

Inaugural address delivered at the annual meeting in the Medical Society of London's rooms : May 30, 1879 / by Benjamin Ward Richardson.

Contributors

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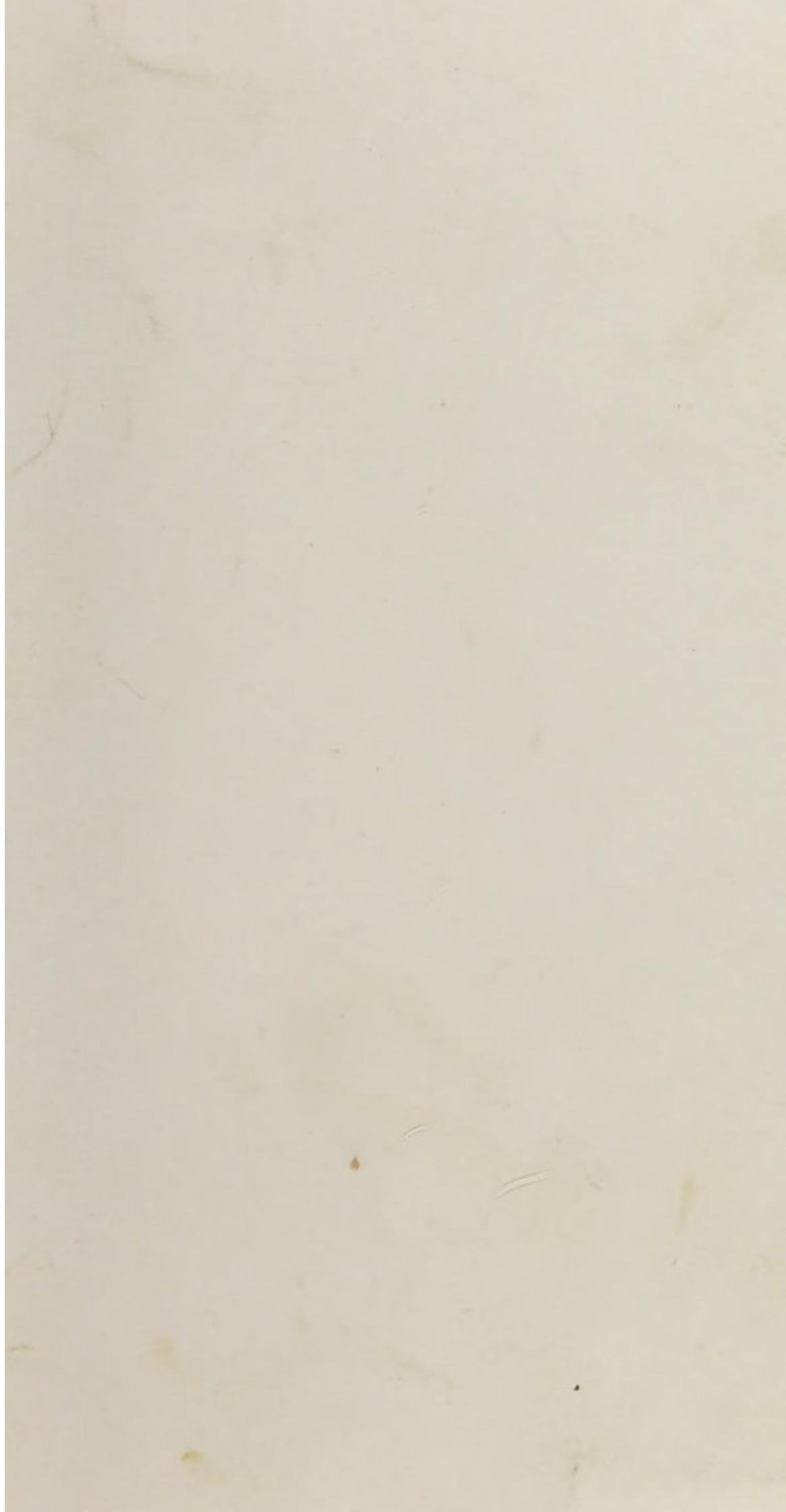
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British Medical Temperance Association.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING

IN THE

MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON'S ROOMS,

MAY 30, 1879,

BY

BENJAMIN WARD RICHARDSON,

M.D., M.A., LL.D., F.R.S.,

PRESIDENT.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE ASSOCIATION,

1879.

At the Annual Meeting of the BRITISH MEDICAL TEMPERANCE ASSOCIATION, held in the Medical Society of London's Rooms, Chandos Street, W., on 30th May, 1879, the following resolution was moved by NORMAN KERR, M.D., F.L.S., London, seconded by HENRY DIXON, Esq., M.R.C.S., Coroner for South Oxfordshire, and unanimously agreed to: "That the thanks of this meeting be accorded to the President, Dr. B. W. RICHARDSON, F.R.S., for his most able, learned, and eloquent Address; and that he be requested to allow it to be published, with a view to a copy being sent to every medical practitioner in the United Kingdom."

The MEDICAL TEMPERANCE JOURNAL, published Quarterly, price 6d.; free by post, 2s. per annum. London: W. TWEEDIE & Co., 337, Strand, W.C.

The Number for July, 1879, contains a full Report of the last Annual Meeting of the British Medical Temperance Association, and the dinner at the Langham Hotel, with a revised list of the members.

British Medical Temperance Association.

PRESIDENT :

B. W. RICHARDSON, M.A., M.D., LL.D., F.R.S., F.R.C.P.

CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP.

