The British Journal of Inebriety

VOL. XIV. No. 2.

OCTOBER, 1916.

WAR MEASURES AGAINST INEBRIETY.*

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THE Society is doubtless not less relieved than I am to have observed in the announcement of this meeting that the Presidential Address—which I am told it is my duty to deliver—is to be a brief one. I so recently addressed the Society at such length in the Sixth Norman Kerr Memorial Lecture, on “The Ethics and Law of Drug and Alcohol Addiction,” that you may well claim immunity from another attack; and we should ill requite the kindness and courtesy of Lord D’Abernon in coming to speak to us to-day, on a topic pre-eminently his own, by any prolonged prefatory oration.

The war has brought about many paradoxical results, and the extraordinary legislation which it has justified or excused has effected many changes, welcomed by some as reforms and regretted by others as reactionary. Political problems which have waited long years for solution, and which have been the subjects of prolonged and fruitless agitation, have, under the magic of measures such as the Defence of the Realm Act, passed into accomplished fact with incredible expedition. Questions which have constituted the battle-ground of political parties, and provided catchwords for factional rivalries, have similarly

* Presidential Address delivered before the Society for the Study of Inebriety on Tuesday, July 11, 1916, in the rooms of the Medical Society of London, 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, W.

been, I will not say solved, but dealt with to the delight or dismay of those who respectively approve or condemn the settlements thus vouchsafed. Mill used to say: "All questions on which there are strong private interests on one side, and only the public good on the other, have long periods of incubation to go through." I think he said it in regard to the reform of London Government, but it is not without its bearing upon "Some Aspects of the Drink Question," on which the Chairman of the Central Control Board is going to speak to us. Whether the phenomenal abbreviation of the incubation period of many innovations which the war has brought forth has been too ruthless to private interests, or wholly conceived in the public interest, or detrimental to the resultant brood, remain to be considered. "Nothing is ever settled unless it is settled right," and some of the legislative progeny conceived in war-time may require not a little reconsideration when that silence of laws, proverbially obtaining in the strife of arms, gives place to the free expression of considered opinion.

Meanwhile we have with kaleidoscopic quick-change witnessed the placing of conscription on the Statute-book; the passing of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, from private into State hands; Free Trade abandoned by Liberals; Home Rule, of a sort, approved by Unionists; *Habeas Corpus* seriously imperilled; the State acquiring racehorses and breweries; and last, but not least, many methods for restricting the sale of alcohol—long advocated by temperance reformers, though resisted as preposterous by eminently respectable opponents—tacitly adopted by the Central Control Board for Liquor Traffic established by regulations under the Defence of the Realm (Amendment) (No. 3) Act, 1915. I recall a speech I heard, when I was in the House of Commons, by a former Home Secretary, now in the Gilded Chamber, in which, comparing London without Sunday closing and Glasgow with it, he said he had not observed in Glasgow fewer drunken persons in the streets on the Sabbath day than it had been his good-fortune (*sic*) to encounter in the streets of London! If the statistics vouchsafed by the Control Board are not wholly fallacious, there can be no doubt whatever that the restrictions on hours of opening and on sale of spirits, the prohibition of treating, and the sanctioned dilution of spirits, have not only reduced convictions for drunkenness, but have also increased output, improved timekeeping, and promoted sobriety. One is naturally led to put the question, "If these

alleged beneficial results have flowed from the power of the Board to modify provisions of the Licensing Acts, on what grounds are such boons to be denied to other than those scheduled areas in which either war material is handled or His Majesty's forces are assembled?" And, again, why should such inestimable social benefits be justifiable only for the successful prosecution of a war, and not for the amelioration of mankind in piping times of peace? Is not the conclusion obvious that our dealing with alcohol must be akin to that of our dealing with any other drug of addiction or poison, since it is not the less baneful because it both saps the will-power and also causes degeneration or destruction of the tissues? As I contended in my Norman Kerr Lecture here on October 12, 1915 (and previously in a letter to *The Times* on April 19, 1915), noxious agencies which by habitual use enfeeble the will and imperil self-control should be brought under national and international regulations similar to those which the International Opium Convention contemplates in the case of drugs of addiction. Such legislation, unlike some we have recently witnessed, would not require repeal when other war emergency measures are allowed to lapse, since it is directed, not to the restriction of the freedom of the individual, but to emancipation of his will-power; for, as Mill maintained, "the principle of freedom cannot require that a man should be free not to be free. It is not freedom to be allowed to alienate his freedom."

In May of this year the Army Council, also acting under that marvel of legislation the Defence of the Realm Act and regulations made thereunder, issued an order making it an offence to sell or supply any member of His Majesty's Forces, otherwise than on medical prescription, with any morphine, opium, cocaine, and some other specified drugs, or any preparations thereof. Thus another step was taken in the direction contemplated by those of us who helped to draft the International Opium Convention. But here again one is impelled to ask, Why is such legislative order good only for times of war and for the exclusive benefit of members of His Majesty's Forces? Have times of peace disclosed no drug abuses, or are morphino-maniacs and coca-fiends limited to the ranks of His Majesty's Forces?

Moreover, the international aspect of this question is sadly neglected. It is idle—it is worse, it is pharisaical—to preach restrictions on drugs and drinks of addiction at home, either for the military or civilians, if we make and vend them wholesale to

foreign countries and our own Colonies. In 1911 the United Kingdom exported 17,200 ounces of morphia to Hong Kong. In 1913 no less than £118,794 worth, or 252,110 ounces, and in 1914 £143,975 worth, or 352,130 ounces, of morphia were exported from Great Britain to Japan (including Formosa, etc.). My friend Dr. Wu-lien-Teh tells me that, since we began to stop the import of Indian opium into China, and China has been attempting to suppress the cultivation of the poppy within her own borders, the country has been drenched with morphia largely imported or smuggled through Japan and Manchuria, much of which would appear to be manufactured in London and Edinburgh. In the year 1914 some fourteen tons of morphia manufactured in the United Kingdom were exported to foreign countries and British possessions, mostly to the Far East. When we remember that the Pharmacopœial dose of morphia is gr. $\frac{1}{2}$, and that a large London hospital for all its patients uses about 5 or 6 ounces a year, it is not difficult to assert that this morphia is largely destined for other than medical or legitimate purposes. In the summer of 1914, at The Hague, just before the war, I subscribed the protocol of the third Opium Conference on behalf of Great Britain. Forty-four out of forty-six Powers had then signed the Convention, and some dozen had ratified it. Since the war broke out the United States, China, and the Netherlands, have signified their readiness to put the Convention in force without waiting for others. The United States has passed the Harrison Law, and France is now legislating for her Protectorates and Colonies on the lines of The Hague Convention. It is to be hoped that as at the Congress of Vienna, at the close of the Napoleonic wars, the abolition of slavery was its first-fruits, so this great social reform of national and international control of drugs of addiction (including alcohol in that term) may be consummated at the close of the present war, since efforts in that direction have been already attempted both by our Allies and within our own borders.

In questions like this the Society for the Study of Inebriety can continue its useful work and exert its valued influence in the broad spirit of its founder, and in pursuance of its declared objects investigate all causes of this social evil, and then, with the force of informed opinion, educate both the professional and the public mind.