CONTINENTAL STUDY OF INEBRIETY.

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THE choice of London as the meeting-place of the International Temperance Congress of 1909 (July 18 to 24) is making many ask what the Continent has contributed toward the study of inebriety. Comparatively few Englishmen are yet fully aware of the long and rapid strides which Germany, Scandinavia, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Finland, and other Continental countries, have been making in the above study within the last ten or fifteen years. In the first-named country especially the progress has been unparalleled mainly because the movement began so largely among the scientific, who quickly placed themselves, and have remained, at the head of even such popular efforts as Good Templary.

Some may be surprised to hear that, out of some 1,200 persons who attended the Congress at Bremen, exactly 1 per cent. was English-speaking. And not one of the scientific papers was by an Englishman or an American. The valuable proceedings of these Congresses are largely lost to us, because they naturally appear mainly in German. The Ninth Congress was held at Bremen in 1903. At the Tenth Congress in Budapest, in 1905, the proportion of English-speaking persons was almost exactly the same. At the Eleventh Congress, held at Stockholm in 1907, there was a larger proportion, due probably, to some extent, to the special effort that England was making to induce the Congress to ignore the language difficulty and to accept her invitation to hold the Twelfth Congress in London next year—an effort which, as we have seen, was successful.

A very hasty glance at the bulky and full reports, so treasured by their possessors, is quite enough to show that 1,000 to 1,400 temperance students do not gather from every part of Europe and spend a full week in session together without knowing that

an abundance of original and solid material will be placed before them for their discussion. Indeed, the complaint has been that there is insufficient time allowed for the digestion of the various courses of intellectual fare which are laid before the Congress.

To give some idea of what this fare is, we may hastily run through the more scientific papers of the last three Congresses, beginning with Bremen.

The only French paper was by Dr. Legrain, head of the Asylum at Evrard, a prominent promulgator of scientific teaching on this subject in France. It was upon the relationship of alcohol to tuberculosis—a paper in which he elaborates the well-known dictum of the late Professor Brouardel.

We find next two excellent papers upon “Alcohol in its Relation to the Vitality of the Race”; the first by Dr. Ploetz, and the second by Dr. Rüdin, both of Berlin. Each paper deserves translation in full and a wide publication in this country. It may be remarked in passing that Dr. Ploetz concludes with the declaration that race-hygiene must make its most strenuous effort to eliminate moderate drinking, and, as its less important task, strive to combat immoderate drinking also. Dr. Rüdin, an able young alienist, is a pupil of Kraepelin’s. He recognizes, as Ploetz also does, that alcohol renders a certain grim service in eliminating the unfit; but both recognize also the enormous harm that is meanwhile being done in the production of the unfit. Dr. Rüdin was an early advocate of the adoption of stringent measures to prevent the propagation of the unfit.

Professor Forel, of Switzerland, whose works on “Mind Hygiene,” “Ants,” and other subjects, cause him to be fairly well known in England through translations, usually contributes some important scientific paper. That at Bremen upon “Man and Narcotics” was valuable. But he is still stronger upon “Alcohol in its Relation to *Geschlecht*,” and gave a splendid paper at Budapest upon “Blastophthoria”; he entertains no doubt as to whether alcohol directly injures the offspring of the drinker. Dr. Forel is perhaps the best known and liked member of the Congress. His intellect is keen; he is a lively and incisive speaker, and full of humour. It is interesting to remark that this man, who has done so much for the propagation of the scientific study of alcoholism among the educated men of Europe, was himself brought to see the importance of the subject by a working man.

The question of the Deprivation of Civil Rights (*Entmündigung*) of the Inebriate was discussed in papers by Professor Cramer, of Göttingen, and Professor Endemann, of Halle. The former lays down, among other conclusions to which his experience has led him, the following: That we can assume with great probability the incurability of an inebriate if he shows no clear signs of improvement after eight weeks' abstinence; and that we must set him down as incurable if, after a half-year's abstinence, there is no clear sign of improvement, or if an improvement which has shown itself early remains stationary. In common with most of those who have to deal with these cases, he complains that the inebriate usually does not enter an inebriate institution until all the mischief has been done to the patient himself, if not to his family also. The paper of Professor Endemann shows an intimate acquaintance with the legislative efforts of various countries either to cure the drunkard or to prevent his becoming a menace to his family and to society, and under the head menace he rightly ranges even looseness of tongue. As everyone else, he insists upon the early incarceration of the inebriate, who should be regarded, he remarks, as a sick and infectious person.

Most careful and valuable papers upon "Beer in Relation to Alcoholism" were presented by Dr. Keferstein, of Göttingen, and by Dr. Delbrück, the head of the Bremen Asylum. The latter is well known as an accurate, tactful, and level-headed man who has exercised great influence in Bremen, and also done much to commend the scientific study of inebriety to Germany generally. These two men in elaborate papers combat the idea, so long prevalent—upon the Continent, at any rate—that beer is relatively harmless as compared with spirits, whether the physiological effects are considered or the eventuation of inebriety. The former mentions that out of 149 patients in a German private inebriate home 41 set down their inebriety to spirits, 30 to wine, and 78 to beer; whilst both doctors agree in attributing certain special diseases to beer, notably the beer-heart, which is of increasing occurrence, and which follows in degree the consumption of beer in the various districts of Germany.

From the above it will be seen that Germany at least is rich in men of light and leading who take a deep interest in the study of inebriety. The writer was still more impressed by observing how many members of the Congress there were who in the discussions could add new and pertinent contributions, and also how few spoke who had little to say.