

Home Circle.

STRENGTH FOR TO-DAY.

Strength for to-day is all that we need,
As there will never be a to-morrow;
For to-morrow will prove but another to-day,
With its measure of joy and sorrow.

Then why forecast the trials of life
With such a sad and grave persistence,
And watch and wait for a crowd of ills
That as yet have no existence?

Strength for to-day—in house and home,
So practice forbearance sweetly—
To scatter kind words and to loving deeds,
Still trusting in God completely.

Strength for to-day—what a precious boon
For the earnest souls who labor,
For the willing hands that minister
To the needy friend or neighbor.

AN OPINION CONCERNING INEBRIETY.

As the subject of our essay we have taken up that of which there has been much said and written, at different periods of time, in the history of man, by minds both of brilliancy and of mediocrity; and, although, there have been others to view this evil from our point of view it seems to us that the number has not been sufficiently large to give to our opinion that prominence which we think it is deserving of. Our opinion is that a scientific point of view is the only one entitled to recognition when studying this deeply interesting subject,—involving as it does everything that is sacred in the time that is, and that to come. A careful study of inebriety from any point of exact science will always lead to the same conclusion, that inebriety is always a positive physical affection, with a distinct aetiology and symptomatology. The theory of half vice and half disease, to be remedied by moral means at first, then, when these fail, resort to physical and medical appliances, has no support from scientific study and the natural history of the cases.

When the history of many cases are studied and compared, the evidence is unmistakable that inebriety is a form of insanity, distinct and prominent, requiring special study, and special means and methods of treatment. Also, that, aetologically, they divide into two groups or classes in which are included all cases.

The first group are those cases in which inebriety is an expression of a neurotic defect of the brain centers, frequently inherited and developed through certain exciting causes, of which alcohol is the most prominent. Inebriety is always associated and marked in this group with physical signs and hints that suggest an imperfect development; great weakness or convulsions, retarded mental growth, approaching idioy, or extraordinary precocity with brain growth and development far in advance of age. The crisis of puberty develops perversions and changes that determine all the after life in such cases. From this time emotional exacerbations, nutrient disturbances, and perverted ambitions, which merge quickly into inebriety from the slightest causes. Obscure states of nerve exhaustion called properly, "a decline," are most quickly relieved by some form of alcohol, which sooner or later ends in inebriety. Often alcoholic excess or intoxication follows the first use of spirits, then a long period will follow in which no spirits are used, or, if any, in great moderation.

But an inebriate soil has been prepared, and only awaits a favoring germ cause to spring into activity. During this period of incubation, in which no alcohol is used, a high degree of mental activity is frequently prominent. He will exhibit great strength, coupled with eccentricity, and a changeable, erratic line of conduct. If he is a public man his conduct will excite great admiration and condemnation. If in business circles, he will be an extremist in work and judgment. Farther on he may be very passionate and inevitable, and will not bear opposition. Often these men are the wild advocates of new schemes of every description. A large number of the foremost temperance reformers have been of this class: always on the verge of inebriety, with every symptom and indication present, except the use of spirits. The religious ranks have numerous types of this class, in which some slight variation or change, and the pronounced inebriate appears. They are neurotics from infancy, and varied conditions of brain and nerve instability appears along the course of life. The organism is not fitted to harmonize with the varied surroundings, or to bear the strains incident to constant change. Neusthenic states, physical ailments, marked by depression, and complex symptoms of every kind, that are as intense as they are transient all crave some relief from outside sources, and find in alcohol a neurotic of the most seductive character. Thus, under the mask of relief, alcohol kindles and develops a disease that has a most favorable soil for its growth. Hence it appears that inebriety is an expression of nerve degeneration and exhaustion, which has begun long before alcohol was used, and this drug builds up diseased tendencies and pathological changes that ever after crave its narcotic effect.

In the second group, inebriety is an expression of certain states of ill health, and failure of brain and nervous system, growing out of special physical conditions and surroundings. This is seen in case of inebriety that have sprung up in bad sanitary surroundings, where bad food, over-work and under-work, and want of proper rest, have brought on conditions of the body for which alcohol was demanded, and produced relief.

The two extremes of society furnish the

most numerous examples. The very poor, who from their suffering and necessities develop a low state of health and low brain force; and the very wealthy, who from of healthy activity and hyper nutrition, are also equally impaired in vigor and health; are grounds from which a large number of inebriates are constantly recruited. There inebriety does not appear in the very wealthy class, it follows in their children with more or less certainty, and can be traced to a line of distinct physical causes. Inebriety frequently appears in a middle class of hard-working, temperate men, and has in some cases an obscure origin and progress. In many cases, active, temperate men will suffer from some protracted sickness, and after recovery begin to use spirits, either to excess at once or after a short period of moderate drinking. Thoughtless people will find that alcohol has been used as a medicine, and conclude that this was the only cause, and thus condemn the physician, when, in fact, inebriety came from some injury to the brain centers following the illness. The changes of vigor and health following any protracted disease, and the entailments that develop other troubles, are the common observation of the profession.

