VAGRANCY AND DRINK.

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IF we are to deal scientifically with the subject of vagrancy, we must classify men. Classifications of humanity must, like all truly scientific classifications, take into account the underlying primal facts rather than the outward forms.

VARIETIES OF VAGRANTS.

In considering, therefore, the relation of drink to vagrancy, we must note three primary divisions, which might be further subdivided if we studied humanity as we do flora and fauna.

1. *The Vagrant Proper*.—If we could uncover the psyche, or self, that accompanies a vagrant habit, we should find it analogous to that of a child. Restlessness and inability to remain in one position or place characterize it. It is strongly emotional, but its emotions, like all else relating to it, are transitory. It may accept sensations that are pleasurable without inquiring into after-consequences, but it has no "habits." What we consider "bad habits" are simply the result of not acquiring better. A child drunkard is rare, and so is a drunken vagrant. In fact, men who sink down to be vagrants are usually less drunken than they would be in stationary life. The habit of drinking is unmade by stern necessity. The roving disposition, gradually strengthened, necessitates certain endurance incompatible with alcoholism. Long tramps need a steady plod, and fresh air subdues craving for intoxicants. The tramp will drink if "treated," as a child will gorge with sweetmeats. He also will gorge if he can. But to wash down his food he prefers tea. Every true tramp carries a tin mug, and presents it for "hot water" to the charitable householder, and if

it is empty, begs tea and sugar. But the besotted drink craze is not, as a rule, found among genuine tramps. It is a pity that the arrangements of our country make "drink" synonymous with alcohol in some shape or form, and that men and women can get "drink" given them when they cannot obtain bed or food. Tea is hard to obtain and expensive, yet men would prefer it if they could get it, as long tramps and the penal work of workhouses raise a thirst which cheap beer does not satisfy.

2. *The "Navy" Vagrant.*—In this class I place men who roam to work on public works, also harvesting, and all sorts of intermittent jobs. The "trade" of the vagrant proper is, in some shape or form, to prey on society, or, like a child, make it support him. But the "navvy" class are genuine workers. Some are bred to it, some, many of whom are "army men," sink to it. It will be noted that the occupations grouped together under this head are open air, intermittent, and compatible with considerable freedom. They therefore suit what I might call a coalescing psyche—*i.e.*, one in which certain groups of dominant ideas coagulate and "habits" begin; but these groups, fighting for interior mastery, make the man subject to "fits" of industry, also idleness, inebriety, and other "sins." Bursts of temper, for instance, may lose him his work. But he does not mind; England is a little country, and such men freely move north, east, south, west, readily finding work that requires a certain elementary skill and muscle, and becoming trained for such work and unusually healthy.

But they are liable to "bursts" or "sprees." They receive a good wage and spend it. Again, we may note resemblance to the child with alternate "fits" of emotion and dullness, industry and ennui. Deteriorating humanity often sinks to this level. A certain periodic compulsion to hard work saves the individual, unless he falls lower into the mere tramp. For this class the arrangements of society should be protective. The "old soldier" should receive his pension weekly through the post office. The tramp ward often has to be resorted to by such men on their journeys, because there is no other sleeping accommodation in many small towns, or even in large ones it is insufficient. But as no money can be taken in, the man is tempted to have a "burst," and go in penniless. Mates are also generous if not "down in their luck," and after the dry and thirsty tramp ward, to seek one is natural. Relief stations and proper travel routes, and real national care for

the bottom "general labourer" might do much. He is, like a child, emotional, and easily befriended. But it is a little-noticed fact that such men, coming to-day and going to-morrow, often *cannot* get food warmed, or obtain drink, save in the public-house. Even sleeping accommodation, sufficient and handy, is not obtainable. Men have been known to have to walk seven miles to work in a park where game was preserved, not being allowed nearer. If a tramway is laid, no one asks where men are to breakfast. Much might be done of a preventive nature if it were realized that the "drink" is often a man's only resource to stay real thirst. "Navying" is thirsty work.

3. *The Unemployable Vagrant*.—We now come to a class which I must characterize as the industrially "unfit." It is not commonly recognized that to be an "industrial" needs certain psychic qualities *in advance* of the ordinary psychology of a child or man capable of *intermittent* industry, and therefore that many *adults* never pass into it. Industrialism implies concentrated energy, "habits" of industry, capacity to subordinate the personality to the community, and become, as it were, a cog in a complicated machine, specially shaped to a special end. In the school this "drilling" is attempted, but many escape imperfect. There is as yet no recognition of the fact that by *sorting* individuals and carrying forward industrial education in the case of the undeveloped to a higher age, many might be saved the consequences of inevitable imperfection. At present a rough education goes forward by elimination of the unfit, but no attempt is made to stop their manufacture, prevent their breeding, or to raise them to efficiency.

