

Alcohol and total abstinence / by Albert J. Mott.

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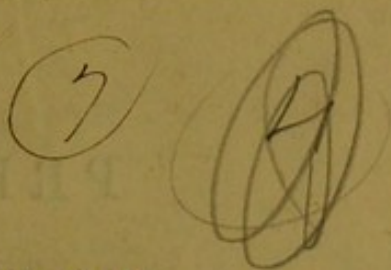
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ALCOHOL

AND

TOTAL ABSTINENCE.

BY

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P R E F A C E .

I AM told that this paper has been so far misinterpreted, that the writer is supposed by many persons to have no sympathy with the motives of those who try, by whatever means, to prevent drunkenness among the people.

It ought to be understood, once for all, that such a state of feeling is impossible. But the habit of praising and flattering those who act from good motives, without reference to the nature of their actions, is a fulsome habit. No man fulfils his duty merely by meaning well, and true philanthropists do not work for praise.

It has been my business not to express anew a sympathy which everybody feels, but to show that on this particular subject the would-be reformers of to-day are working upon lines which cannot succeed, and are led to do so by a want of knowledge concerning the facts they deal with and the leaders they follow.

A. J. M.

June 1884.

ALCOHOL

AND TOTAL ABSTINENCE.

THE demands of the advocates of total abstinence for changes in the law are persistent and energetic. The real views of statesmen on the subject are little known, and probably ill defined, and the practical issues dependent on them are many and serious.

I propose to call attention to some facts of great moment, connected with the question, facts which must determine the ultimate result of any laws relating to it, and which ought therefore to be the finger-posts of rational legislation.

The first statement I have to make will no doubt bring down a storm of indignation and throw many excellent people into an attitude of great surprise. It is that the total abstinence agitation is now, and has been for many years, one of the most remarkable impostures of the present age. The statement is a grave one and needs explanation, but it can be given in few words.

The doctrine of total abstinence assumes that alcoholic drinks as ordinary beverages are unnecessary and mischievous, and that in order to prevent drunkenness we ought to prevent their use. The supporters of the agitation claim that the truth of this is recognised by a vast and increasing number of Englishmen, and that in calling for laws intended to enforce obedience to it they have with them the real sympathy of the best part of the nation.

It is this claim which constitutes the imposture, and it is the apparent support actually given to it by public writers, speakers, and legislators, that makes it remarkable.

The total abstinence agitation has now been carried on with great energy for more than forty years. Innumerable speeches, a flood of papers, a vast machinery of societies, pledges, ribbons and meetings, have reiterated its doctrine in every part of the country through that long period. Pressure of all kinds has been brought upon individuals; several specific laws have been passed

in the interest of the movement, and several hundred thousand pounds at least have been spent in its service. But after all this has been done, the positive result is that the average consumption of alcohol in Great Britain has never at any time been affected by it in the slightest appreciable degree.

This single fact, of which I shall presently give the proofs, establishes the imposture. For what is meant by conversion to the principles of total abstinence when people drink as much alcohol as before? What is meant by national sympathy with the desire to prevent its use when that use is continued unaltered from decade to decade by the nation at large?

The truth is that the total abstinence party is not now, and never has been, anything but an active sect, considerable in positive but insignificant in comparative numbers, and consisting chiefly of persons who for various reasons of preference or necessity would drink little or no alcohol under any circumstances. The apparent sympathy which it receives from others is obtained on false pretences, for it is called forth by an interest, not in the principle of total abstinence at all, but in the very different principle of temperance as opposed to intemperance in the use of alcohol. These two things, which are not only not the same but are radically inconsistent with each other, have been skilfully confounded together; and the friends of temperance, who make the bulk of the nation, are being blindly led by self-appointed guides to look with favour on proposals presented to them as aids to their own excellent cause, while, in fact, their real purpose is of a different kind. That purpose is the single one of obstructing and lessening the consumption of alcohol by any means available, as a first step towards the prohibition of its use. It is for this, and this only, that Permissive Bills, Local Option, Sunday Closing, and Elected Licensing Boards are devised and brought forward by the total abstinence party. The nation generally has not the least intention of altering its usual diet, or of being prevented from buying what it pleases; but it wishes to discourage drunkenness, is told that certain measures will have this effect, knows but little on the subject, and receives no guidance from the leaders of public opinion, and is thus led to appear as the ally of persons who act with another motive and for a totally different end.

