

WHAT ALCOHOL IS AND DOES.

ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION CHURCH
OF ENGLAND TEMPERANCE ASSOCIATION, 12TH NOVEMBER, 1883, BY
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No wise general will go to war without first obtaining a good idea of the power and resources of the adversary he will have to meet. In 1871, urged on by intense national dislike, the French nation, without counting the cost, rushed into war with the powerful German Empire; and not until they had lost vast treasures of money, a large army of men and two magnificent Provinces, did they realize what a fatal mistake had been made. Let not Temperance Reformers make a similar error in entering into the contest with old King Alcohol. Let them calmly consider four very important points. (1) What is the nature of alcohol, (2) how it has obtained its marvellous power, (3) what use it has made of that power, and (4) what will be the consequences if not promptly met, defeated and destroyed. And let it ever be borne in mind in all these contests, that the truth is mighty and will ultimately prevail, and that nothing does so much good as the ventilation of such questions as these, for the more light we can pour in upon the subject of the use of alcohol as a beverage, the more hideous and awful will appear the terrible work effected by its use, and the better able will be the Canadian people to deal with this burning question in an able, thorough and statesmanlike manner.

Well, then, first, as to the nature of alcohol itself—it is not a natural product—it is a chemical result caused by the decay of vegetable matter; it is not a food, building up the main part of the body; it does not go to renew the tissues like albumen, eggs, cheese or flesh; nor does it burn in the body, producing heats like fats and oils. It produces only phenomenal effects, like ether or chloroform. The direct effect of alcohol is to harden the chyle, and thus retard or prevent digestion; hence the first effort of Nature is to expel it, it never assimilates with the body. If an ounce is consumed, then, through the skin, the breath—and in other ways—an ounce is expelled. In a word, alcohol is a poison, active and dangerous, and all the more dangerous because, though it sometimes kills rapidly, it generally kills gradually and by degrees.

At one time it was thought it helped men to perform feats of physical strength; to-day this fallacy has been completely disposed of. Ask our professional athletes what they do when they prepare for some coming contest, and when they are wishful to bring up the body to its utmost physical strength, and they will tell you they carefully exclude alcohol from their diet, and drink chiefly, if not altogether, water or milk. When Tom Sayers prepared for all of his celebrated fights—fond as he was of liquor—and at last it killed him—he carefully abstained. "When I go in for business," said he, "water, and water only, is my drink." Ask Hanlan what he thinks about alcohol when training for a boat race. And at the present moment, Weston, the celebrated English pedestrian, is walking all over the United Kingdom, performing many miles a day of hard walking, and in the evening delivering a Temperance lecture. Again, as a medicine, its benefit is now very much questioned. Dr. Gardiner, of Glasgow, after very careful experiments, has proved that, instead of helping in the case of fevers, it is a dangerous and even fatal fluid. When he first watched its effects upon his patients, he found that 36 out of every 100 died—he gradually reduced the doses, and the percentage of deaths decreased in proportion to the doses, until, at last, he decided to give up its use altogether; and now only 8 or 9 per cent., instead of 36, of his patients die. And thanks to the splendid discoveries of other eminent men of science, the medical faculty are reconsidering their practice, and are using this drug very differently from former days. Further, it is found to be a fruitful cause of disease. Twenty years ago, excepting delirium tremens, what is called "gin drinkers' liver," was considered to be about the only disease caused by alcohol; but now, it has been discovered, that not only this disease, but a number of others are the result, directly, or indirectly, of the use of alcohol. Notably, liver diseases, paralysis, dyspepsia, heart disease and premature old age; and some eminent physicians do not hesitate to declare that 70 per cent. of all the diseases of Great Britain and Ireland spring from the use of alcoholic beverages. Again, it has been proved that heredity of disease result from its use. Dr. Mason has shown that inebriety in parents is a fruitful source of insanity in children—and out of 116 patients at one time under his charge in the insane asylum, 92 were the offsprings of drunken parents. Is not this a fearful fact, and one pregnant with dire results to the future of our race? Another fallacy that has been disproved is, that alcohol keeps out the cold. It is perfectly true that after a dose of alcohol the pulsations of the heart will rapidly increase, but in a short time the reaction sets in, and the heart beats much feebler than before the dose of alcohol was taken.

