

wounds in the German Red Cross Ambulance which proceeded to South Africa under the charge of Dr. Matthiolius in December, 1899.

Boer mortality from wounds by—	Cranium.	Face.	Thorax.	Abdomen.	Vertebral column.	Limbs.	Total.
Artillery projectiles ...	3	1	—	—	1	2	7
Percentage to wounded	21·0	10·0	—	—	100 0	3·4	7·5
Small-arm projectiles ...	6	1	2	4	2	1	16
Percentage to wounded	44·4	4 5	7·1	15 4	50·0	0·5	5·8

Dr. Fischer is also responsible for the statement that at the six engagements specified below the Boer losses amounted to 224 killed and 607 wounded, the proportion between the two categories being as 1 to 2·7 : Maggersfontein (Dec. 11th, 1899), Tafelkop (March 29th, 1900), Ladysmith (Jan. 6th, 1900), Colesberg (Jan. 4th-6th, 1900), Tugela (Jan. 17th-26th, 1900), and Kōedoesberg (Feb. 7th, 1900). (The orthography in the *Archives* has been adhered to).

DEATHS IN THE SERVICES.

Inspector-General Richard Dane, C.B., at Southampton on March 27th, aged 88 years. He entered the army in 1835 as assistant surgeon, was promoted to surgeon-major in 1855, and reached the rank of inspector-general of hospitals in 1868. He served in the Punjab campaign of 1848-49, including the battle of Gujarat (medal), and acted as principal medical officer of the expeditionary force in China in 1858, being present in the various operations of the campaign (mentioned in despatches). On his retirement in 1872 he received the C.B. and a special pension for distinguished services.

Surgeon James Powell Willis, R.N., of the Portsmouth training ship *St. Vincent*, at Sundayswell, Cork, on March 25th, from typhoid fever after an illness which lasted five weeks. The deceased, who was only 29 years of age, was a son of Fleet Surgeon S. Armstrong Willis, R.N. (retired), and received his medical education at the University of Durham, where he took various scholarships and graduated M.B. (with honours) and B.S. in 1892. Surgeon Willis leaves a widow and child.

The King has given to Major Cathcart Garner, R.A.M.C., His Majesty's Royal licence and authority to accept and to wear the Insignia of the Third Class of the Imperial Order of the Medjidieh, conferred upon him by His Highness the Khedive of Egypt, authorised by His Imperial Majesty the Sultan of Turkey, in recognition of valuable services rendered to His Highness.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE DUTY OF THE PROFESSION IN REGARD TO LEGISLATION FOR ALCOHOLIC EXCESS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Your leading articles on the alcohol question in THE LANCET of Feb. 9th, p. 410, and March 23rd, p. 873, suggest a still further discussion of this medical question—for a medical question it is of momentous import. Few medical men can doubt that there are now five medical questions which concern the public health and the race stability more than any others—viz., the ordinary infectious diseases question, the consumption question, the syphilis question, the housing question (which includes the provision of proper playgrounds for our children), and the alcohol question. Not one of these can be adequately solved but through the application of scientific facts and principles the import of which the medical profession alone can fully estimate. I most strongly concur with you that in regard to the whole alcohol question we as a profession have not taken up the position that our knowledge and opportunities give us, and when we have

spoken it has scarcely been with that earnestness which comes of an assured conviction that we are dealing with one of the most dangerous enemies to our modern English race that exists. The advances in scientific knowledge in regard to brain physiology and pathology and its mental relations within the past half century entitle us, nay, they should compel us, to utilise that knowledge for the benefit of the public health as well as for the individual patients whom we treat. I hope there are few medical men who will not heartily agree with you and Dr. William Carter of Liverpool that the alcohol question should now be treated as a part of public and preventive medicine. Thus only can we get it subjected to those great principles that have initiated the recent legislation for the health of the community and the stability of the race which are embodied in the Factory Acts, the Lunacy Acts, the Workshop Inspection Acts, and the various Acts relating to public health. It is chiefly, I believe, by a clear realisation on the part of the public and of politicians that such principles, through which the absolute liberty of the subject is conditioned for the good of the social body and the benefit of future generations, are applicable to the alcohol question that they will embody them into effective laws. The medical profession alone can demonstrate this applicability. Thus only can the enormous influences of "the Trade" be overcome. That great power will fight the mere social reformer, the prohibitionist, and the teetotaler to the death, and hitherto it has fought them all most effectually. But cold, hard scientific principles used dispassionately by a profession which has no antagonism whatever to "the Trade," has no personal advantages in the matter, and is obviously acting in the public interests, must surely prevail in the long run. Thus only shall we get rid of pettifogging attempts to remedy the alcoholic evils in detail, and be able to put the whole of the legislation in regard to alcohol on as broad a basis of principle as the existing Public Health Acts. To a considerable extent the embodiment of the proposals in Lord Peel's report would come up to the ideas of our profession on this subject. Here it may be necessary to point out that in educating the public mind and in legislating for the nation in regard to alcohol no practical account need be taken of the Weismann or other such transcendental theories of heredity, or of any such theory of alcoholic "immunity" as was lately developed so interestingly by Dr. Archdall Reid. The hard and undeniable scientific facts about the injurious action of excessive alcohol on the brain functions and structure can be as clearly demonstrated as the mutual interaction of an acid and an alkali. Whatever theory of heredity may ultimately be proved to be the true one, the fact is demonstrable that the children of the worst kind of drunkards are to a great extent ill-developed, neurotic, criminal, feeble-minded, or insane, and therefore bad citizens. It does not weaken the force of these facts, but rather strengthens them, that the drunken parent was himself probably of a neurotic, degenerate stock, this being one cause of his taking to drink, and that he thus fell an easy prey to the temptations which beset him at every public-house or in the social customs of his class. When to adverse hereditary influences we have added toxic interference with the germ plasm, a bad environment in childhood, bad and insufficient food, a bad example at home, and unphysiological conditions of life generally during childhood and adolescence, we have a sum of conditions which make for national decay and which call urgently on the State for remedy by every means in its power.