No useful action of any kind can be looked for till this confusion is cleared away. No laws can be wisely passed when they are skilfully proposed for one sole object and ignorantly supported for another. No social efforts can be effective when the leaders of them intend to abolish what their supporters intend to use. The

with an answer, but the nation at large is not; and as a definite help towards the formation of a definite opinion, I propose to describe as briefly as possible the real facts concerning the use of alcohol, and the fallacies by which the total abstinence theory is being recommended to mankind.

In what follows, the word "alcohol" will be used to mean proof spirit, the British standard of strength; not the absolute alcohol of the chemist. Common spirits of wine mixed with half its bulk of water makes proof spirit. Brandy, whisky, &c. as commonly sold are proof spirit diluted with from 10 to 20 per cent. of water. The alcohol in all alcoholic drinks is of course the same thing, variously diluted and mixed with other substances, always very small in quantity, peculiar to the special liquid. In estimating the total consumption of alcohol, the quantity in distilled spirits is determined immediately by the hydrometer, and is known with great precision. The quantity in wine is also known pretty nearly. I have taken it as equal to 40 per cent. in England before 1860, when weak wines were first admitted at a low duty, and as 30 per cent. since that date. This is possibly a little above the average, but if so the error is unimportant. The whole quantity of alcohol consumed in wine in England has never much exceeded one pint per head per annum.

The quantity in beer is less accurately known, because it varies not only with the mode of brewing but with the age of the beer. But a bushel of malt is officially equivalent to twenty-six and a quarter pounds of sugar, and this produces more than two and a half gallons of proof spirit if completely fermented. The fermentation in beer being incomplete, I take the alcohol contained in it as equal to two gallons for one bushel of malt or twenty-six pounds of sugar used in brewing.

This also may be something more than the actual quantity, which has often been estimated as only a gallon and a half to the bushel. But the general analysis of beers, and the theoretical expectation, seem in favour of the higher estimate, and it is adopted throughout this paper. The reader will therefore understand that the consumption of alcohol cannot be greater than is here stated, while it may probably be a little less.

Alcohol is produced in cider and home-made wines, but the quantity is not large enough to affect our figures. In all matters of calculation I use the word "beer" in the sense of malt liquor brewed with two bushels of malt, or its equivalent, to the barrel of thirty-six gallons.

Now, the average consumption of alcohol is very nearly a constant quantity through the whole civilized world. It amounts

nearly everywhere and always to somewhere between four and five gallons of proof spirit per head per annum. It rarely exceeds five gallons, and probably never falls below four gallons in any Christian state. It is affected, to some extent, by fiscal regulations, and by climate, and it fluctuates up and down with the prosperity of nations; but these movements are almost invariably confined to the limits stated above.

This alcohol is consumed in the three principal forms of distilled spirits, wine, and beer. The form in which it is consumed depends in all countries very largely on the relative cost. The cheapest form is that of spirit distilled from grain, sugar, treacle, or potatoes. The first cost of such alcohol is generally from 1s. 6d. to 2s. a gallon. About a gallon is obtained from 28 lbs. of ordinary corn.

The next cheapest form is wine. Common wine at the place of production costs less than half as much as distilled alcohol, but only from one-fifth to one-fourth of it is proof spirit, and the cost of moving wine to a great distance makes it, when that is necessary, not a cheap but an expensive form.

The first cost of beer is not very different from that of wine, but it contains only half as much alcohol.

In the wine-growing countries, though the alcohol of distilled spirit is cheaper than that in wine, the difference is neutralized by questions of distribution and taxes. The taste of wine being generally preferred in those countries, it is the chief alcoholic drink. The French, however, consume nearly as much distilled spirit as the English, in addition to their wine.