Personal Abstinence from all intoxicating liquors, as beverages. Every registered, or registerable, British medical practitioner is eligible.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION :

NOT LESS THAN FIVE SHILLINGS.

Registered, or registerable, Abstaining British medical men, desirous of joining the Association, are requested to fill up the following form, and transmit the same to the President, 12, *Hinde Street, Manchester Square, London, W.*

Being an Abstainer from all intoxicating liquors, as beverages, I am willing to become a member of the BRITISH MEDICAL TEMPERANCE ASSOCIATION,

..... (Name).

..... (Address).

..... (Qualifications).

..... (Date).

British Medical Association

PRESIDENT

R. W. RICHARDSON, M.A., M.D., LL.B., F.R.S., F.R.C.P.

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION

PERSONAL ABSTINENCE FROM ALL INTOXICATING BEVERAGES, AS REGISTERED, OR REGISTRABLE, BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, 5, ADELPHI WALK, LONDON, W.C.2.

BEING AN ABSTAINER FROM ALL INTOXICATING BEVERAGES, AS REGISTERED, OR REGISTRABLE, BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, 5, ADELPHI WALK, LONDON, W.C.2.

BEING WILLING TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, I AM WILLING TO SIGN THE FOLLOWING FORM, AND TRANSMIT THE SAME TO THE PRESIDENT, 11, KING'S STREET, MANCHESTER SQUARE, LONDON, W.1.

BEING AN ABSTAINER FROM ALL INTOXICATING BEVERAGES, AS REGISTERED, OR REGISTRABLE, BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, 5, ADELPHI WALK, LONDON, W.C.2.

(Name) _____

(Address) _____

(Qualification) _____

(Date) _____

BRITISH
MEDICAL TEMPERANCE ASSOCIATION.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

By BENJAMIN WARD RICHARDSON, M.D., F.R.S.,

President.

“ Be stirring as the time ; be fire with fire ;
Threaten the threatener, and outface the brow
Of bragging horror. So shall inferior eyes,
That borrow their behaviour from the great,
Grow great by your example.”

OUR national poet made these lines address themselves to a living power he had in his mind which he wished for his dramatic purpose to excite into vigorous action. The words meant an instigation to sharp, decisive, and real warfare against an armed threatener. To-day in relation to actual war no such words are necessary ; but there are struggles,—warfares, if we like to call them so,—to which the words, and the thoughts expressed by the words, wondrously apply. The civilised world is just now in open hostility to a threatener who, of all others, has, time out of mind, been most deadly, ruinous, cruel, and devastating. A threatener, grafted on to a superstition, self-inflicted by man on man, that he, out of the whole circle and chain of living creatures, must have for his life and sustainment a thing to drink so foreign to his nature that he must learn to endure it before he likes it, and then suffer endless penalties for the liking he has acquired. In the fifty years which some of us have lived this superstition has, by direct and indirect means, been the cause of death, by disease alone, to at least two millions of human beings in our England—forty thousand each year. What war, what conqueror in the history of the world, ever destroyed forty thousand persons

in one country every year for fifty years? What plague, pestilence, or famine ever committed such havoc?

Nor is it only a question of death that is to be considered. There are the consequences also to the survivors. There are the diseases, the griefs, the shame, the disgrace, the helplessness, the homelessness, the poverty, the crime, the whole of the domestic anarchies incident to the mortality. These must be added to the triumphs of the merciless threatener, the Juggernaut of civilisation.

I am by profession a healer of men. I solemnly swore on entering the splendid profession to which I belong, I solemnly swore, as my brethren of the same calling have each and all solemnly sworn, that I would consider it a part of my holy duty, so long as I lived, a capable rational being to practise duty, to respect, of all things, life; to relieve pain and disease; to alleviate, and to the very height of known skill, according to my gifts, to stave off death from my fellow-men. Can I, in conscience, in the remembrance of so solemn an obligation, be anything else than a foe to so mortal a threatener as that which slays forty thousand of my countrymen per year, and accompanies the act with all the accessory ferocities and evils attendant on such wholesale destruction? I ask any member of the body of Medicine, who is under the same obligation, if he can reconcile the tolerance of this practical and merciless threatener with the conscientious fulfilment of his binding obligations? What men of any class are so encompassed with an obligation touching the lives and interests of their brother-men?

One of the objects why the society of medical men which meets together now has been formed, is to threaten the threatener, and, as the poet would continue,—

“To outface the brow
Of bragging horror.”

For this superstition is, of all superstitions, a bragging horror of the truest kind. No man at table lifts his glass defiantly to his neighbour to encourage him to do the same, or to laugh at him for non-compliance, without having the consciousness that the act is simple bragging, and that the end of it, as a lesson, is, in the strictest sense of the practice of it, a mere horror, which he could not look at were it put before him in all its wholesale woe.

We, as a society, are a small body. We number a hundred at most, all told; so that I am, by the pleasure of the members, as their captain, a mere centurion in the army of medicine. Still it is a notable fact that there should be in England one hundred medical men joined together with the rest of the abstaining community to make war against the threatener. We assume at this moment to exist only as a nucleus. We wish chiefly

to exist that we may attract others of the same profession to join with us. We would that every man who calls himself a healer were "stirring as the time," were "fire with fire," and that his example, so potent for good or evil, should be stamped for good in this great contest.

