INEBRIETY IN SCOTLAND.*

By ARTHUR SHERWELL.

IN attempting a swift survey of the problem of intemperance among civilized peoples at the present time, one is met at the outset by the embarrassing paradox presented by two apparently contradictory but incontestable facts. The first is an unquestionable advance in temperance sentiment and in public appreciation of the social seriousness of the evil to be remedied; and the second is the no less real persistence and even aggravation of the evil, as shown by the statistics of consumption.

The *sentiment* of temperance unquestionably grows; the *practice* of temperance, so far as it is indicated by the statistics of consumption, appears to halt. The paradox may be more apparent than real. *Per capita* statistics of consumption have the defects of their virtues. The law of *averages* is a tyrannous and indiscriminating law; it destroys distinctions and reduces progress to a general standard. The excesses of some may sometimes obliterate evidence of the progress of others. But, allowance being made for this, the facts are, nevertheless, disquieting, and that they are more than *statistical* I shall presently show.

A conspicuous illustration of the paradox to which I have referred is afforded by the United States. In no part of the world, probably, is temperance sentiment more advanced or more adventurous, and certainly nowhere has legislation of a restrictive and penal character been so readily and widely adopted. Over large and growing areas—almost exclusively, it is true, of a rural and sparsely-peopled character—prohibition is the law; but the

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obstinate fact, nevertheless, meets us that, despite this advanced sentiment and this prohibitory legislation, the *per capita* consumption of alcohol is steadily growing. The statistics just published for 1902 accentuate this increase, and a review of the statistics for a series of years shows that it is no temporary or accidental thing, but that it indicates a "stream of tendency" with which temperance reformers in America must reckon.

The case of Scotland, with which we are primarily concerned this afternoon, affords another illustration of this seeming paradox. No one who is intimately acquainted with Scotland can doubt either the sincerity or the growth of temperance sentiment in that country; but so far as the consumption of alcohol and the statistics of crime and disease afford any clue to advance in the practice of temperance, it cannot be said that the country has made any substantial progress during the last forty or fifty years, and the gravity of the evil is as evident in the national life of Scotland to-day as it was two generations ago.

It is much to be regretted that no reliable statistics exist to show what has been the measure of progress—taking the consumption of alcohol of all kinds as the test—made by each division of the United Kingdom during the last fifty years. Certain rough estimates have recently been made by the Inland Revenue authorities of the proportions of wine, beer, and spirits consumed in each of the three divisions of the United Kingdom; but these are too uncertain and conjectural to give us reliable figures even for the last ten years, while they are altogether unreliable for any earlier period. Judged, however, by the consumption of that which is the principal beverage in Scotland—viz., spirits, for which, happily, reliable statistics are available—it is clear that Scotland has made no progress during the last forty years. I do not go back farther than forty years, because, as I have elsewhere shown, no fair comparison can be made with an earlier period. We are, however, on safe ground in selecting the five years 1857-61 for comparison with the five years 1897-1901. Comparing these two periods, we find that no progress has been made in reducing the consumption of spirits in Scotland. In the five years ending December 31, 1861, the consumption of spirits per head of the population in Scotland was 1.76 gallons, while in the five years ending December 31, 1901, it was 1.85 gallons. It cannot be doubted that if the consumption of beer

could be added to the comparison, the result would be even more discouraging.

But the consumption of alcohol is only one test, and probably at the best a partial test, of progress. A *per capita* increase in consumption, it may be argued, is not necessarily an indication of greater inebriety. It may indicate only a more even distribution of consumption. There may have been an increase in the amount of alcohol *moderately* consumed, and at the same time a decline in *immoderate* or intemperate consumption. That there has been some increase in *moderate* consumption may be conceded at once. It is difficult to support it by evidence, but it is at least a reasonable corollary of indisputable economic facts. The consumption of alcohol, moderate and immoderate alike, is, we know, affected by commercial prosperity and by an increase in the purchasing power of a community. But that this is not a sufficient explanation of the figures under consideration is apparent from other facts, and the suggestion, however reassuring, breaks down when tested.

