

DRUNKENNESS.

It is said that there are, at least, six hundred thousand drunkards in the United States; and that of these sixty thousand die annually, their number being made good from the ranks of the drinkers of ardent spirits. That the evil is a very great and growing one; that well-considered and very united and vigorous efforts on the part of the sober portion of the American people must be made by some means to check or to put a stop to the progress of drunkenness, or substantially their health and their character will be destroyed, admits not of question. For the last forty years good men and women have been at work to this end, and arguments of the most reasonable and conclusive nature have been presented to the consideration of a large portion of our inhabitants throughout the country. **Many have been convinced by them, and have adopted the only safe means, namely, that of total abstinence from all intoxicating substances.** Yet the evil does not abate. In the judgment of many well-informed persons it has increased, till the thoughtful, patriotic, public - spirited, benevolently - minded, religiously - disposed, humane men and women in our country are at their wits' end, well-nigh, as to the best and most successful means to be employed in order to put a stop to its further growth.

In this direction, my reflections have led me to form some very conclusive opinions, which I take the liberty here to state, because I think the subject is one which legitimately falls within the scope of thought to be set forth in this book.

I regard drunkenness essentially as a disease, requiring for its cure medical treatment, and demanding of society such exercise of its plenary right to control the conditions of any persons to such degree as is necessary for the safety of the whole, and to inaugurate and establish proper means whereby the drunkard can be restored to sobriety; and he should be placed under their operation without his consent unless he gives it. For, philosophically speaking, drunkenness is not only a disease, but is one which is to be classified with aberrative diseases. **A drunkard is an irresponsible sick man, and one whose bodily diseases are such as to induce mental derangement. He is not, therefore, to be supposed to have such a sense of consciousness of personal responsibility as to be adjudged liable for what he does, and, therefore, cannot be accorded the liberty of saying what he will or will not do.**

Society has already settled that it has a right to deal with persons whom it recognizes as insane, without asking their consent. A man running up and down the streets of any village half-naked, hallooing and acting violently towards those whom he should meet, would be regarded by all who should see him as insane; or for the time being so bereft of his reason as to justify, on the score of the public welfare and

the safety of the inhabitants of such place, that he should be restrained. What society needs to do for the public safety is properly to classify and deal with drunkenness.

Every man who is intoxicated is not only a diseased man, but his disease is substantially one, pro tempore, of mental derangement. He is not, therefore, at liberty to be his own master, and a public or private infirmary is the proper place for him, to which he should go voluntarily, or to which he should be sent. It matters not how he came to be mentally deranged or drunk. This does not enter essentially into the question of how he shall be dealt with.

Nothing will ever come of the temperance reform in this country, to the substantial good of the people, which does not involve in its discussion and settlement a right diagnosis of drunkenness. When it shall come to be understood that drunkenness is a disease, and that, in order to its cure, proper remedial agencies must be used, and that, in order to prevent it, proper prophylactic measures must be taken, and that **these must involve a larger basis of action than that of simple pledge of persons to total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks, then the evil can be met and successfully checked, if not entirely cured. Until this is done, few drunkards will be restored to sobriety and to personal and social usefulness,** and no proper security against the sober being: turned into drunkards will be furnished. For, if drunkenness be a disease, involving morbid conditions of certain structures or organs in the body,

then predispositions or strong liabilities exist just in proportion to the existence of the morbid condition of such structures or organs. If these can be made to become deranged without the use of ardent spirit at all, but only so deranged as to wake up in the person a most vigorous and insatiable appetite for strong drink, then it seems to me that **no complete security against the use of alcohol can be had simply by reason of a promise or pledge on the part of the person not to use it.**

Suppose that a person were voluntarily and over his own signature to pledge himself and to promise others that he would not eat, does it stand to reason to expect that he would, for any great length of time, keep that pledge, after he should have so long gone without food as to become seized by insatiable hunger? I take it, that under such circumstances his moral sense, or his obligation to keep his promise, would grow faint in his consciousness, until it completely faded away, and no impression of it was left on his memory, hunger having completely absorbed it, and he, forgetting, or if not entirely forgetting that he had thus made a pledge, caring nothing for it.

This is a good illustration of the relation to the pledge of total abstinence made by any person whose habits, methods and conditions of physical life are such, in general, as to create and awaken in him a strong desire for stimulating drinks. Let him but have the feeling creep upon him that he must have something to overcome his present sense of physical debility, and his moral sense of the impropriety of resorting

to stimulants grows feeble, and his sense of moral obligation to keep any pledge which he has made not to drink gradually dies out of him. If it still remains in him, sufficient to have some influence on him under a direct form of presentation to his consciousness, then he will set to work to find some indirect methods of being relieved from it. If he does not feel encouraged straightforwardly to violate the pledge and so drink liquor openly, if possible he will find a justification for doing it in the expressed opinion of a medical man. If there is any sense of a diseased condition which challenges, in the mind of the subject who suffers, the necessity of medical advice and medical treatment, it is that feeling of debility which, coming over him, awakens the instinctive necessity of rousing up his vital force to renewed expressions of energy by the introduction into his circulation of some substance which has the power to produce such effect.