If the doubter needs additional facts we can refer him to Professor Kraepelin's recent careful scientific experiments on the injurious effects of large, but non-intoxicating, doses of alcohol on the mental and motor working of otherwise healthy brains, and the extraordinary persistence of some of these effects for long periods after the alcohol has been stopped. Such physiological facts will receive sure confirmation through the pathological changes that within the past 10 years our microscopists, by their recent methods of preparation, have been able to demonstrate in the brain cortex of alcoholics—changes affecting the blood-vessels, the neuroglia, and the cells. Such changes can be seen both in those dying from acute alcoholic toxæmia and in the case of the respectable toper who has lived and enjoyed himself for 20 years since he began to drink too much, all the time getting lowered in mind and morals *pari passu* with his cortical deterioration and in consequence of it.

The effects of excessive alcohol in causing insanity, both *de novo* and by bringing out latent tendencies thereto, I can

speak about with some confidence after nearly 30 years' experience at the head of a large mixed city asylum. I find alcoholic insanity increasing here in prosperous times, as my friend, Dr. Yellowlees, found long ago in Glamorganshire. It now amounts to 25 per cent. of our admissions. If this is general, surely no social fact should cause a more intense feeling of disappointment to the well-wisher of our British race. That the extra money which might have provided food, luxuries, books, amusements, greater happiness, and longer life to our artisans and labourers should have gone towards brain poison, causing mental disease and degeneration, is surely one of the most biting of satires on our boasted nineteenth century progress. Could any greater human act of folly possibly be conceived? Science has nothing to say against punishing the ordinary responsible drunkard for being found drunk and for any criminal act he may commit while drunk. It has no theories that tend to diminish the responsibility of healthy men to the law. Duty, conscience, accountableness mean just as much in true science as they do in law and ethics. But science does step in and point out that there are special temptations and opportunities to drink which cannot or are not likely to be resisted by certain uneducated or unstable brains in which the faculty of inhibition is weak, and that while such persons might under favourable circumstances in a generation or two get over their brain weaknesses through the natural laws that tend to bring a weak organism back to the ideal, they will, when poisoned by alcohol, go surely on towards mental disease, crime, and extinction—meantime handing down a progeny with all their own tendencies accentuated.

Another thing the medical profession is specially fitted to do, and that is to judge rightly the safe limits of the pleasures and the social and personal amenities which alcohol in physiological quantities may secure, and to pick out the persons who can safely indulge in such pleasures. They fully recognise, through their physiological and medico-psychological studies, that human nature has never in any age or race been satisfied with bread-and-butter, but that it has craved, and always has secured, some stimulant or narcotic in addition to its common food. They can look at this fact from a scientific and brain point of view, not usually being biased or carried away by metaphysical, religious, or ethical standpoints in estimating the significance of such cravings. They can distinguish between a controllable desire and a morbid and injurious craving for such things, whether it be tea, tobacco, opium, or alcohol. They know where safety lies and danger begins. They well know also that men and women largely sin in ignorance when they begin to exceed in the use of such brain stimulants and sedatives, but that excess once begun it is apt to be a case of *facilis descensus Averno*. They also know, as no other men can know, the meaning of that slight mental and moral lowering which results from the habitual over-use in small degrees of stimulants.