The first test to apply is naturally that of the statistics of crime, and here the facts are certainly discouraging. During the last twenty years there has been a marked increase in criminal offences in Scotland. The average number of persons charged for all classes of crime has increased from a ratio of 344 per 10,000 of the population in the five years 1883-87 to a ratio of 393 in the five years 1897-1901, or an increase of 14 per cent. The increase is most marked in the last five years for which statistics are published, the figures rising from 360 charges per 10,000 of the population in 1897 to 382 in 1898, 403 in 1899, 406 in 1900, and 417 in 1901. Comparing the totals of 1897 and 1901, we find that, while the population of the country increased by only 4 per cent., the number of persons charged increased by 21 per cent.

If we take the four principal classes of crime—viz., crimes against the person, crimes against property with violence, crimes against property without violence, and malicious injury to property—the figures are much less serious, but even these show a slight increase in twenty years.

But it is when we turn to the “miscellaneous offences,” of which drunkenness and disorder constitute more than two-thirds,

that we see where the real increase has been, the figures in this class rising from 295 per 10,000 of the population in the five years 1883-87 to 345 in the five years 1897-1901, an increase of 17 per cent.

Offences of drunkenness and disorder have grown from an annual average of 262 per 10,000 of the population in the five years 1883-87 to an annual average of 294 in 1897-1901, or an increase of 12 per cent.

If we turn from the general statistics of offences to the *prison* statistics, the gravity of the situation is made even more clear. The increase in the number of commitments to the prisons of Scotland during the last half century has been very great, rising from 74 per 10,000 of the population in the five years 1851-55 to 122 in the five years 1891-95, and to 129 in the five years 1896-1900, or an increase in fifty years of 75 per cent.

The increase is certainly startling, although for a period of twenty years prior to 1880 certain special causes were at work which discount the figures for that period. The Police Act of 1862 and the Public-house Act of the same year greatly increased the offences punishable by fine or imprisonment; while the discontinuance during the same period of the practice of detaining drunken people overnight for "protection," and liberating them next morning without bringing them before a magistrate,* also affected the returns.

But no such explanations are available for more recent years, and the figures for the last five years especially are so serious as to demand the gravest consideration from all who are concerned for the progress of Scotland. They show a progressive rise from 120 per 10,000 of the population in 1897 to 149 in 1901, or an increase of 24 per cent.

The figures for 1901 were far the highest on record, and included no less than 15,000 persons who had never been in prison before.

What is the explanation of this deplorable increase? The Prison Commissioners themselves urge that "neither changes in

* In Glasgow alone about 25,000 cases were so dealt with in a year.

police administration nor alteration in the law" can account for it. They give the real explanation in their last report, where they state that the rise in the prison population between 1897 and 1901 was "due to greatly increased numbers of casual, irregular workers, who, owing to the comparative scarcity of labourers, had more employment than usual, and had, accordingly, more money to spend on drink."

The closeness of the relation between intemperance and crime has become a truism, but it is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the criminal statistics of Scotland. Take the single fact that out of a total of 179,821 persons charged with criminal offences in 1900, no fewer than 114,207, or 63½ per cent., were for offences directly connected with drinking. This lamentable figure, the Commissioners are careful to tell us, is no exaggeration of the "charges resulting directly from overindulgence in alcoholic liquor." The statements made by a great number of men and women who have come into prison convicted of serious crimes have convinced the Commissioners "that the majority (probably 66 per cent. at least) of such cases are closely connected with, and have their real explanation in, alcoholism." A detailed examination of the life-history of fifty long-sentenced criminals, made by Major Forbes, Deputy-Governor of the prison at Barlinnie, "shows conclusively," say the Commissioners, "that in at least 66 per cent. of the cases the crime was merely the accompaniment of excess in drink, as it was in so many thousands of minor offences." This inquiry established:

1. That the great proportion of the criminals drink to excess.
2. That 34 per cent. of crimes were committed after the man had been drinking for some time, 32 per cent. when he was more or less in a state of intoxication, and 34 per cent. when sober. Only 6 per cent. of the total were abstainers. Some of the prisoners, who admitted that they were drunkards, informed the Deputy-Governor that they carefully abstained from liquor for some time before committing some pre-arranged robbery, in order to insure having their wits about them at the critical moment.
3. That the number of crimes committed by men having an insatiable thirst for drink, simply in order to obtain the where-withal to get more drink, is very great.