Wherever wine is not grown it is comparatively costly, and in such countries the chief consumption is divided between distilled spirits and beer; and, as these are generally taxed, the proportion depends largely on the incidence of the duty. In England, under the present duty, the first cost of distilled spirit of the cheapest kind, including the duty, is about 12s. a gallon. The cost of the same quantity of alcohol in beer is not much less, but beer contains nutriment as well, and the pleasant bitter of the hop; and the national taste so far prefers it that three-fourths of the whole quantity of alcohol is consumed in beer.

The final result is that, in one form or other, a nearly constant quantity of alcohol per head per annum is everywhere consumed. The proof of this is very simple. The total quantity of wine produced in Europe averages between two and three thousand million gallons a year. France, Austria, and Italy together produce about two thousand million gallons in average years. Nearly the whole of

not more than two or three per cent. of the vast total. The wine-growing countries—Portugal, Spain, France, Austria, Italy, Greece, Switzerland, and part of Germany—have altogether a population of 140,000,000. The alcohol contained in the annual wine crop, exceeds 500,000,000, and often reaches 600,000,000 gallons, and the average consumption in this form is therefore about four gallons per head per annum throughout this half of Europe. In addition to this, spirits distilled from grain, sugar, and potatoes, as well as beer and cider, are also consumed in considerable quantities, and the general average of between four and five gallons is definitely established.

Nor does it differ much in different states. Nearly one hectolitre of wine (22 gallons) per head is the customary average, and where, as in Austria, the average is a good deal less, it is supplemented by a larger consumption of beer or spirits. The same average is maintained in those northern States where wine is not grown. In the German empire, for example, which includes only a small wine district, the consumption in the form of spirits and beer exceeds four gallons per head, which, again, is the average in England. In the United States the statistics cannot at present be relied upon, but the consumption is known to be large.

The natural effect of duties and restrictive laws is to lessen the consumption, which would be larger if these were removed, but nothing has ever reduced it much below the general average. If one form of alcohol is made dearer than usual, nations content themselves with some cheaper form, and if it is too difficult to obtain it in any lawful way it is immediately procured by illicit means.

The natural consumption from climatal causes would be rather greater in England than in France. The actual consumption is rather greater in France than in England, alcohol in its various forms being much cheaper in France. The French consume nearly twenty gallons of wine per head per annum, the wine containing about four gallons of alcohol, and about one gallon of other spirits, making a total of five gallons. The usual English consumption is a little more than one gallon per head in distilled spirits and wine, and about three gallons in beer, making a total of about four gallons. The fluctuations caused among ourselves by changes in the national prosperity have never been greater than about one gallon per head. Thirty years ago the average was just four gallons. In the last period of great prosperity, ending in 1875, it rose for one year to five and a quarter gallons. It has since then returned to, and now remains at, the normal average of about four gallons.

The way in which these fluctuations are treated by the Press and by public men is perfectly astonishing, and is altogether incon-

sistent with the common-sense supposed to be our national attribute. There is not really the smallest ground for believing that any change has occurred, or is occurring, in the national use of alcohol as part of the habitual diet of the people. Looking back through any number of years the variations are all exactly of the same kind. There is an increase when times are good, a decrease when they are otherwise, a little change when duties are altered; on the whole, a general tendency to increase, though not to a large extent. Yet we are constantly hearing either lamentations on the growth of drinking habits if the Excise returns are large, or congratulations on the moral improvement of the masses if they are small. That this should be the attitude of the total abstinence advocates is no matter of surprise to those who watch their methods of procedure; but that statesmen who can hardly be ignorant of the facts should adopt it as their own is certainly astounding. These changes in the Excise and Custom House returns denote no change in the national diet, but simply in the national income. They are often large in figures because the quantities dealt with are enormous, but they are never large in real proportion; and the idea that anything can be inferred from them concerning the intemperance of the people, or its increase or decrease, is nothing less than silly. The consumption of alcoholic drinks is all but universal. The great total is made up of the very small quantities individually consumed day by day by 35,000,000 of consumers. For though the 20,000,000 of adults drink the greater part of it, almost everyone is a consumer more or less. Alcohol is the common remedy in sudden faintness or pain, the common stimulant in exhausting illness. Medicines are prepared in it, wounds are dressed with it, toothaches cured by it, chilblains rubbed with it, clothes cleaned with it, the housekeeper uses it in preserving, and the cook in flavouring. Small matters separately, but all of them multiplied by vast numbers, and all included in the general consumption.

