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THE AIMS AND FUTURE WORK OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF INEBRIETY.*

BY SIR WILLIAM J. COLLINS,

K.C.V.O., D.L., M.D., M.S., B.Sc., F.R.C.S.,

President of the Society for the Study of Inebriety (1916-1919).

HON. MEMBERS will recall how at the last meeting of the Society, through misfortune and not by our default, we were disappointed of the pleasure of hearing Lord D'Abernon, Chairman of the Central Control Board, and how we accordingly improvised among ourselves an unpremeditated debate on alcohol and drug addiction. Those present were so gratified at this inventive outcome of inexorable necessity, that I ventured to adumbrate the possibility of repeating the experiment, if not by accident perhaps by design. Again, most unfortunately, we are disappointed by our announced lecturer, Sir Thomas Whittaker, who had undertaken to speak to us on "Counter-Attractions to the Public House." Thus, again, perforce, we are thrown back upon our own resources, are compelled to repeat the experiment of our last meeting, and to endeavour to devise some counter-attractions to Sir Thomas Whittaker.

The amiable despot who masquerades as our hon. sec. has commanded me to lead off, and as your expiring President I will, with the best grace I can, obey this final injunction, and in a few valedictory remarks deal with what has been set down for me—viz., "The Aims and Future Work of the Society for the Study of Inebriety." Before, however, dipping into either the past or the future, allow me to congratulate the Society on its present position and popularity. The annual report discloses not only

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a satisfactory state of finance, but also of the new adherents to the Society during the current and the previous year. With the exception of the years following the advent of our present hon. sec. in 1903 (when his energizing was reflected in augmented numbers), no years have been so fruitful in securing recruits to our ranks as have been the last two.

I take it that in speaking of the aims and future of the Society, I am invited to direct your attention to the objects or ends for which the Society was established, to the extent to which they have been achieved, and to the question whether the present constitution of the Society—since reconstruction and reconstitution are now in the air—is that best adapted to realize our objectives in this year of grace 1919, and after the lapse of a generation since the Society was begotten.

It has been a matter of some archæological research to ascertain with precision what are the aims and constitution of the Society as prescribed by Rules and Bylaws. I have discovered a copy of these latter embedded in the Transactions of the Society of July, 1884, but these, I understand, have from time to time undergone modification and amendment.

This Association was first entitled the "Society for the Study and Cure of Inebriety," but the therapeutic objective, whether that of the Individual or of the Body Politic, appears to have been permitted—somewhat unaccountably—to lapse. I am well aware of the danger of so-called Political Science, the danger of making Science political without making Politics scientific, but

"Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And hope without an object cannot live";

and it would almost seem to amount to a dereliction of duty and to run the peril of being

"lost in a maze of uninspired research"

if when study for a generation has resulted in the attainment of such organized common sense, as science has been held to be, such knowledge should not be translated into action, and with such authority as it can justly claim make representations alike to legislative and administrative bodies for the advancement of social well-being and the betterment of mankind.

Rule II. declares the object of the Society to be "To investigate the various causes of inebriety, and to educate the professional and public mind to a knowledge of these causes and to a *recognition of the physical aspect of habitual intemperance.*" In 1884, at an inaugural lunch which ushered the Society into the world,

Dr. Kerr said: "Inebriety is for the most part the issue of certain physical conditions, is an offspring of material parentage, is the natural product of a depraved, debilitated, and defective nervous system." Dr. Alfred Carpenter yet more crudely taught that "inebriety has its origin in vice and its seat is in the brain." Now, as I said in my Norman Kerr Lecture in 1915, I cannot help thinking that the emphasis which our pious founder laid upon the physical causes of inebriety and his insistence upon regarding it as a *physical disease* were more appropriate to the time and temper, as well as to the philosophic trend, of the seventies and eighties of last century than to the tendencies of to-day. Dr. Kerr regarded the opium habit as "a true inebriety"; he classed such drug and drink addiction together as "Narcomania." In glancing through the old papers read before the Society, I find one, in 1896, by Dr. Wm. Huntly entitled "Opium Addiction: Is it a Disease?" This paper was memorable by the fact that Dr. George Harley participated in its discussion only a few hours before his death. Dr. Kerr on the same paper observed: "He was somewhat surprised that nothing had been said on the pathology of opium. Up to the present, though existing pathological knowledge was imperfect and had hardly been considered, *post-mortem* appearances had been described. He had rarely ever seen more than an absence of fat, and muscular wasting. On the other hand, the *post-mortem* appearances after chronic alcoholism were characteristic, manifest as a rule in stomach, liver, kidneys, heart, and brain. So that so far as scientific research has yet gone, they were warranted in considering opium addiction to be a functional disorder, while alcoholism was undoubtedly an organic as well as a functional disease."