And this, I think, is indeed a point to win,—even beyond the winnings of science through him,—that, whenever a medical man is fairly and fully brought over from the fanatical superstition of this Juggernaut of civilisation, he is at once an example of examples to all around him. The example of the clergyman is, no doubt, of the greatest moment; but that, even, is not like the example set by the doctor. The clergyman is open to challenge from hour to hour, on the doctrine of necessity. He may urge all that he can on the moral side of the question; he may appeal in the most fervid and eloquent terms to the sympathies of his auditors; but when they approach him on the ground of necessity, when they say to him that they cannot exist without the aid of alcohol; when they, as intelligent persons, reason with him on scientific grounds; then, they are, or may be, a match, or more than a match, for him. In like manner, the head of a family or of an establishment may declare his own views, set forth his own example, insist on his commands being obeyed, and even enforce those commands. But he will have a diminished influence when he comes to close quarters, in argument, with those who are of the same standing and right as himself; while he is liable to be branded as a mere opiniated man, or a tyrannical man, by those who obey because they fear and do not believe.

Moreover, there are times when all who may be staunch believers in total abstinence see reason for doubt in their own action. Some one near to them, some one for whom they feel they hold a responsibility, declares that, in a pressing emergency, the stimulus of strong drink is necessary. What is then to be done? How can the unlearned man deal, even with a drunkard, under such circumstances? He hesitates in the crisis; and gives way, it may be, to a good-natured impulse, which is as likely to be ruinous as it is likely to be useful in its after-results.

But when the medical man is brought on the field he is in a different position altogether. It really is not necessary for him to enter on the moral side of the question at all. It is hardly necessary for him to appeal to any sympathetic argument. On that side of the Temperance question he finds the battle won for him. There is no one whose opinion is worth considering who doubts the morality of perfected temperance; no one who hesitates to admit that, under the absolute reign of temperance, poverty, crime, disease, would lessen, and happiness increase. The medical man may, therefore, stand with effect purely on his

own ground. He speaks with authority on the question of authority. He reads with precision the pleadings for the supposed sustaining agent, and detects without hesitation whether they be real or the mere unnecessary desires of a perverted and dis-tempered brain. How strong his position! In proportion, how solemn his duty! Other men may laugh, he cannot; other men may sigh, he need not. He is there the wise man, the arbiter who is educated to know, and who is referred to as knowing. Just a word from him in the right direction, how it may save those who are deceiving themselves, and who, in that self-deception, are deceiving others more determinately.

If our society, as a nucleus, could get the whole of the profession to proceed with it so far in the exercise of the legitimate influence of medicine, and no further, what an aid it should bring to the work of the great reformation that is in progress I need not tell to those who, with anxious minds and hearts, are watching the professional tone and sentiment for the slightest breath of its sympathy. The influence of all medicine thrown into the scale of perfected temperance; the example, of which the poet speaks, thrown into the scale of perfected temperance! It is one of those aspirations so much to be hoped for, there seems to me that no labour can be too great to realise it, no honest price too heavy to win it.

In estimating this success, we are bound, moreover, to look at it from the negative as well as the positive point of view. They say, in politics, that one vote gained is equal to two, because the winning side wins what the other side loses. In the contest on which we are engaged to win, one doctor won is a far greater success: because, if the influence of the physician or surgeon on our side be for good, the influence of but one against us is much more potent for evil. A doctor whose example turns the scale ever so little towards intemperance; a doctor who treats the temperance question as a joke; a doctor who devotes his energies to his calling of saving life, and who, with forty thousand of his fellow country folk dying yearly around him from one cause, and who, towards that cause, exhibits indifference or carelessness, or apathy;—what pretensions has he to be a healer? Where is his honour, to say no word of his feeling? Is it honour to swear fealty and not to obey? What if some other great cause of mortality, say of consumption, were at work, slaying its thousands annually, and that cause were as well known to him as this cause, would he towards that be equally indifferent? Would he hand it about, partake of it himself, give it to his children, laugh at those who are wearying to sweep it away, or tell the afflicted from it that it is a necessity? I am sure he would scorn to do any such thing.

As a society we want to bring these things home. We know they are not ignored intentionally, but we feel that they are ignored unintentionally; and we hope that, if they can be only canvassed fairly by our brethren, they will soon be recognised as truths deserving the choicest judgment. We offer no reflection on the past, for we admit that in the past there was a common error pervading medicine in relation to the physiological action of alcohol, a common blindness as to the pathological evils springing from it, and a common misunderstanding or ignorance as to the extent of the evils. We remember how in our pathological studies our masters indifferently noticed the lesions admittedly produced by alcohol as they were observed in the dead, while they devoted their energies to define with the utmost nicety the lesions which immediately caused death. I recall one of those devoted teachers, whose memory I shall ever cherish, who, at nearly every research in the dead-house, would end the most careful description of the conditions that were the actual cause of the fatal disease with, "Gentlemen, there are the usual known other lesions, with which I need not trouble you, because they come under the one head—whisky."

We admit all these past mistakes; we know how blind not we alone but all the world has been, and we come at present purely to review the past with the intention of improving the future; of asking if there be not some common ground on which we can all work, and, stirring with the time, be indeed "fire with fire."

There is much already that is in common amongst us, as a fraternity, in respect to the alcohol question. It is astonishing what we have gained in a few short years in the way of positive knowledge on the subject. How, having got into the natural lines of inquiry, we have, even in opposition to our prejudices, found one proof of action confirm and support other proofs. Fifteen years, or at most twenty years, ago the true physiological action of alcohol was a speculative discussion unsupported by any reliable experiment, and therefore of the most contradictory order. Now there is so much evidence of its mode of action that dispute gives way to accepted fact. That the ultimate action of alcohol on the animal temperature is to reduce the temperature; that alcohol relaxes organic muscular fibre; that alcohol produces four destructive physiological states of the body; that alcohol reduces oxidation; that alcohol interferes with natural dialysis; that alcohol induces, even when it is taken in small quantities, a series of morbid changes and diseases which were not formerly attributed to it; that alcohol prepares the body for destruction by external shocks and depressions, which are thus made more fatal; that alcohol belongs to the same class of chemical sub-

stances as chloroform, ether, and the anæsthetic family; all this is practically now on the accepted record, with the final admission, when we are speaking and thinking seriously, that man, like his lower earth-mates, and like his own children, can, in health, live and work and play, as well, not to put a finer point on it, without a trace of alcohol as he can with it.