And when times are bad, it is the thrifty and sober people who spend less in alcohol. The drunkard sacrifices every other comfort first. This simple truth, a truth so simple and obvious that it is impossible to dispute it when once put into words, is, nevertheless, entirely overlooked or forgotten. Any decrease in the consumption whenever it occurs is treated as if nothing could produce it but a decrease in drunkenness! In like manner it is the sober and frugal, who have been pinching themselves by drinking water or small beer when times were bad, who begin to live a little better as soon as they can afford it, and the increased consumption which follows is chiefly theirs. Everyone engaged in the sale of alcohol

knows that this is true, and it needs but little acquaintance with human nature to see that it must be. Those who can reflect reasonably upon these things will see how perfectly they accord with and explain the fact, that while drunkenness has almost disappeared among the educated classes, and has been greatly lessened among a large portion of the rest, the average consumption of alcohol per head is slightly greater now than it was thirty or forty years ago. The variations that occur show with great precision the comparative rise and fall of general prosperity; but they tell us nothing whatever about drunkenness, simply because the quantity consumed as ordinary diet is so enormously greater than the quantity consumed by drunkards, that any changes in the latter are too small in proportion to be perceived.

This statement would be accepted as a truism by ordinary observers of English life if no efforts had been made to disguise the truth. Conclusive proof of it will be given further on, but I shall first give some examples of the manner in which questions of fact are habitually treated by the total abstinence party and their political friends.

The National Drink Bill, as it is called, is constantly put before the public as a national disgrace. The money paid for alcoholic drinks approaches £130,000,000 a year. It is assumed that this is the cost to the nation; that it is an extravagant amount; and that most of it is paid for vicious self-indulgence.

The first and third of these assumptions are absolutely untrue; and the second is equally so if alcohol is used at all as a national beverage.

The £130,000,000, which changes hands every year, consists of three distinct portions. The first is taxation which is collected by the dealers in alcohol. It amounts to £30,000,000. The second is the real cost of the beer, wine and spirits themselves, which is about £45,000,000. The third is the cost and profit of distribution, which is between fifty and sixty millions.

This subject has been examined and the results determined on the best information available by a committee of the British Association. Professor Leone Levi and the late Professor Jevons were members of the committee. Its two reports, drawn up by Professor Levi, are printed in the Association volumes for 1881-82, and give the most authentic account the nation possesses of the particulars of its expenditure. The above figures are taken in round numbers from these reports.

The real cost to the nation, as the committee point out, is only the second of the three portions—the £45,000,000 which the beer, wine and spirits themselves have really cost. The £30,000,000 of

taxes must, of course, be collected in some way. The sum paid for distribution is paid to the nation itself, and is only a transfer of so much income from one hand to another, for capital used and services rendered. It constitutes the income of nearly two million persons employed in or dependent on the trade ; * and if the trade were suddenly stopped the national effect would be, not that the nation was richer by this sum, but that the income of two million people was taken from them and distributed among the rest.

These two million being thus made destitute, would endeavour to do something else ; and if they could become producers instead of distributors, without displacing any other producers or lessening their production, the national income would then be increased by the change. But we have already a surplus of people who would be producers if they could, or who would produce more if it were wanted. The labour-market is always over-stocked, and the nation has no power of enriching itself by turning distributors into producers. The real cost of alcohol to the nation as one of its beverages is, therefore, £45,000,000, instead of £130,000,000, with the addition of anything that might be added to its produce by any other use of the capital employed ; and as capital itself is superabundant, and can be had in any quantity when there is a chance of profitable use, the addition, if any, could be trifling only.