The same will be found true in many cases of inebriety which are literally the result of pathological changes that have begun long before. Traumatism is another starting point of inebriety in this class. A direct injury to the brain from a fall or blow, or a severe wound, or exhausting hemorrhage, is in many cases the beginning of inebriety, which may begin with a period of moderate drinking, or with impulsive and excessive use of spirits at once. Physical traumatism, or injury from mental shock of any kind, is another common cause in persons who were previously temperate and healthy. Here inebriety is a hint of some injury to the nerve centers, and unmistakable sign of pathological change. These are the cases whose obscurity suggests a spiritual origin, to all who are anxious for an explanation of all the phenomena of nature. Such cases are invariably interpreted as springing from the sudden growth of a sinful nature. A great moral lapse of character and giving way to evil of the heart.

In the first group vice and sin was rampant from the start, in the latter it simply triumphed at last after a long struggle. In the first group are those whose general history, both physiologically and psychologically, borders more or less closely in that shadowy land of disease, insanity and crime.

In the second group inebriety is acquired, and the outgrowth of physical states and injuries. The theory that in all cases alcohol is the only cause, is unsupported by facts from a study of cases. The methods of treatment where alcohol alone is removed, furnish strong evidence that this is only one of many causes in the many failures that follow. When the history and symptoms of a number of cases are accurately observed and compared, they will be found to follow a certain uniform line of progress. Beginning at a certain point, the same stages, marked by the same symptoms, follow each other with a regularity that points to the reign of law, and causes that are uniform in their action. In most cases two periods appear to be prominent; one beginning some where in the past, sometimes traceable, but generally obscure, marked by certain signs of mental and physical debility, which increase along a regular line, that can be often defined and predicated.

The second period dates from the first tonic action of the alcohol, intoxication, or excessive use, and ending in death. This is also marked by distinct stages, that are uniform and clear. The progress of the case from this time is within the observation and range of every general observer. It may not always be uniform; halts and variations in the order of events may appear, but the same general line is preserved.

All study of these cases indicates the possibility of predicting the approach of inebriety, and anticipating its march and progress at every step, with the same certainty that the movements of the heavenly bodies are known. What we want, is a knowledge of the forces and causes, and the influences on certain physical organizations; then the problem will be clear.

Another conclusion still more startling comes from a general study of these cases. It is that inebriates are the results of physical causes and conditions; that they are grown and manufactured, as much so as cotton and wool, and the machines to work them into fabrics, the difference being only in the process of manufacturing, whose complexity is beyond our present knowledge to follow out. In outline we can trace an intimate relation between inebriety and great social revolutions, wars, and diseases which affect the interests of large sections of country.

We can see inebriety coming from the neglect of great physical laws; we can mark its footsteps as a tide of disease, ebbing and flowing, following some unknown germ cause, and we know that the same eternal order of cause and effect reigns here as elsewhere. As medical men it is our duty to find out these causes and the laws which govern them.

The impulse to use alcohol is not an accident or evil impulse to do wrong, which might be checked with ordinary pondence and self-control. It is the outburst of some diseased tendency, which seeks relief, and grows into great proportions by the very means which it demands.

Let the conscientious observer start from any point of inquiry and seek facts alone, and he will arrive at the same conclusion, that inebriety is a physical disease, and as he goes on further in his investigations, the

causes and their prevention will come out distinctly and with startling significance.

He has touched the shores of an almost unknown continent, about which to-day there are written thousands of volumes and hundreds of papers, whose descriptions of this country are worthless, and whose theories are but fogs and superstitions of the infancy of the subject.

Inebriety can not be reasoned out, it must be seen and studied as a new country above all theory and speculation. The problem is a serious one, and its solution determines the interests of vast numbers of persons. Personal, social and political interests are involved, the influences of which are becoming more and more important every day.

Inebriety is increasing far more rapidly than the increase of population. Penal methods of punishment for restraint are everywhere recognized to be failures; and worse than all, increasing and making the victims more incurable. Short terms of imprisonment, and fines for the purpose of checking inebriety, are literally building up and educating a chronic class, that always entails heavy burdens on the community, and is a source of peril to law and order.

The methods by appeals to the emotional faculties, to sign the pledge and become converted, must of necessity fail, as they do not recognize the physical condition of the inebriate.

The time has come for medical men to teach the public what inebriety is, and is not, and not the victims of this malady and the teaching of moralists whose shifting dynamism is unworthy of notice. The problem is a medical one, and can only be solved by an appeal to the facts gathered from many sources by accurate observers. Every physician in the country can study inebriety in his own circle; he can group the facts he may discover, and deduce some laws which govern them. In this way he can become a pioneer, and thus help to solve a problem against which all theory and speculation will beat in vain. The time has come to put on one side the theories of the hour, and demand the facts and their meaning above all ideological and popular notions of the day. Inebriety is a physical disease, then we have it in our power to reach and prevent it by the use of physical means along the line of causes. If inebriety is the outcome of physical conditions and surroundings, then a knowledge of these will enable us to apply preventive medicines and means that will reach out and prevent the disorder, and restore the victim.

Here is a field where the best trained medical men of the country will find vast regions of unknown facts, and where each may be a discoverer untroubled by rivalry or competition with others.

TOWNSEND, M. T., Nov. 23, 1884.

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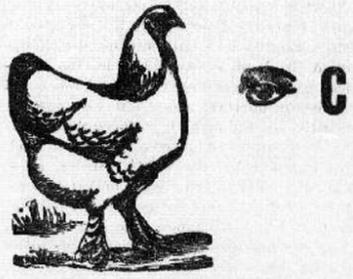
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