4. That the number of those who began to drink as mere boys or youths is very notable; of those examined, 48 per cent. had been drinking from boyhood.

DRUNKENNESS IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND COMPARED.

Statistical comparisons are admittedly dangerous and often misleading, and probably never more so than in relation to the statistics of drunkenness; but the high volume of drunkenness in Scotland as compared with England is certainly striking, and hardly to be accounted for by variations in police practice and in methods of tabulation. "It is true," as was officially pointed out in a discussion of the criminal statistics of England and Wales for 1898, "that the number of charges of drunkenness depends largely on police action. The figures could probably in many places be doubled or trebled by more stringent instructions to the police, and the town with the largest number of convictions for drunkenness may sometimes be, not the most drunken town, but the town with the most efficient police force. Even, however, when full allowance is made for these variations in police action, the comparison between the figures for different countries is not without significance. Thus, while in England the number of charges of drunkenness per 100,000 of the population is 698, in Scotland it is 1,018; and while the figure for Newcastle—the highest for any town in England—is 1,795, that for Glasgow amounts to 2,960. The contrast between England and Scotland is still greater if it is borne in mind that in the English statistics under the head of 'Drunkenness' are included all cases of 'drunk and disorderly,' while in Scotland there is a separate heading for 'breaches of the peace' not appearing in the English statistics. As the rule applies to the statistics of both countries that the more serious offence is tabulated in preference to the less serious, it follows that when a drunken person arrested in Scotland is charged with 'breach of the peace,' the offence appears under that head, and not under the head of drunkenness. If the charges of 'breach of the peace' be added to those of 'drunk and incapable' in Scotland, the proportions per 100,000 are for Scotland generally 2,688, and for Glasgow 6,043."

An analysis of more recent returns shows even more clearly the exceptional character of the Scotch figures. Taking the last

quinquennial period for which returns are available (*i.e.*, 1897-1901), I find that the average number of persons proceeded against for drunkenness (including drunk and disorderly) in the principal towns of England and Wales was 7·4 per 1,000 of the population, whereas the average in the principal towns of Scotland was, for drunkenness alone, 16·28, or, if we include, as we strictly should, the cases of "breach of the peace," less a deduction of 7 per cent.* for cases unconnected with drunkenness, 34·99. Such a difference cannot be a statistical difference only, nor can it be entirely due to differences in police administration. It appears to point to a real and serious difference in the amount of drunkenness in the two countries.

GROWTH OF INSANITY.

But it is not alone in the statistics of crime that we find confirmation of the conclusion suggested by the statistics of consumption. A similar confirmation is found in the statistics of mental disease. No one now doubts the intimate relation that exists between intemperance and insanity. Dr. Clouston, who speaks in this matter with unquestioned authority, has recently told us that "one thing which has impressed itself on the members of the medical profession is this, that a larger consumption of alcohol has led to a larger proportion of cases of insanity and to a larger number of deaths from nervous diseases." Elsewhere he says: "I cannot myself get over the conclusion that the excessive use of alcoholic stimulants during times of brisk trade and high wages has, to a large extent, been the cause of the undue amount of mental disease which we have been called on to treat this year (1900). We had, as a matter of fact, 115 cases, or about a quarter of our whole number of admissions, in whom drink was assigned as either the sole or as a contributory cause of the disease." And he adds: "It is certain that for every man in whom excessive drinking causes absolute insanity there are twenty in whom it injures the brain, blunts the moral sense, and lessens the capacity for work in lesser degrees. My alcoholic lunatics," he continues, "have risen from an average of $15\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in the years 1874-88 to $21\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in 1889-98, to $22\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in 1899, and now to $24\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in 1900."

* The official estimate.

Later figures show a still higher percentage. The report for 1902, recently published, shows that 28 per cent. of the admissions were assigned to intemperance in drink. Dr. Clouston, in commenting upon the figures, says: "This is the highest number that we have ever had sent here as the result of alcoholic excess. It is most sad and discouraging that this preventable cause of the most terrible of all human diseases should thus continue to increase. It is a veritable plague spot in our social life."