"I agree," writes a medical friend to me,—a friend who will not go so far as to allow himself to belong to a totally abstaining society even of his own brethren—"I agree with you that the lower animals are better without alcohol. I agree that children and young people are better without alcohol. I candidly confess I do not know when a young person should begin to partake of it, or at what age of life any person who has never tasted of it should begin. I agree with the ancients, who had a law on the subject that the whole female sex would be vastly better without it, and that those women bring up the healthiest children who never touch it. I agree that a man in a good condition of health is better without it. I have been to see Carver shoot, and I am forced to the conclusion that a glass of wine would almost of a certainty spoil all his sport. Nay, to please you, which is always a satisfaction, I will honestly state that I do not believe any man who trusted in the least to alcohol could do what Carver does, with such almost superhuman precision. I quite admit what you relate in one of your lectures, that in towns and communities of abstainers, like Johnsburg, health, comfort, happiness and wealth are all advanced far beyond what they would if the wine-god made his entrance there. All these confessions I make, but still I cannot join you."

My friend is a representative, I believe, of nearly the whole profession of Medicine that thinks on this question seriously. Strange it is that with such advance of thought there should be so much of hesitation as to the logical course to pursue!

Another physician I could name has recently read Dr. Cheyne's well-known essay on "Health and Long Life," published in 1725, and thereby he is sorely perplexed. Cheyne puts before this reader some curious arguments. Cheyne says, "that no man is afraid to forbear strong liquors in an acute distemper, what quantity soever he might have drunk in his health, and yet any sudden change in his humours would not only be more dangerous than than at any other time, but also would more readily happen and come to pass in such critical cases. But," Cheyne continues, "the matter of fact is false and groundless; for I have known and observed constant good effects from leaving off suddenly large quantities of wine, and flesh meats too, by those long accustomed to both, and never observed any ill consequences from it in any case whatsoever. Those

whose constitutions have been quite broken and running into dissolution, have lived longer and been less pained in sickness by so doing; and those who have had a fund in nature to last longer, have grown better, and attained their end by it." This experience of a very wise old father of medicine perplexes my doubting modern friend the more, because, to the letter, it represents his own practice and his own experience. In all cases of acute disease he has, from custom, forbidden, as a first direction, wine and every other stimulant; and in most cases of disease of all kinds,—liver cases, stomach cases, brain cases,—he has followed the same plan. What is more, he has found it a good plan, and, as Cheyne says, he never has seen anything but ultimate good from it. And so he asks himself if it be good to cut this agent off in disease because the body is diseased; and if it be true, as all seem by consent to declare, that in health the body does not require the agent; when does the body require it, even from the point of view of a doctor who, in spite of all, cannot join such a society as ours?

Another of my brethren, who is, in like manner, in doubt, communicates his view in equally striking terms. He says, referring to one of my lectures: "The best score you, I think, ever made was in your pulling us all up on the question of the degree to which alcohol should be carried in its administration, and in insisting that it should never be carried beyond the first stage or degree of its action. I see" (he adds) "that one of the writers in the *Contemporary Review* repeats the same lesson, and lays it down as a rule that whenever alcohol is taken to the extent of doing more than causing flushing of the face, and a little excitation of the heart and brain, it has been given or taken in such sufficiency that to go further would be to go into danger. I entirely agree with this advice, my good friend, but the difficulty with me lies in carrying it out in practice. How do I know what quantities of different wines or spirits to order for people of different ages and constitutions so as to produce just this effect and no more. The drinks are varying quantities, the drinkers more varying still. To carry out the rule, I must first make a physical analysis of every drink I prescribe, and then make a mental analysis of every person I prescribe for. This is absurd. Again, I find that the constitutions treated are like the movable feasts, never twice alike. If I can produce the precise tint of flushing to-day, in a man, by six ounces of sherry, or three ounces of the finest whisky,—the *Encore* whisky, for example, which is said to be the purest of the pure,—I am told in a week or two that the quantity had lost its effect, and that I must change the drink or give a little more. Then I shake in my shoes, lest by yielding I should encourage my patient to rely

on the drink, to increase it and become a tippler. So," he concludes, "the question, as I see it, is surrounded with difficulties. The theory is perfect, the practice an impossibility. I certainly do not want to induce people to get into the second stage of alcoholism any more than you do, and I would like to prescribe alcohol to cause a given effect, as I prescribe chloroform, ether, mercury, iodide of potassium, or quinine; but the thing is not to be done unless, like you and your friends, I go over to total abstinence and use the good gift as if it were a mere drug; a step which, in my opinion, is just as intemperate as the intemperate misuse of the gift." It is very strange indeed to hear these reasonings, reasonings against reason; and yet I rather greet them. They are signs of an awakening conviction that at the bottom of their argument some fanatical sentiment, some ingrained looseness of principle, is felt by these apologists for alcohol and almost repented of. By standing steadily together, though we be but a hundred, we shall, I think, in time easily conquer such objections as these.

It is a fact, openly confessed by those who are not with us, that we are logical, and only too rigid in our method, surcharged with consistency.