VAGRANCY AND ALCOHOLISM.

I must emphasize the fact that behind the individual lies an undeveloped psyche, and it is the characteristics of this psyche that make the individual a ready prey to alcoholism, and usually a victim to its ravages. Such men are the flotsam and jetsam of large towns, the despair of police-courts, the inmates of work-houses, and of prisons for crimes of "drunk and incapable" and small crimes of violence or lust. They have most of them tried to work, and have been rejected. They subsist in all kinds of ways on the "charity" (?) of friends, relatives, or the public. They do not wander far, though they may count as "tramps" through entering the vagrant ward in emergency. Many have long-suffering wives

and large families. Few are really celibate. We may reclassify them—for they come from all ranks—as :

1. The slum product, lads put to some untrained branch of industry, and never acquiring skill.
2. Lads growing to men undisciplined, from "middle-class homes," revolting from the stern discipline of industrialism, or acquiring vices.
3. Professional and educated men of all classes who drop mainly through alcoholism.

DEFECTIVE VAGRANTS.

Mingled with these are the *physically* incapable, the epileptic, or weak-minded, hereditarily predisposed to a mental make-up incompatible with sustained work. Industrialism requires a certain rough standard of perfection, and relentlessly rules out imperfection.

All these are not only a ready prey to alcoholism, but alcohol constitutes in itself a seeming redress to certain evils in their conditions. This gives it a fictitious value to the individual, whom it appears to raise temporarily to efficiency. The psyche, *before* it can centralize and sacrifice itself and "settle down" to steady, persistent industry, needs to *realize* itself. There is a craving, plainly to be seen in the child, to go in for any excitement that enlarges the personality. Often there exist unseen restraints, such as timidity or doubts of efficiency. The capacity is untested, and the individual wavers, often fatally, between different occupations; or the one selected proves dry and unattractive. The desire for pleasure is strong, and for virtue hardly yet strong enough for self-control. But alcohol makes a man feel and talk big, gives rosy dreams, temporarily enlarges the personality. Pleasures of various kinds go hand in hand with it. The temptation comes to all—the professional man used up by study or work, the student with a hard grind, the clerk in a dull office, the mill hand or mechanic at monotonous toil. The result is the "wastrel"—useless, worse than useless, a menace to civilization. Until we learn to treat the question of national education scientifically we cannot eliminate him. Until we learn the absolute folly of the tramp ward and the short sentence, we cannot send

him to school. The lines of redemption are, however, plainly written by Nature's hand. Interesting occupation, in touch with Nature's rewards of industry, remedial not punitive, would educate many to industry and self-control. For the rest, national treatment should be coercive or preventive. Compulsion to work should rule out parenthood without responsibility, and stop the fatal breeding of men predestined to be paupers.

THE ELIMINATION OF THE VAGRANT.

We must recognize that, though we may decrease this class, it will always remain as a national care, to be wisely dealt with, and tided over into a national asset, instead of debit, by more provision for all its varying requirements—*e.g.*, colonies for epileptics, after-care of the feeble-minded, and the wise device of restraints on alcoholism; also its scientific treatment as a disease seizing on immature developing psyches. We should satisfy the craving for interest in life by means of wise instead of unwise methods, by counter-attractions to the public-house, and bright Nature-haunted cities replacing the squalid slum-life. In the school much preventive work might be done; also much may be done—how much we hardly realize as yet—by continuation schools. We *must* replace the education of the street.

In conclusion, I must briefly allude to the industrial himself. He is not vagrant, but though he fits into life and remains stationary, this in itself does not preclude alcoholism. It is among the stationary slum-dwellers with homes behind them that the worst cases are found. But the home disintegrates, and the man drops into the abyss. He drops there for a certain rough discipline. If our social arrangements furthered instead of hindering this, and followed Nature's lines, we should by degrees eliminate vagrancy, and foster only necessary and useful migration. It is no sin to migrate. It may lead to sin to stagnate. But at present we dub all destitute migration "vagrancy," and couple it in our mind with all the deadly sins. A science of humanity is badly needed, and common-sense in its practical application.