The published returns do not enable us to determine the growth of alcoholic lunacy for Scotland as a whole, but they show conclusively that there has been a striking increase in insanity during the last half-century. Since 1858 the number of lunatics under the jurisdiction of the Scotch Board has increased 180 per cent., while the increase of population during the same period has been only 49 per cent. The increase, moreover, has not been intermittent; it has been continuous throughout the entire period.

I do not, of course, suggest that these figures can be taken as an accurate index of the actual increase of insanity in the country. The increase is to some extent a statistical increase only. The attitude of the community towards its mentally afflicted citizens has undergone a considerable change in the last half-century, and a larger proportion of lunatics come under official supervision and control than was previously the case. But when full allowance has been made for this, the fact of a serious increase in alcoholic insanity appears to be unquestionable.

DEATHS FROM INTEMPERANCE.

I will add only one other test—the deaths from intemperance. The official figures in this case are not exhaustive, since it is certain that many more deaths result from alcoholic excess than are officially assigned to this cause. But while the official figures of deaths from alcoholic excess are certainly not exhaustive, they have a significance which cannot be overlooked in estimating the problem of intemperance in Scotland.

Taking the first two reports and the last report of the Registrar-General for Scotland, I find that there has been an increase in

the total deaths from alcoholic excess (including delirium tremens) of 36 per cent. since 1855.*

The increase, as in England, has been most marked in the case of women, the increase in their case amounting to no less than 100 per cent., as against an increase of 18 per cent. in the case of males. Part of this apparent increase may be due to stricter classification, but it is impossible to suppose that it is wholly so caused. Indeed, the Registrar-General for Scotland, in answer to my inquiry on this point, states that "there has been no important change in the classification of deaths from alcoholism and delirium tremens in recent years."

There seems, therefore, to be no escape from the depressing conclusion that the increase is largely due to greater alcoholic indulgence on the part of women in Scotland.

It is unnecessary to test the matter further. The facts given show that, despite the zeal and enthusiasm of temperance organizations, and despite the magnificent self-devotion of individual workers, Scotland is making no substantial progress—nay, that in some deplorable directions matters are steadily getting worse. Surely the time has come when the best thought and the best courage of the nation must assert itself, and a determined national effort be made to secure an effective remedy for the present condition of things.

I have not time, nor is it the purpose of this paper, to offer detailed suggestions as to the precise form which this national effort should take. My views on that point are already sufficiently

* The figures are as under :

Deaths from—	1855.			1856.			1900.		
	Per One Million Persons Living.			Per One Million Persons Living.			Per One Million Persons Living.		
Delirium tremens ...	M. 40	F. 10	Total. ¹ 24	M. 36	F. 5	Total. ¹ 20	M. 52	F. 39	Total. ¹ 45
Alcoholic excess ...	26	13	20	37	17	27	26	7	15
Total deaths from in- temperance ...	66	23	44	73	22	47	78	46	60

¹ The figures in this column are based upon the total population, and those in the other columns upon the total of each sex separately.

known. I am of those who believe that the problem requires for its solution a readjustment of emphasis in our legislative arrangements and the supplementing of restrictive effort with constructive reforms. At present we are on wrong lines. I go so far as to believe that all through we have been acting on wrong lines. Our licensing arrangements have throughout been based upon the assumption that a traffic peculiarly liable to abuse, and capable when abused of serious hurt to the community, can safely be left in the hands of those whose only interest in it is the commercial interest of gain. Is it not self-evident that this is impossible, and that in the conflict between private commercial interest and the larger interests of the community the latter will be sacrificed to the former? Nothing short of a recognition of this fact, enforced by the substitution of a system of public control for the present system of private management, will, in my judgment, suffice to put us in a position from which, as a community, we can effectually grapple with the problem of intemperance. Ultimately, I admit, the question is one of education and the stimulation of new interests. I differ in this respect from what appears to be the position of a distinguished member of this Society (Dr. Reid), in that I believe that the problem is a psychological, as well as a physiological, problem. But while I am fully alive to this, I am also convinced that legislation, too, has its part to play in the actual solution of the problem. The limits of legislation are less rigid than we sometimes suppose, and it should be the first concern of statesmen to secure that the force of law and of social arrangements inclines to the side of sobriety rather than to the side of intemperance. Such a readjustment of emphasis is, however, impossible under a system of private license, and the increasing adoption of this conclusion is the bright spot in an otherwise depressing situation.