Let us not at the same time, in pride of logical status, contend that they who are not with us have no other arguments save of the kind above quoted. There are other arguments, and with one or two of the best of these I propose, in all candour, to deal for a few minutes of time.

There are some who say that if we are logically right, we are losing ground by insisting too forcibly even on our rightness. This is a world of give and take, and the wisest rules will be relaxed by the wisest men. The old author of the work on "Health and Long Life" helps this argument when he says, "The reflection is not more common than just that he who lives physically must live miserably. The truth is that too great nicety and exactness about every minute circumstance that may impair our health is such a yoke and slavery as no man of a free spirit would submit to." "'Tis, as a poet expresses it, 'to die for fear of dying.' On the other hand, to cut off our days by intemperance, to live miserably for the sake of gratifying a sweet tooth, is equally beneath the dignity of human nature." Well, we all admit that to be true, and we would relax our rigid rule about wine if we felt that to take off wine were "to die for fear of dying." Our contention is, that to leave off wine is not to assume but to cast away a yoke and a slavery which no man of a free spirit would submit to. Our argument is that the wine drinkers are the yoke bearers, we the free men; and that their indulgence, in this instance, is beneath the dignity of their nature, while the

casting off the yoke is for the happiness, not less than for the health, of all mankind whom it affects, now and to come.

There are others who argue that the world itself is not prepared to receive the whole truth from the professors of medicine, even if the arguments against the use of alcohol were all accepted. They say that faith would be lost in them by their patients if the luxury were too hastily forbidden. They insist that they could not live, by practice, expounding such extreme views. And they assure us that free will is one of the potent influences to be conciliated even in matters of life and death. I admit at once the speciousness of this argument. I have written an essay dealing on free will in relation to physic. I have a keen appreciation of the power of free will, but I still see one other side, perhaps two, even to this argument. First, if medical men were united, free will in full array against them would have little chance. Secondly, in this matter, if I mistake not the signs of the times, the tide of free will is going rather against them than with them in opposition to the use of alcohol. At all events if popular free will has not set up in full tide against alcohol, popular free doubt has, and that is next thing to it; so that on this mere subject of expediency,—and it is nothing else,—our society has no need to do more than keep up its colours and stand by them triumphantly.

The idea that alcohol is necessary to enable men to perform extra mental or physical work has so utterly come to grief, it is really not necessary that I should put it forward, even as a remnant of superstition against us. But it has been suggested, leaving the present ground of history altogether, giving up, in despair, all attempts to reply to those unanswerable modern proofs against the old fallacy, which Arctic explorers, men of great strength and physical skill, incessant minds, and the most laborious literary scholars so richly supply;—it has been suggested, I repeat, that, in some inscrutable manner, alcohol has been the feeding-mother of great nations; that it has sustained racial tenacities and vitalities, overcome mighty adversaries, and been, in short, both a herald and a conqueror on the side of civilisation. For our parts we, who dare to doubt this conclusion, want to know on what facts the conclusion is based. We are willing to learn, but we insist that those who preach must prove. Who can say what any great and mighty nation of to-day would have been if wine had never been? By what evidence can the destinies of nations in favour of a great destiny be traced through wine or strong drink. We can see some facts in history in relation to the effects of human acts plainly enough. We can see, for one instance, that Constantine most probably destroyed the Roman Empire by moving the seat of government from its old basis to a new city that should be marked by his name. But where is

there any corresponding fact bearing on great events in the making of nations, wine being the factor? Some facts, in history, point, circumstantially, all the other way. Nations the mightiest have risen while they were abstaining nations; have fallen when wine became their luxury. Herodotus gives us the record of the Persian Cambyses receiving from an Ethiopian prince a bow, with this message: Tell the king of Persia that when his subjects can bend this bow with the same ease that I do, he may, with a superiority of numbers, venture to attack the Macrobian Ethiopians. And the historian relates, with evident satisfaction, that these Macrobian Ethiopians, who were the finest of men, so that they stood a head above the Persians and were a truly noble race, were distinguished from the Persians in that they drank no fluid stronger than milk, while the Persians revelled in wine. There is yet another bit of evidence against the hypothesis of alcohol as the nursing-mother of great nations. Through all tribulations, through all vicissitudes, through all persecutions, what nation has maintained its vitality like the Jewish nation? Has alcohol been to this people a nursing-mother? Baron Haller, dealing with this topic in the last century, gave the secret of the cause of this vitality in a single word—*sobrietas*.

There is one other line of objection taken against our work which is the last I have space to refer to, but which is first in its bearing on our success. The objection relates to the possibility of successfully treating disease, in some forms of it, without the aid of alcohol. Opinion in the profession itself has greatly changed at various times on this subject, independently altogether of the subject of temperance. Before ever the Temperance question was dreamed of, medical men and schools of medical men were in conflict from time to time on the right and wrong of using alcohol in disease. The Greek and Roman physicians were moderate in their employment of wine. They used, it is true, various kinds of wine; they used salted wines; they used acid wines; and in many ways they used wines purely as medicines, not confounding the general with the special use at all, and, as a rule, proclaiming against the general use. The Middle Age physicians were almost as cautious as their predecessors, and although, after the time of Albucasis, in the eleventh century, they became acquainted with the use of spirit of wine,—ardent spirit—they do not seem to have employed the ardent spirit to any extent, if at all, for internal use in the treatment of disease. They used the spirit chiefly for tinctures and for dissolving resins and gums.

