Book Reviews

STUDIES IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF INTEMPERANCE. By G. E. Partridge, Ph.D.
Sturgis and Walton Company, New York.

This volume offers a new presentation of the problems of alcoholism and intemperance in a study brief and untechnical but based on wide knowledge and a fundamental insight into the nature of mankind. It departs from the ordinary ineffectual treatment of the outward symptoms of intemperance to deal with the real meaning and power of intoxication in human development, affording a true psychological basis for the control of this impulse and the direction of the force of which it is one expression.

The author's investigation begins even in the animal world. What is discovered there is more fully confirmed in an extensive study of primitive man and of early civilization, namely the relationship existing between intoxication and those states of excitement and exaltation that accompany the great racial functions, particularly reproduction. The intoxication impulse is at work as one important manifestation of instinct force proving its usefulness and necessity in the resulting increase of capacity for sustained excitement and a tendency toward that, which are essential to the creative activity upon which racial evolution depends. The impulse has manifested itself chiefly in religious activity and development. The excitement always demanded in this sphere has made intoxication appear pleasing to the gods or even divinely ordained, while many are the cults found throughout history dependent upon intoxication. Whether in the customs of widely scattered savage tribes or in the ancient Hindu soma worship; whether through stimulants the priest puts himself into the frenzied state necessary for communion with gods and spirits or the god is actually present in the wine, it is intoxication that produces the desired and effective religious condition. Out of these induced states on the other hand have arisen enlarged religious conception and quickening of faith in the supernatural. In its earliest uses moreover it was the accompaniment and source of a developing social consciousness, leveling natural barriers, producing good fellowship instead of original hostile relations and conducing to the establishment of guiding and restraining laws. For individual indulgence was not common among primitive peoples, rather intoxication was entered into by certain groups for special seasons and with definite purpose, and though great excess was the rule there followed regulated intervals of total abstinence. The very excess is a part of that deep-seated instinct to carry excitement to the point of abandonment to its highest culmination, which points to the fact that it is the state of intoxication that is sought rather than pleasure in the intoxicant.

In civilized nations again history testifies that a period of highest culture is preceded by intoxication expressing the intensity of the impulse for that excitement which, controlled and regulated, leads to the creative activity that marks the cultural period. This nature of the impulse makes intoxication likewise a characteristic of strong and dominant races. The narcotic side, on the other hand follows in a period of decadence and stagnation, when nations or individuals or certain groups of society can no longer turn the impulse to action but seek to escape the suffering inci-

dent upon inability to cope with the demands of existence and progress.

Literature and language testify to the important place of this impulse among all peoples. Medicine has witnessed through an exaggerated use of alcohol to the survival of the primitive conception of a life principle to be stimulated, an idea now modified and transformed and useful in psychotherapy in the principle of *aroused consciousness*.

Upon such well-laid foundation Dr. Partridge develops the practical side of his study. The individual manifests this impulse also as a part of the spirit of growth, that exaltation which must precede and accompany creative effort, and thus we find desire for excessive stimulation and the narcotic impulse following the natural periods of adolescent growth and maturer activity or of diminution of energy and interest. The excessive use of alcohol, now that its period of racial service is past, is abnormal and is found among two classes, those unable to rise above the level, where excitement fails to find its higher expression, and those so ill-balanced that they must seek narcotic effects.

The effect of alcohol on the individual can be studied by precise measurements and also by the examination of the feelings of the individual. In regard to the latter a large number of abnormal cases were examined by Dr. Partridge more or less fully according to opportunity and accurate laboratory tests were made upon normal individuals, ordinarily abstainers. The general conclusions agree. Physiologically alcohol is an injurious substance. It causes at first a temporary increase in physical and mental power but depression follows. There is however at one point a "feeling of power" in "intensity of consciousness" in which the individual feels himself freed from ordinary restraints and superior to ordinary limitations. This is allied to the social spirit which is so prominent in individual as in group intoxication and which is a predominant factor in the yielding to intoxicants.

It is upon an emphasis of its intrinsically social nature that the author would seek a cure for the prevailing evils of intemperance. So fundamental a craving, one which has served such broad racial purposes cannot be defined as sinful or immoral, nor can it be defined and eradicated as a physiological condition. It must be dealt with on broader terms. Education of the child and the youth for the guidance of his natural excitements into sustained and intensified activity through effective outlets, is the prophylactic need. The reëducation of the drunkard and readjustment of his surroundings so that new interests shall stimulate him and take up his energies, these will bring their own cure. Those opportunities for social contacts which the saloon has provided must not be neglected but there must be added what the saloon has failed to give, a "normal zest for life" and opportunities for real, effective activity.

This book is suggestive for such practical lines of endeavor based on a fundamental understanding of the problem with which it deals. It is stimulating too to further study and investigation into the deeper psychological nature of the social impulse bound with intoxication, the nature of the demand for the narcosis of alcohol, and further back the hidden relation between religious development and the intoxication impulse. Such are some of the problems to which this brief study might open the way.

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