself free to take such steps as she may think fit to safeguard her interests which she conceives to be threatened by the uncertain delimitation of the Mongolian frontier. Among such steps she includes the passage of Russian troops through Mongolian territory. This is interpreted in some quarters as the first step toward the annexation of Chinese territory, and therefore as a first step toward the opening up of the whole vast and dangerous problem of the partition of China. The *London Times* which has little confidence in Russia's good faith finds an explanation for this latest move in the anxiety of the Russian staff to thwart the dreaded Japanese flanking movement in the belt of sixty miles between the railway and the frontier. The *Times* believes the Czar and the Russian Foreign Office to be concerned in this Mongolian movement and manifests some alarm as to the consequences. It calls upon London and Washington and even Berlin to intervene immediately if their compact for restricting the area of the war is not to be hopelessly broken. Even allowing that some of the coloring of the *Times* is hectic, says the *London correspondent* of the *New York Evening Post*, this situation has elements of danger which cause official circles to await further news anxiously.

The Waterways Commission.

Pending the answer of the Washington Government to the Canadian Government's contention that the law establishing the International Waterways Commission provided that all international waterways between the United States and Canada be included in the scope of the commission, no further proceedings will be held. This was decided at a meeting held in Washington May 26 at which all the commissioners were present. Future meetings will be held alternately at Toronto and Buffalo and the Canadian and American sections of the Commission will establish headquarters respectively at these points. It was decided that at all meetings on American soil the Chairman of the American section should preside, and that the Chairman of the Canadian section should preside at meetings held in Canada. In addition to the St. John River question there are also questions about the Milk River, Rainy River and other small streams between the two countries, and it was pointed out by the Canadians that as the country in that section was developed new controversies would be sure to arise which it would be necessary to refer to some commission.

Norway and Sweden.

The people of Sweden and Norway form one nation, but for a good while past there has been more or less friction between the two countries, the Norwegians have threatened to secede and set up a monarchy of their own if matters were not made more satisfactory to them, and apparently the relations between the two countries do not grow more amicable. King Oscar of Sweden and Norway has been in poor health, and for several months past the functions of monarchy have been discharged by the Crown Prince. The King's health, however, has been in a measure restored and he has resumed the duties of rulership. His action on the question of separate consulships for Sweden and Norway, which both Houses of the Norwegian Parliament have voted in favor of, had been awaited with eagerness. On May 27, the King officially declined to sign the law creating a separate consular system for Norway. This led to a crisis

in the Government, the ministers immediately tendering their resignations which the King refused to accept. A Christiania despatch says: King Oscar's veto of the separate Consular law created a great sensation, as possibly involving a dissolution of the union between Sweden and Norway and perhaps international complications, though best informed Norwegians decline to believe there is any danger of a Russian invasion, contending that if Russia had designs she would not be deterred in pressing them by having to fight both Sweden and Norway, and that therefore, the question of a dissolution of the union will have no effect from an international aspect.

There is a Limit

In the midst of much that tends to discourage the hopes of the upright citizen who looks for honesty in political and municipal affairs; there is for him at least this bit of consolation, that those who seek to promote their supposed interests by corrupt means are apt at length, by selfish and reckless disregard of popular rights, to defeat their own ends. By and by the patience of a long-suffering people is worn out, and then comes a nemesis. As an instance of this, the city of Philadelphia has long had the distinction of being one of the most corruptly managed municipalities in the United States. Corrupt officials, grown bold by long experience in dishonest methods, had come apparently to believe that there was no limit to the long-suffering of the citizens. But there has been a rude awakening. The council had made a deal with a gas company, which was believed to be corrupt and was strongly condemned by public opinion. An ordinance was passed legalizing the deal, and when the Mayor vetoed the ordinance, the councillors, nothing daunted, declared themselves ready to pass the law over the mayor's veto. But public opinion began to manifest itself in a way which the councillors began to understand could not be disregarded, and as the easiest way out of an unpleasant situation, the gas company came to the relief of its friends and declared that the offer it had made was withdrawn. The result is regarded as a triumph over municipal iniquity, in which good citizens in Philadelphia and all other cities may heartily rejoice.

Roosevelt Advises Peace.

President Roosevelt had a conference at the White House on Friday with Count Cassini, the Russian Ambassador at Washington. According to a press despatch, Count Cassini said that his conversation with the President was most cordial, that it had to do in a general manner with the whole situation in the Far East and was of course confidential. That the conversation should be confidential is what would naturally be expected, and the reports which the newspapers have given of the interview may be read with that in mind. According to the statements published the President informed the Ambassador that he and his Government desired to see peace restored, and he believed this was the desire of other nations. He also expressed the opinion that Russia has nothing to gain by prolonging hostilities, that hard as might be the conditions which Japan would propose after such a naval victory as that just gained in the Straits of Korea, those conditions would only become harder as a result of continuing hostilities. Count Cassini however, we are told, has not abandoned hope. He was deeply impressed by the sincere and cordial words of the President, and the frank and friendly manner in which he had spoken, but while the Count had no word from his Government, he for himself could not see that there was anything in the present situation, unfortunate as it undoubtedly was for his Government, which made it necessary for Russia to sue for peace. There was hope yet, he held, of a victory for the Russian arms, and at all events if Japan's terms were anything like so severe as they had been represented, he believed that Russia could with advantage continue the war indefinitely. These may be the views of Count Cassini and they may represent the sentiments of the Russian bureaucracy, but Russia's leaders have to recognize the fact that a crisis has been reached where other Russian sentiment besides that of the bureaucracy and its sympathizers have to be taken account of, and humiliating as may be the alternative of war, it is doubtful if the party whose voice is still for war can control the policy of the nation.