Later on, after the time of Stahl the doctrine of the phlogistic theory, and of the antiphlogistic treatment of disease led to the all but abandonment of stimulants in the treatment of disease.

so that during last century we had many illustrious physicians who, on theory, let stimulants stand aside; while some others joined in the objection to the use of those agents from more general and, I had almost said, from more generous sentiments bearing on their danger to mankind. The illustrious Haller, Boerhave, Armstrong, and particularly Erasmus Darwin, were earnest in their support of what we now call the principles of temperance, and the illustrious representative of the name of Darwin to this day maintains the principle in unbroken line.

Just about one hundred years ago, there occurred for a time a revulsion of feeling, owing to the attempted establishment in Edinburgh of what was called the Brunonian system of medicine, founded by one of the most erratic, generous, and unhappy men and classical scholars Medicine ever possessed, John Brown. Brown strove to institute a system of medicine based on the internal administration of stimulants and narcotics,—chiefly wine or rum, and opium. In his physiology he classed the stimulant and the narcotic together as stimuli, and held up the practice of their free administration as the all but universal cure. Disease was to him always a relaxation or loss of vital power, and the cure of disease was by and through the conserving elevating stimulant. In 1780, Brown was for a second time elected President of the Medical Society of the Edinburgh University, and to such fury did debate run that a law was passed for expelling students who challenged other students to mortal combat. Cullen, and all the leaders of the Edinburgh School, opposed Brown, who, in time, came to London, where he died, in his fifty-second year, of apoplexy, after having taken a large dose of opium, to which stimulant narcotic he was accustomed. That Brown exerted an influence in favour of the stimulating method of treating disease is without any doubt. He suggested a bad idea which ministered, in its badness, to one of the weaknesses of mankind, and he himself, with all his genius, fell upon his own sword.

In the early part of the present century the debate as to the value of wine in disease continued, the practice at last lapsing into a compromise, the rule of which continued so long I am myself able to remember it as in force. The rule was that, in acute disease, phlogistic disease, the remedies to be used were to be strictly antiphlogistic or depressing, by which rule all stimulants were rigorously excluded; but when the fury of the phlogistic attack had been subdued, and the sick man, by bleeding, tartar emetic, and purgatives, had been reduced to death's door, then it was the thing to bring him up again by gently pouring in wine or other stimulant, with an improved dietary. In the profession of medicine these were halcyon days; for the people they were rather too systematic to be advantageous. They met their end

by the hand of Dr. Todd, who, seeing the evil done by the depressing system, and not the evil by the stimulating system, pushed his theories to the extent, practically, of saying that all disease was depression of itself, and, therefore, required to be treated boldly, and, from the outset, with a stimulant. I, for my part, imbued in early life by the lessons of a venerable practitioner of medicine of the antiphlogistic school, was never led away by the enthusiasm of Todd, whom I knew very well, and who was always most kindly interested in my experimental work. But I have always felt that Todd did great service in dispelling the old dogma of the violent antiphlogistic line, and only erred in not stopping at that point. His revulsion back to Brunonianism was for a time a serious disaster; but the very mischiefs it wrought were, in the end, a gain to the cause of temperance. By exaggerating the tendencies of mankind to intemperance, his plan struck a note of alarm in the minds of conscientious physicians, and made them anxious, as the eminent Dr. Fothergill in his later days expressed, whether, in treating the sick by wine, the physician might not be giving the first lessons of fatal inebriation.

Since the time of Todd the tone of the profession has been one of conflict, sobering down, in these last days, to the idea that stimulants are only temporary necessities in disease, and that men in good health require none. The old antiphlogistic mania has departed, and its Brunonian sequence is following the same course.

With this improved mode of thought the profession is lending itself to the progressive spirit of the age. What we want is that it should do more. Confessedly the profession has lost the lead in the march of those simple and grand men who, in their noble simplicity and greatness of nature, led the way to the redemption of the drunkard from drink. We may regret this; but, as it is too true, regrets were vain. Medicine has not, in this respect, been worse than its learned friends. The Church of all banners also lost the lead. The Law has not yet moved in a single form of organisation into the ranks of the veterans. But, at last, the Church of all banners has taken up its place, and we are organising to go with it. Our aim now should be to cast off things that so easily beset us, and to step boldly into the van. We are held back mainly by one conservative feeling,—I do not say that in derision, for medicine, to be sound, must always be conservative,—we are held back by the idea that alcohol is a necessity, not for health nor for the healthy, but for our work in the treatment of disease. We are none of us in this society out of sympathy with this sentiment, though it be but a sentiment. We all claim the right to use alcohol if, in our hearts, we believe

we can save life by it, save suffering, or lessen affliction. We merely contend,—and this is the point we want our fellow-labourers to recognise,—that it must be used as a medicine, whenever it is tried, *secundem artem*.

As a therapeutical agent, I have never excluded alcohol from my practice. But this is what I have done for some years past: I have, whenever I thought I wanted its assistance, prescribed it as a chemical medicinal substance, in its pure form, in precise doses, and in definite order of time. As I have prescribed amyl nitrite, or chloroform, or ether, so I have prescribed alcohol.

By this method I have an absolute experience of the clinical use of alcohol, which, I think I may safely say, does not belong to many other prescribing physicians. There are thousands of physicians who, in the same period, have probably prescribed alcoholic fluids a hundred times to my single time; but if they were to be asked the precise doses they have ordered, the actual purity of the substances they have ordered, they would be quite unable, in most cases, to answer at all. So many ounces of wine, so many ounces of brandy or whisky, really mean nothing at all that is reliable. Therefore an absolute experience of alcohol, and that only, is a novelty. When I order alcohol, I prescribe as much of it as I think or know will produce the desired effect, directing the specific gravity of the fluid to be $\cdot 830$, which is not absolute alcohol, absolute alcohol being $\cdot 795$, but which is sufficiently near to be reliable, and is the alcohol commonly retailed as absolute alcohol, being prepared without the expense and trouble of removing the last portion of water.