Now, I cannot help thinking that these remarks, the teaching that appears to underlie them, and the "recognition of the physical aspect" of inebriety which this Society by its present rules is bidden to stress, betray some confusion of thought. The undoubted physical lesions which are the result of chronic alcoholism, mostly of the nature of cirrhosis, sclerosis, or other degenerative changes due mostly to irritative causes, and which may affect, *inter alia*, the nervous as well as the digestive and eliminative organs, can only by a process of logical inversion, confounding consequents with antecedents, be cited as demonstrating the pathology of inebriety in the terms of physical disease. I cannot help thinking that our founder was led into the insistence of recognizing inebriety as a disease because he

saw that it required to be treated as an infirmity rather than merely reprobated as a vice or punished as a crime. Remedial and not penal treatment, amid appropriate environment, was what he desiderated, in order to rehabilitate a weak will, instead of the futile folly of repetitive short sentences in gaols that were too often seminaries of crime.

The notion that addiction to alcohol and drugs can be traced as effect to cause to some localized cerebral lesion belongs to the pathology that located the soul in the pineal gland, that believed that without phosphorus there is no thought, that man is what he eats, that the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile, that morality is correlated with grey matter, and along with Littré and his school would probably declare that the soul is but "the ensemble of the functions of encephalic sensibility." The sot, however, cannot be reclaimed by anything out of a bottle nor even an injection syringe, nor is any drug in the latest edition of the *Pharmacopœia*, nor any serum, even of the Mulford brand, endowed with the property of strengthening the human will or prophylactic against the consequences of unfaithfulness to the higher choice.

Medical science has got to extricate itself from the dreadful thralldom of that materialism which dominated all science during the latter half of last century, at a time when the medical curriculum, as it still is, was crystallizing into form. Psychophysical parallelists must learn from Wundt that "mental phenomena cannot be referred to bodily as effect to cause," that "personal character is the ultimate cause of volition"; and with Bergson that "the soul—essentially action, will, liberty—is the creative force *par excellence*, the productive agent of novelty in the world . . . that it is the rôle of life to insert some indetermination into matter," and that "the nervous system with its chains of neurones is a veritable reservoir of indetermination, to the construction of which the vital impulse has led up; or, better still, as our own Spenser put it that—

"Of the soul the body form doth take,
For soul is form and doth the body make."

I rejoice to see signs of a change of view in this respect. The other day the President of the Section of Neurology of the Royal Society of Medicine was commenting on "the fundamentally different outlook" of the younger generation in their study of the Science of Neurology, in which the evolution of function is accorded precedence over the too exclusive anatomical teaching

of earlier years. "Disease is disordered function," he reminded his hearers. Translating Spenser's poetry into physiology, we may claim indeed that function anticipates structure, which it, in turn, determines and ordains. Thus, as I said when addressing this Society for the first time sixteen years ago: "It is all very well to assert, as many of your previous lecturers have done, that inebriety is a disease. A disease it may be called, but a *disease of the will*—if one may couple terms derived from the opposite poles of the material and the volitional—and assuredly a disease in which the individual possessed has in many instances a most essential co-operative influence in his own worsenment or betterment."