Now, by every association of ideas into which the children as well as the adults of our country are educated, alcoholic stimuli are regarded as the most efficient, the most appropriate, and the most easily available of any. When one feels weak, if he is to be made strong by taking anything into his circulation, nothing so readily suggests itself to him, and is so easy to be procured, as some form of alcoholic beverage. Pledge him, therefore, as strong as we may, not to touch it, **his pledge furnishes no certain security, whenever in his bodily conditions a sense of debility makes him conscious**

of the necessity of using it. If his pledge is of such a character as to forbid him to use it at all then he immediately reasons that it was made under a very different set of conditions of body from what he has then present. So he justifies himself in not keeping it, and, therefore, drinks. If his pledge is such as to forbid him to use it in health, but to permit him to use it when out of health, as a medicine, then under these conditions of debility he feels himself entirely at liberty to use it, because he is not only not healthy but positively sick.

Whatever conditions or habits of living, therefore, tend to produce or do actually produce a certain order of debility in a human body, tend to make or do actually make any pledge on the part of any person to abstain from all intoxicating drinks quite insecure, and not by any means to be relied upon. There is, then, no security of any person against the use of intoxicating drinks, except in the establishment of such conditions and habits of bodily life as to render to the consciousness of such person their use uncalled for. Overfeed a man until his stomach refuses to perform its office, and a consciousness of enfeeblement of that organ comes to exist to that degree as to be described only by a sense of goneness and faintness of it. No man pledged to the disuse of ardent spirits would think anything of such pledge for a moment after he should be made to feel that a glass of brandy would relieve him from that terrible suffering. Overwork a man until he is so tired that he can scarcely

put one leg before the other, and convince him that to drink a glass of brandy may relieve him from such terrible suffering as such a sense of fatigue always creates, and he will drink brandy against all the pledges in the world. Over sexualize a man until there is not a nerve or a muscle in his body that does not carry to his sensorium its own debility and press it home there upon his consciousness, and he will drink against any pledge heretofore made, if he can be induced to think that by so doing his debility will give way and vigor take its place. It is hard fighting against bodily instincts. Even the moral sense of a man, in the long run, gives way before their all-powerful sway.

The fact is, that any person in order to become a drunkard must have one particular organ or portion of his bodily structure diseased. Until it is so, he cannot become a drunkard; the thing is physically impossible. I care not what other organ or organs are deranged, **he never will become an inebriate until he has congestion, or irritation or inflammation of the solar plexus of nerves.** I do not mean to say that he may not become intoxicated; but even this cannot take place until congestion of the solar plexus exists. Protect this network of nerves, if it were possible, against the effects of alcoholic poison, and a man may drink a barrel of fourth-proof brandy and he would not stagger nor show any mental abnormalism more than were he to drink so much water. But introduce into the circulation poison enough to affect the action of these organic nerves, and the man's brain as well as his muscular system will give

way. Poison his circulation by the introduction of alcohol into it so frequently as to establish what may be called a bodily diathesis or habit of dependence on it, and this net-work of nerves becomes not only congested or irritated, but passively inflamed, and then the man has a burning desire for liquor; unless he is deprived of food he never can have enough of it so long as he is conscious of anything. Drink he will, for drink he must. **There is no more hope of saving him without so altering his relations to life as to reduce that inflammation, and restore that net-work of nerves to something like healthy action,** than there is of making a deaf man hear while he remains deaf, or a blind man see while he remains blind. **Whatever methods of living tend to induce, or do induce, congestion of the blood-vessels of the stomach and of the network of nerves lying behind it, also tend to create conditions which to the man's consciousness render the use of stimulating drinks needful to him.** As soon, therefore, as under his bodily conditions there seems to be a necessity for their use, how, under any action of his moral sense, is he to be kept from their use? I never knew a man whose moral sense deterred him from doing that which he thought was necessary for him to do. In the department of morals, as in every other department of human life, necessity rises above all law; it knows none. Make a man, therefore, to feel that liquor is necessary to his health and to his strength, to his sense of enjoyment, and to the use and proper fulfilment of his powers, and that he cannot

have these without it, and of what force is to him a pledge that he never will take intoxicating liquors? It is like burnt tow wherewith to bind Samson: it amounts to nothing.

To check, therefore, the tide of intemperance in this country, we must go into a discussion and examination of the general habits of living of our people. If we cannot make them live so there will be no instinctive desire in them for stimulants, pledges will be of no avail wherever such desire exists, because under its existence the use of stimulants is consciously and obviously a necessity; and, I repeat it, **pledges are no security against any indulgence** which in his own estimation is necessary to the person. He is then under exceptional conditions, and, if he keeps up the necessity, the conditions will exist, and ultimately come not to be exceptional, but ordinary; and thus the man is in just the line of travel which places him in the conditions of a drunkard. Drunkenness, therefore, being a disease, must be prevented by healthier conditions of life for our people; must be cured by changing the habits of life of all such as have become its victims.