Used medicinally in this manner the therapeutical action of alcohol may soon be reduced to a positive method. There is no ambiguity of action about it at all. It is as easily manageable as chloroform, and is as definite in effect as mercury, or potassium iodide. The differences of statements as to its influence in disease are, in fact, one and all due to the unscientific and utterly fallacious mode of ordering it as wine, or spirit, or beer, without regard to quantity, quality, or admixture. For when it is ordered in that way the percentage of alcohol is unknown, the fact that there is no other alcohol save the ethylic is unproven, and the other disturbing agents that may be present, in the way of ethers and acids, are not calculated for, though they may be ever so important.

From the simple method and scientific course pursued, I may say that when alcohol is prescribed for the sick in a positive mode in relation to quantity, quality, and purity, so that nothing but the action of ethylic alcohol is brought under observation after the administration, the phenomena that follow are singularly corroborative of the physiological facts which have of late years been made

known as to its action on healthy bodies. It is probable indeed that the influence of no other medicine in the pharmacopœia can be more correctly read by the light of physiological learning than alcohol. The chief difficulty that attends the administration for securing positive results lies in the circumstance that so many persons have accustomed themselves to the use of it in varying quantities, there is no standard dose, applicable to the community at large, for ensuring the precise degree of action that may be desired. We are often in the same condition in respect to this drug as we are in respect to opium, when on rare occasions we have to treat a person who is addicted to the daily use of opium.

When, however, we have under treatment those who are not accustomed to alcohol the results are regular and decisive. Then the dose of half a fluid ounce, by measure, of .830 ethylic alcohol administered to an adult is, as a rule, sufficient to produce a brief temporary action. The action commences within ten minutes after the fluid is taken, and the first sign of its action is detectable in the circulation. The action of the heart is quickened, the rate of quickening being distinct even when the pulsation is previously quickened from disease. The rate of increase runs, as a rule, from five to seven pulsations per minute, and even in cases of permanently slow pulse the rule is maintained, as I found in the instance of a member of my own profession, who has a permanently slow pulse of thirty-five. With this rise in the pulse there follows the temporary elevation of surface warmth, and all the other signs and subsequent effects of that ephemeral fever from alcohol with which we are so well conversant; a fever which, in some respects, resembles a mild ague, and in other respects a hectic. By the use of alcohol in this pure form we learn, also, with much accuracy, its effects when it is administered in minor doses so as not to produce any objective effect, but, as it is presumed, to conserve metamorphoses of tissue, or quicken local circulations. On the whole I am not inclined to deny the use of alcohol in this strictly scientific sense. I could do very well without it, since there are other substances to take its place that are less persistent in their effects, and are not so prone to create a constitutional appetite for themselves; but as a remedial agent of a third or fourth class value it deserves to be retained in the arcanum of physic.

I hope I have shown now, in all that is present and practical, that there is a reason for the existence of this nucleus of abstaining medical men; that the nucleus has its work laid out; and that the affection and adhesion of other members of the same profession, of which it forms so small a part, is for all sakes a realisation to be hoped for and expected.

The illustrious Descartes, in one of his prophetic moods, ven-

tured to predict that all the great movements of the world of thought, in physics, metaphysics, morals, and even government, would at some future day be evolved out of the medical sciences. It was natural for the founder of the Cartesian philosophy to predict in this wise. With him there were but two principles in nature—"I think, therefore, I am"—and,—“nothing exists but substances.” The combination makes up man, a spiritually materialised organism, who must, with his material surroundings, come, in course of time, more and more particularly under the cognizance of those who study the attributes and structure of man, and the effects of the external forces and materialities upon his existence, habits and character. To Descartes the social status of the Physician strengthened this conception. In his time there were no general rivalries of thought and learning to oppose the particular thought and learning of the strictly professional man. Between the philosophical scholars, and the commonalty there was a gulf which seemed to be impassable. The few learned were so distinct they held the whole province of knowledge, and when they spoke others did but wonder and listen; listen to René Cartes himself as to an oracle. Why should they change?

Had Descartes lived to this hour he would have seen that the gulf between the learned and the unlearned was anything but impassable; that it might be broad but was not too deep to be successfully crossed; and that the ultimate fate of the world was probably for it to cross *en masse* into the domain of learning, to settle there and make the domain as common property as ever was claimed by an overwhelming body that knew how to march and to conquer.

Perhaps, therefore, in this day the great philosopher might not be inclined to take the same sanguine view as that which he expressed so convincingly in his own day. He would see, with deep satisfaction, his theory of the extension of matter into infinitude brought, by such men as William Crookes, into experimental demonstration; but he would not see any particular sect of men belonging to medicine taking under their supervision the whole physical, metaphysical, and moral administration of the world. So far from seeing this, he would be a witness to a decline from any such commanding position. He would see all the learned professions bordering on a state of discontinuity. He would observe that men and women of all classes were beginning to know and think for themselves without the aid of any professional adviser, or, when calling in the aid of such adviser in great emergencies, being extremely inquisitive at the moment and extremely critical afterwards, when the fruits of the advice, good bad or indifferent, were declared. More remarkable still, he

would see in our modern civilised circles an universal educational life growing up amongst the young which, like hardy vegetation on good old soil, is threatening to uproot everything before it, and to establish a new face and destiny.