The amount paid for the distribution of alcohol shows that the trade, as a whole, is not a specially lucrative one. It is about £30 per head for the people dependent on it, which is very nearly the general average income of the nation at large.

That the expenditure is extravagant in amount is untrue if beer, wine, and spirits are used at all as national beverages. This will be shown conclusively when we come to the details of consumption ; but, in the meantime, the fact that the quantity used is practically the same in all civilised nations disproves the charge of extravagance on general grounds, for the term cannot properly be applied to an expenditure universally and persistently adopted. Nor is the cost excessive when compared with that of other articles.† Bread costs £60,000,000 ; meat and fish, nearly £100,000,000 ; tea, coffee and sugar, £35,000,000 ; potatoes, fruit and vegetables, £50,000,000. I am giving the actual *cost*, not the sums paid by the consumers, which are, of course, much more. The cost of dress exceeds £120,000,000. If every person consumed a pint of milk a day, which is in fact a common allowance among

* The number was estimated as at least a million and a half in 1871.—See Professor Levi's Report to Mr. Bass, 1871, p. 16.

those who can afford it, the annual payment for milk alone would be £100,000,000, and the actual cost more than half of this.

The assumption that alcohol is chiefly used for purposes of vicious self-indulgence is absolutely untrue. When a man drinks a glass of beer or wine with his dinner there is no more self-indulgence than when he puts sugar in his tea or butter on his bread, or milk in his porridge. He is simply taking such diet as he finds pleasant and suitable, and the great bulk of the consumption is always of this kind, as will shortly be demonstrated. The public are merely imposed upon by the hardihood with which such statements are made and by the effect of large numbers, the true import of which is carefully concealed. All numbers become large when they are multiplied by thirty-five millions, and the quantity of any article in universal use in a great nation is necessarily an enormous quantity.

Statements equally misleading are habitually made when the consumption of different periods is contrasted for any special purpose, and two extraordinary examples of this occurred last year.

The Act known as the Forbes-Mackenzie Act, by which public-houses in Scotland were closed on Sunday, was passed in 1854, and during the seven years following, the average consumption of British spirits in Scotland showed a large decrease. In Mr. Hoyle's long account of the "Drink Bill," published in the *Times* of March 26, 1883, this fact is brought forward with great emphasis, the decrease being pointed out and dwelt upon as *the result* of Sunday closing. The object was to give support to some other proposals of a similar kind. I have nothing here to do with Sunday closing, which may be discussed on its own merits; but a more flagrant attempt to practise upon the ignorance of the public has very rarely been made, and I expose it as an instance of the method systematically adopted by the total abstinence party. The Act was really passed, and the decrease really occurred afterwards, but there was something else which Mr. Hoyle concealed from his readers, of whom not one in a thousand would have any knowledge of the facts. His words were as follows:—

"In the spring of 1854 the Forbes-Mackenzie Act, for the closing of public-houses on Sundays, was passed; *the result was* * that the sale of spirits, which for the seven years ending 1852 had averaged 6,825,320 gallons yearly, for the seven years ending 1861 averaged only 5,392,282 gallons, being a decrease of 21 per cent."

The facts are these. The duty upon British spirits in Scotland for the seven years ending 1852 was 3s. 8d. a gallon. It was