During the thirty-four years of our Society's useful existence, most valuable papers have been read and leading parts in discussions have been taken not only by medical men, but by lawyers, learned divines, publicists, legislators, administrators, and scientists in other walks than that of medicine, of both sexes and of other nationalities than our own, which would seem to postulate the implication that there are other aspects of inebriety than the purely medical and other causal and remedial agencies to be considered than the purely physical. During the last four years the operations of the Liquor Control Board, under powers that in other times would have been deemed highly unconstitutional and autocratic, have served to illustrate and confirm in practice what has been often urged upon deaf ears and shut imaginations, and the present juncture calls for decisive action on national and international lines if we are not to lose in future peace what we have gained in recent war. The Control Board has, as the result of a scientific investigation by medical men, pronounced with an authority which no one with a proper regard for D.O.R.A. will be so rash as to dispute that alcohol is to be regarded and dealt with as a narcotic drug; and as the result of the use of the Board's autocratic powers in restricting hours of sale, the places of sale, and the strength for sale of alcoholic drinks, claims to have reduced public drunkenness by three-fourths.

Thus the Central Control Board invests with the authority of D.O.R.A. the scientific conclusions preached by the early fathers of this Society a generation ago, and endorses with the deliverance of unimpeachable sanction some of the tritest commonplaces of the temperance platform of an even earlier date.

If I am right in the contention I have laid before you as to width of aim and breadth of view which should attach to the

ideals and objectives of this Society, I would respectfully ask whether its present organization is the best adapted to achieve their attainment.

As at present constituted qualified medical practitioners are alone eligible for *membership*. Other persons, though they may read papers or initiate and take part in discussions, can only aspire to *associateship*, which, though contingent on the same subscription as membership, confers no right to vote for, or be elected to, the Presidency and Vice-Presidencies, or to any one of the twenty-five Councillorships, in whose collective wisdom, along with the ex-officio members, the conduct of the Society is vested. I am not propounding a revolution, but only stating facts, and the meticulous may be reassured by remembering that the Rules provide that no change in the constitution can be made except at a general meeting and after due notice.

I am well aware that there are some who view with jealousy and disdain the intrusion of those whom they are pleased to regard as laity or outsiders within the sacred precincts of the temple of medical science. They would surround the goddess Hygeia, as did that empiric Dr. Graham in his Temple of Health at the Adelphi, with an atmosphere of pathological sacerdotalism, and in such sacrosanct exclusiveness would account those who know not the laws of pathogenesis as, scientifically speaking, accursed. I am inclined to think that any such homage to a priestcraft of science is a bit out of date; that if the subject-matter with which a Society concerns itself is such as demands the co-operation of earnest and serious men and women, whether medical or legal, ethical or ecclesiastical, legislator or administrator, or social workers bent on the betterment of their fellow-men and women, then the organization and conduct of such Society should be adapted and proportioned in such a way as to enlist the service of all in pursuit of the ideal of all. I do not desire to dogmatize, still less to dictate; I am merely doing as I was directed: opening a discussion. I am also closing my three years' tenure of office, and this is my swansong. I am proud to have been the President of this Society and proud of the Society. I do not desire to magnify unduly its importance, neither, I trust, will you be smitten with "the craven fear of being great." Many minds of different types are needed that each may give his quota to the study of a subject which, on the one hand, lays under contribution the exactitude and precision of the chemist, and, on the other, reaches out into the nebulous regions of the momenta of the human will and the reciprocal rights and duties of the citizen and the State.

However much by means of that which is implied by that blessed and often misused word "research" we may extend the bounds of human knowledge and push back the penumbra of error and ignorance, annexing new continents of thought to the empire of science and the republic of letters, there will always remain, eluding our grasp, yet entering into our equations, a subtle power which a great lawyer described as the power "of judging right upon imperfect materials. It is a talent which no rules will ever teach, and which even experience does not always give. . . . All that can be said about it is that *to see things as they are*, without exaggeration or passion, is essential to it. . . . All really important matters are decided, not by a process of argument worked out from adequate premises to a necessary conclusion, but by making a wise choice between several possible views."

It has been well said: "If we see things as they are, we shall do as we ought; and if we do as we ought, we shall see things as they are." This law of "do and know," the recognition of the reciprocity of mentality and morality, I would respectfully commend to your acceptance, not merely in minor application to the aims and organization of your Society, but as a helpful guide in the elucidation of the subject-matter of your inquiries wherein volitional personality is the agency whose power is invoked in order that conscience may reign throughout the realm of consciousness.