Stranger still would it appear to the father of the Cartesian philosophy that in no point were his calculations so far out as on the point of the progress into power of his favoured professional community. He would find the grandest interests of that profession poorly recognised; he would fail to discern that classical scholarship which was so distinctive a feature in the medical celebrities he knew; he would discover amongst them no exercise of political influence beyond what was held by the community in general; he would be pained to hear amongst the half-educated ruling classes not unfrequent remarks of disparagement as to the social and scientific distinction of his favoured brotherhood; he would witness with sadness and amazement the fact that, in deference to a whimsical folly of the age, many of the best men amongst the brotherhood were frittering away their lives at some contemptible little section of their noble craft, to which section they were mercilessly, piteously specialised: and, worst of all, he would gather that by this process of dividing, dividing, dividing, the whole body was, by wide-spreading, being brought into danger of utter disintegration.

And yet, gentlemen, there was after all nothing but what was natural and probable in the prophecy of Descartes. It is perfectly true that we, as a fraternity, are or ought to be engaged in studies and pursuits so sublime and so intimately connected with every incident of this mortal life, that we should be in the fullest sense a first power amongst mankind. So closely connected are our pursuits with the heart and soul of all that lives that if we had no ambitions, no passions, no desires, we ought by our very work to stand in the first ranks of mankind. Respect, profound and persistent, should be paid to our work if not to our workmen. And yet our best work is, as a rule, known only to ourselves.

At last, in this social position of our body politic and scientific,—a position not heartily accredited by men of pure science; not over warmly admitted by the republic of letters; scarcely thought of by the artistic world, although our artistic working is of the most refined order; sometimes frowned at by the Church; resorted to by the masses as a necessity they would gladly avoid; and all the while retained within our own sphere as if we had no connection with the outer world except by the pure practical tie which must never be broken,—at last in this position, I repeat, we come face to face with one of the great revolutionary incidents in the present grand,—surpassingly grand beyond anything of which

we have any record,—revolutionary epochs of human history, the supreme effort which is now being made, with every prospect and certainty of ultimate success, to rid the world of the slavery of superstition, folly, sin, sorrow, madness and death that has for ages past been imposed upon the world by the use of alcoholic drinks.

Never in our course as a profession have we been brought face to face with the public in a more serious or solemn manner. We are brought face to face with the public on a question which it will have solved though it solve it independently of us altogether, and that a question which is singularly, and in the name of health, emphatically our own. The question is not whether man can live without the use of alcoholic drinks, but whether we can, by our voice and authority, justify the thoughtful section of the public in its attempt to prove that men can not only live without such aid, as the lower creation lives, but can live as healthily; whether men who have been accustomed to take stimulants until they have acquired a lower organisation than was meant for them can give up the habit with safety as well as advantage; and, lastly, if it ever be necessary that alcohol or some similar agent be positively called for in emergency, whether we, as men specially fitted for the task, can or cannot come to the assistance of our public workers, and by our skill meet their difficulty without encouraging a habit which is fraught with danger to the individual, and with endless suffering to the nation, to the world.

We who constitute this society are all of us men who, in the active exercise of professional duty, are living witnesses of the truth of the proposition that men engaged as we are can fulfil our allotted tasks without recourse to alcohol as a sustainer or as any part of our life's feast. We join hands in this matter with the rest of the abstaining community, and we join with it in the belief that we perform our work more steadily, more cheerfully, more easily, more healthfully, than we did when we indulged in the factitious delusion and practice of seeking sustainment from alcohol. We extend from this experience our lines of observation and inference. We argue that, as we are no more and no less mortal than our even Christian, what we can do can be done also by any member of our profession, or of other professions. We, therefore, have a logical basis of argument, and can move heart and soul with those who strive to redeem the world from one of its worst slaveries. But, then, we are a mere isolation. Out of twenty thousand in the ranks of medicine we number a two-hundredth part. The rest, what does it say, that voice of two hundred to one?

I will not indicate, at this moment, what the representatives of that great voice should say. I will only urge that the mode in

which they could safely speak—safe, I mean, as a mode of inspiring reliance on their utterances by the public mind and conscience—is, that they should speak definitely, aye or no, to definite questions. When they are asked if alcoholic drinks are a necessity for healthy life, they ought to be able to say, with the proof on their lips, aye or no. When asked if the confirmed alcoholic, of any age, can give up his stimulant without injury, they ought to be able to say as clearly, aye or no. When asked by an earnest man or woman, who wishes to reclaim either a single individual or a community, whether they can help in the emergency by meeting an assumed necessity, they ought to be able to say aye or no, with a precision of statement worthy of their learning and their vocation. We stand, all of us, on our mettle when these questions come forward to be answered. The public, that regards so little our politics, that cares so much less for our routine work, that ignores our finest triumphs of skill with so much stolidity, tests us here. These, say they, are the men who, of all others, ought to say definitely aye or no. Here is a great public question, essentially their own. Let us test them and try them. If they are not able to answer questions so simple and straightforward more distinctly than we are, what good are they? As to that two-hundredth part, they may be mere enthusiasts, and their sayings may be prompted by their sympathies rather than by their reason; we want to know what the majority can satisfactorily tell us.

I do not overstate the matter in the least in these remarks. The profession of medicine has lost sufficient already by its attitude towards this vital, urgent question. Remaining as it does a few years longer, it will lose beyond recall the confidence it still retains; for, without reference to its final judgment, time will yield the answer it ought to give if that judgment be long delayed.

With all respect, therefore, but with all earnestness, we say to our brethren everywhere,—

“Be stirring as the time, be fire with fire,”

Nor do we fear to add the corollary of the poet:—

“So shall inferior eyes,
That borrow their behaviours from the great,
Grow great by your example.”