raised to 4s. 8d. in 1853, the year *before* the Forbes-Mackenzie Act was passed, and the consumption in that year fell off at once 600,000 gallons. It was raised again to 5s. 8d. in 1854, the year of the Forbes-Mackenzie Act, and the consumption again fell off another 500,000 gallons. It was again raised to 8s. in 1855, and again the consumption fell off 400,000 gallons. It was kept at 8s. for four years, and during those four years there was no decrease in the consumption. Finally, in 1860, the duty was raised to 10s. a gallon, and the consumption fell off again more than a million gallons. Mr. Hoyle has actually ventured to contrast the seven years in which the duty was 3s. 8d. a gallon with the seven years in which it was raised step by step to 10s. a gallon, and has told the public that the decrease in the latter period was "*the result*" of the Forbes-Mackenzie Act, without a single word about any other event by which a decrease could be occasioned! What is to be said of any cause whose advocates can stoop to methods of this kind? And what is to be said of advocates who can thus suppress the truth in a matter of grave national concern? The increase of the duty from 3s. 8d. to 10s. doubled the cost of home-made spirit in Scotland; and to double the cost of an article *without* decreasing the consumption is a feat no Chancellor of the Exchequer has accomplished yet. Every addition to the duty was followed, as it always is, by a corresponding decrease in the consumption. When the duty remained unchanged the consumption was unchanged also, and there is not a single real fact to make it even probable that the Forbes-Mackenzie Act had anything to do with the decrease. That, however, is not the question here. The question is whether men who, instead of telling the whole truth, conceal the chief part of it, have any right to address the public, or any claim to be listened to.*

The deception is even greater than I have stated. The doubled cost of British spirits increased the use of foreign spirits and beer, and duties being now equalized between England and Scotland, the interchange of goods became free and the separate consumption less accurately known.

The final fact was that by the year 1864, at which time the numerous fiscal changes of the ten previous years had settled their general effects, the average consumption of alcohol in the United Kingdom was rather greater than in 1850. Mr. Hoyle's statement

* Mr. Hoyle's "Drink Bill for 1883" in the *Times* of March 27th, is a paper of the same kind. Criminal statistics are quoted to induce the public to believe that crime has greatly increased since 1860. There is no single ground for such a charge, which is a libel on the nation. The figures given are the result of nothing but changes in the

on the subject has been widely adopted by the public press, apparently without the slightest knowledge of the truth concerning it. There is some excuse for this, for nobody remembers the financial details of thirty years ago, and the official returns are not given in a form which makes it easy to recall them.

The authority for my own statement is the folio report of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue dated 1870.

The second example to which I referred, of the mode in which the question is being treated, was in the Budget speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer last year, as reported in the *Times*. The consumption of 1875-6 was contrasted with that of 1882, and the decrease in the revenue from wine and spirits was pointed out, but not regretted, because it was assumed to indicate the spread of temperance among the people. A Chancellor of the Exchequer ought to know better than this, for he ought to know all the facts. The consumption from 1874 to 1876 was the largest on record, and was the culminating point in a period of very rapid increase, the cause being open to no sort of doubt. It was a period of extraordinary national prosperity, and of an enormous increase in the income of the working classes. Those were the years in which pig iron rose to £6 a ton, and in which a coal-miner could earn £3 a week. The annual consumption of alcohol in all forms, on the estimate already explained, was 4·30 gallons per head in 1867. It had risen to 4·50 in 1870; it was 4·90 in 1872; 5·14 in 1873; 5·21 in 1874; and nearly the same for two years longer. That it would fall again if trade decreased and wages fell was as certain as the ebb of the tide. The fall has taken place in exact correspondence with the known condition of the national income. The consumption was 5·0 in 1877; 4·92 in 1878; 4·40 in 1880; and 4·16 in 1883. These were years in which it has been given in evidence before Parliament, that the whole capital employed in the cotton trade produced no profit whatever.* The consumption of 1883 is almost exactly that of 1864, and is as nearly as possible the normal consumption of the last fifty years. There is not a particle of evidence to show that the national habits were rapidly getting worse from 1867 to 1875, or that they have as rapidly been getting better from 1875 to 1883. The nation has done what it always does; it has spent according to its income, and the real meaning of the decreased consumption of alcohol is that times are hard; that homes are impoverished, that there is national distress and compulsory economy. This is no matter for congratulation; but the minister had a political purpose to serve, and, unfortunately, it is

not yet the rule in politics to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