This special knowledge throws a tremendous responsibility on our profession towards the public in regard to the alcohol question. But it may be suggested: "If the State or society for its advantage wants to get the benefit of our scientific experience let it ask us for our opinions, and put us in a position to have our views translated into laws." I do not think we can thus get rid of our duty. The State now deals with the alcohol question in a way, and it has created a most profitable monopoly in its sale so that it can further deal with it as it thinks good for the existing community and for the race of the future. If we can instruct the State and make our legislators realise that the advances of scientific knowledge have created a new and an imperative duty in this matter towards the health and well-being of our people, surely we are bound to exert all our influence to secure efficient legislation, just as you point out that Snow and Simon and others of our profession persuaded the State to embody their scientific discoveries in the Acts that provide pure water and air uncontaminated with sewage exhalations for the people. The populace did not make these demands. It was too ignorant at the time, just as it is now in regard to the scientific aspect of the alcohol question. The State did not go to Snow and Simon. Those men first convinced the medical profession of the truth of their views and then went to the State to tell it its duty. Parliament was profoundly ignorant of the facts and very sceptical. The scientists were "impractical" doctrinaires and the legislation demanded was sneered at as "grandmotherly." We are now in the same position in regard to the alcohol question. We cannot shirk our plain duty

in this matter. It is certain, too, that, as in regard to ordinary sanitation, the existence and working of such Acts would be a most important education to the public in regard to the dangers of alcohol. Thus sobriety on principle and conviction would be attained—the highest result of all. Surely we might now reasonably ask something like the following legal provisions.

1. Powers to restrict the liberty of the habitual drunkard and to place his name on a black list or to put him under treatment.
2. Powers to protect children in every reasonable way against alcoholic evils.
3. Compulsory instruction in regard to the dangers of drink and the necessity of physiological temperance to be given in all schools.
4. A strict and even suspicious inspection of all public-houses by a special department of police. It is a most anomalous and irrational thing that dairies, factories, lunatic asylums, gaols, reformatories, workhouses, schools, and many special trades are rigorously inspected by the State, while public-houses, that may do far more harm to society than any of these are left practically uninspected.
5. Provision for a careful inquiry by a public, impartial authority into the character of those who hold licences and sell drink in public-houses before the licence is granted.
6. The punishment of everyone who knowingly sold drink in such quantities the immediate effect of which was to create the condition and crime of drunkenness.
7. Provision for good food and non-intoxicating drinks in all public-houses.
8. A general diminution of temptations to excessive drinking and shorter hours for public-houses.
9. A duty laid on an impartial judicial and medical authority to investigate the causes of any special amount of drunkenness, or disease, or race degeneration the result of drunkenness in any locality, and powers to enforce drastic remedies.
10. Abundant liberty for localities to try methods of supplying the public with drink other than through the ordinary licensed public-house, and to provide counter-attractions in every reasonable way.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

March 30th, 1901.

T. S. CLOUSTON.

LEGISLATION AGAINST NATIONAL INTEMPERANCE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Two questions lie at the root of the problem of temperance reform—the question as to whether parental intemperance affects children subsequently born and the question as to whether measures for diminishing or abolishing the use of alcohol are practical. I need not dwell on the first point. It was dealt with at length in THE LANCET of Oct. 14th, 1899, p. 1066. I observe, however, that your correspondent, "M.D., B.S. Lond.,"¹ states that "it is a fact that habits of intemperance in either parent tend inevitably to produce conditions which act unfavourably upon the children and interfere with the healthy development of both mind and body." May I ask him for evidence in support of this statement—which, if true, is of such momentous importance that the whole temperance problem hinges on it? My request has been made many times, but the reticence and silence which have always followed are so curious that I await his reply with unusual interest.

Of late years temperance reform has been tried on a very wide scale in the civilised world. I have ventured to challenge² its advocates to indicate a single instance of its successful application—to indicate a single instance in which prohibitory laws have not been followed by increased drunkenness, as well as by a general degradation of the public morals. As yet I have received no reply, and I anticipate none. The most drastic measures having failed everywhere "M.D., B.S. Lond." proposes to exclude children and barmaids from public bars. He will perhaps pardon me, but I am irresistibly reminded of the historic lady who tried to sweep back the ocean with a broom. He inveighs against the "firmly rooted belief in the general usefulness of alcohol both as a remedy in disease and as an article of diet," and declares that "it is our duty to put the facts clearly and authoritatively before the public." I cordially agree. But may I add that some knowledge of the biological truths which underlie this matter, as well as of the disastrous failures which have attended all attempts at

¹ THE LANCET, March 23rd, 1901, p. 892.

² THE LANCET, Feb. 23rd, 1901, p. 578.