A few years ago the mail carrier between Laprairie and Montreal had to drive from the village to the city in the month of February with the tem-

perature from 25 to 30 below zero. He started upon his journey about ten o'clock in the evening; before starting, to keep out the cold, he took an extra glass of whisky, and when the sleigh arrived at the hotel in Montreal the man was found holding the reins, but himself held in the cold, icy grasp of death. And in the Arctic explorations it has been demonstrated that only the men who abstained altogether from alcohol could stand the rigours of the climate. Lastly, it attacks the brain. Every poison has its affinity. Nicotine's affinity is the nerves; strychnine's the spinal column; alcohol goes direct to the seat of government and strikes at the brain itself, hence its fascinating power over men of great mental capacity and nervous energy. These are the men most in danger, and from the ranks of the poets, the musicians, the orators, the painters and the warriors of the world, have come a large army of wretched and habitual drunkards. It destroyed the life of Scotland's greatest poet before he had time to sing half his marvellous songs; it destroyed the life of England's greatest statesman in his prime, and with half of his statesmanlike projects fulfilled, it destroyed the world's greatest warrior, while yet a young man; and it brought down the greatest orator of modern times to worse than the level of the brute beasts. Before its wild fascination the most sagacious of men have fallen; and with its iron slavery, men of the firmest will have wrestled, but wrestled in vain.

Why then will men, with knowledge of what alcohol has done, tempt their destiny by holding familiar converse with this vile conqueror? Some dangers there are that must be faced, and he who flees from them is a coward and no man. In the time of battle the soldiers must face the enemies' guns though death may result; in the time of storm, the pilot must stand to the helm though the waves threaten to wash him from the deck; and in the time of pestilence the physician must risk contagion though disease or death may follow. But no man is called upon to swim Niagara's mighty Falls, nor cross the ocean in a sinking ship. Let not men then foolishly rush into danger, where much may be lost and nothing gained.

Let us consider now for a few moments how alcohol obtains its power. Experience shows to us that no drunkard intended to become a drunkard when he first commenced the use of alcohol. Nothing would have given him more offence than to be told, when he first commenced its use, that he would one day become its bond slave. It obtained its power over him by slow degrees, until at last he found himself in the grasp of a monster he could not control. Hence the cause of its great danger. Did men become suddenly and at once drunkards, there would be little danger, as the effect would be too patent, but gradually, insidiously and surely it gains its power. The pleasant excitement which at first is produced by one glass decays, and then two and three and more are requisite, until, when too late, the poor victim finds his health destroyed, his will shattered, and his prospects gone. Well may we exclaim, "Oh, that men will put a devil to their mouth to steal away their brains."

And now let us briefly glance at some of the uses alcohol has made of its power; and we have time only to very briefly notice some of its dreadful work. Amongst other things, let us mention the fact that it has converted 12,000 children in the City of Chicago alone into habitual drinkers. In our own Dominion it has desolated over 100,000 homes, it has made 70,000 habitual drunkards, and every year it digs nearly 7,000 graves. It enters the workshop and takes our best workmen; it enters the warehouse and seizes our ablest salesmen; it enters the church choirs and carries off our brilliant musicians; it enters the lawyer's office and leads captive our most eloquent pleaders; it enters the halls of science and lays its spell upon our most skilled doctors; it enters the warrior's camp and makes willing prisoners of our most daring leaders; it enters even the sacred circle of the Church of God, bringing within its mighty power the minister of the sanctuary, and making him the bond slave of Satan. It laughs at all ties, at all restrictions, at all consequences. Subtle, insidious and alluring, it wins its way alike into the mansion of the rich and the cabin of the poor; the palace of the monarch and the hut of the peasant; and where'er it goes, it leaves its slimy trail behind. It has a mission, and its mission is the mission of death, for, it first allures, then ensnares, and then rends and destroys. Well, indeed, may every lover of his country, and especially every Christian man, exclaim, in the words of the sweet singer of Israel, "How long, O Lord, how long shall this iniquity work."

To night we have not time to dwell upon the terrible consequences that must result to this great Dominion of Canada if this evil be permitted any longer to continue, unchecked, its destructive career. Meantime, what shall we do? Shall we stand coldly by and see our loved ones perish? Imagine, if you can, a vast horde of barbarians to sweep down upon our cities and villages. Should we stand idly by and see our property destroyed, our children killed, and our wives insulted? As one man, all worthy of the name would rush madly forward and drive the wretches back. How shall it be then when a worse foe assails the very foundations of our peace, prosperity and happiness? Will not every one who loves his country wage eternal war against this monster, and like Hannibal of old, make solemn oath, never to cease the contest while the foe is in the field and then when success smiles upon our efforts, and victory perches upon our banners, this grand Dominion of ours, purged from its worst enemy, from the rocky shores of the wild Atlantic, to the slopes of the far Pacific, shall be the happy home of a contented, happy and prosperous—because religious and sober—people.