Now for the treatment. Deal with the drunkard as if he were a nervous dyspeptic, and his disease can be cured as thoroughly as can nervous dyspepsia ; for, in truth, drunkenness is but the counterpart of nervous dyspepsia. The difference between them is only apparent, for nervous dyspepsia puts on protean changes. Now it is

hypochondria, now hysteria, then sciatic rheumatism, then congestion of the lungs, then seminal emissions, then spasmodic twitchings of the muscles, then congestion of the brain; now epilepsy, now apoplexy, now paralysis, now typhoid fever, now drunkenness. **In other words, a large class of diseases have their predisposing causes in imperfect digestion and assimilation of food, and their provoking causes in an inflammation of the nerves of the stomach, liver, spleen, kidneys and bowels.** I have treated over fifty cases of paroxysmal or habitual inebriety where most of them had lost self-control, ordinarily or at times, pitiable to behold. Some of them were men in middle life, others young men just starting out in life, others mature women, and, in three or four instances, girls. In the cases of the women and of the girls, if I recollect rightly, the liking for alcoholic liquor was kindled as the result of its medicinal use. **I treated them all on the basis that the nerves of the stomach were inflamed,** and that where the appetite was paroxysmal, amounting to mania a potu, or craziness for drink, the paroxysm was brought on from some cause producing it in the external circulation. Not infrequently this change would be obviously dependent upon the modification of the temperature of the atmosphere. If it sunk in the scale 20° or 30°, making the air pass from a quite warm to a chilly temperature, the external capillary blood-vessels would be contracted, blood driven out of them upon the inner tissues, particular and especial irritation of the blood vessels of the mucous membrane of the

stomach would be established, irritation of the organic nerves follow, the brain be affected, and the desire for liquor at the time would be awakened, and become intolerable. Before any such appetite all considerations of propriety vanish like a fog before the sun's rays. Home, friends, character, are nothing. To use the phrase of one of them, the victim's legs would be operated upon by an invisible force, and as against all the influences that could be brought to bear upon him through his judgment and moral sense, he would go to a groggery and drink until complete unconsciousness ensued. The paroxysm would last under the law of periodicity until reaction of the nerves, and so of the circulatory system, would take place, when, for the time being, he would be as disgusted with the idea of liquor as he had previously been drawn to its use.

In case of paroxysmal drunkenness, consequent upon occasional use, as of daily drunkenness consequent upon habitual use, my plan of treatment under my reflections on the subject came to be such as directly tended to relieve the blood-vessels of the stomach and the adjacent structures from their overplus of blood, and so relieve the nerves of their inflamed condition. To do this, **tonic baths were given, daily, to the surface of the entire body. Fomentations were laid over the region of the stomach, liver and spleen, every day for half an hour,** followed by washing the parts thus covered in cold water, and then putting on abdominal bandages which

would be worn night and day, except when the person was in bath. **The person was placed on antiphlogistic food, made up largely of grains and fruits.** Oily substances, such as butter and cream, were dispensed with. **Common salt was not used at all. Tobacco, tea, coffee, and all the condiments, were strictly prohibited.** The patient was taken away from business and placed under kind but thorough oversight. He was not permitted to go to town, nor in any direction to associate with persons who, drinking alcoholic liquors, perfumed the air more or less with their breath. A system of manly obedience was required of him, and, if necessary, an attendant was dispensed to him, and went with him, walked with him, cared for him, roomed with him. **From three to twelve months have been taken up in restoring such cases.**

Although, in a few instances where injudiciousness of friends has been manifest, and in a few instances where overwork has induced debility, the parties have returned to their drunkenness, yet out of the entire seventy not more than four or five have ultimately become drunkards again; the rest are, or were, when I heard from them all in good health, and sober, useful, honest, upright men and women. I, therefore, am firm in my belief that I have discovered **the seat of the disease not only, but the means of curing it.** I would as soon expect a reformed drunkard to remain sober if he were to return to the use of fermented and distilled liquors, as I would if he were to use tobacco or opium.

Although it may seem very strange to all who may read what I have said with reference to drunkenness and its cure, I nevertheless cannot forbear to say that **I do not believe reformed inebriates, generally, can be kept sober after they are pronounced cured, if they are permitted to eat largely of flesh meats seasoned with the various spices in common use with our people, or to use tobacco, or to drink tea or coffee. A simple nutrient diet, the use of pure cold water for a drink, and personal cleanliness, with abundant sleep, will prove to be the only securities to the reformed drunkard.** It is not necessary, in order to awaken in him the appetite for liquor, so that he will drink and become a drunkard, that he shall use liquor of any kind whatever. Tea, coffee, tobacco, pepper, mustard, salt, flesh meat, will create such a condition of the organic nerves, and of the mucous lining of his stomach, as to re-establish the desire for liquor, and then he will drink, come what may to his pledges or his social position.