That statement, made on such authority, has, of course, been eagerly seized upon, and the true friends of temperance as well as the advocates of total abstinence have been enjoying all the pleasures of a fool's paradise, believing that a great conversion has taken place among the intemperate classes. No doubt when wages are high there is some increase in every form of self-indulgence that can be bought with money, but the idea that the quantity of alcohol consumed by drunkards forms at any time any large part of the national consumption is, as I have already said, a profound mistake, and the matter is of such vast importance that I shall now examine it in detail. What, then, is the real quantity consumed by sober people who drink beer, wine, and spirits as ordinary beverages, as they do tea, coffee, and cocoa; taking, that is to say, as much as they find agreeable and do not find injurious? This question is never examined by the advocates of total abstinence, who trust to the sensational effects of large figures, of the real meaning of which the public have no idea. Suppose that in speaking of the prevalence of nervous disease we were to remark with emphasis that the nation swallows, annually, more than a thousand million gallons of tea and coffee, and that this vast quantity would fill a canal five yards wide, five feet deep, and five hundred miles long? Such figures look portentous enough, but there is nothing in them; they are not far from the truth, but they only mean that most of us drink one or two cups of tea or coffee twice a day. In like manner the mere statements that so many gallons of alcohol are consumed, or that so much money is spent upon it, give us no useful information until we know what these figures would naturally be in a sober nation.

In the consumption of alcohol, one half-pint of beer, or one glass of wine, or one tumbler of weak spirit and water, daily, are about the smallest quantities taken by those who use alcoholic drinks at all as part of the daily food. In each case the annual quantity consumed is rather more than two gallons of alcohol. But an active man drinks two pints of ale, or a pint of claret, or two glasses of spirits, if diluted, with perfect impunity in twenty-four hours. In these cases the consumption of alcohol is about ten gallons a year.

Now the people who live thus are not only sober all their lives, but they cannot be otherwise, unless they drink the whole daily quantity at one time, and even this would not make most men intoxicated. Nor is this by any means the maximum of sober

diet of those who, without the least suspicion of intemperance, are used to what is called high living : good dinners, much society, and great activity of life. A man of this class begins with breakfast, at which he drinks only tea or coffee. About noon he has a glass of wine and a biscuit, or a glass of beer and a sandwich. At two o'clock he sits down to luncheon and drinks another glass of beer and a glass of sherry. He dines at seven or eight, drinks a glass of sauterne, another of champagne, half a glass of sherry, and a small quantity of liqueur, and at dessert he has half a pint of claret. He goes up-stairs to an evening party, and in the course of the evening has some claret-cup and champagne. Finally he takes half a glass of brandy or whisky in seltzer-water, and goes to bed. He is absolutely sober from beginning to end. A man accustomed to this diet is not even excited by it in any particular degree at any period of the day, but he is drinking about twenty-two gallons of alcohol per annum. This, however, though not the maximum of sober consumption, is close upon its limit, and the general average will lie not far from the middle line between this and the minimum of two gallons. It will, therefore, be about the ordinary consumption of ordinary sober men.

Now, women drink less alcohol than men, and we may, for argument's sake, treat children as if they were not consumers, though it is not so in fact. There remain at least ten millions of each sex of whom the vast majority are known to be consumers. The sober men do not consume less than the above average nor the women less than half as much, if they can afford to buy it ; but the largest annual consumption on record has never been sufficient to supply them all even on this scale of absolute sobriety. If ten million men drank on an average twelve gallons each, and ten million women half the quantity, and no other alcohol were used for any purpose whatever, the annual consumption would be 180,000,000 gallons. At present it is about 150,000,000, and the largest ever reached was 170,000,000.

I will give one other illustration which may, perhaps, both amuse the reader and surprise him. An effort has been made by Mr. A. A. Reade to get the opinions and experience of a number of literary men as to the effect of alcohol and tobacco on their mental powers.* It has brought together, as might be expected, many different and many opposite views, but not much definite information. Among other things, however, Mr. Gladstone's own consumption of alcohol is given by his son. Mr. Gladstone, we learn, drinks one or two glasses of claret at luncheon, and the same

* See *Notes and Queries*, vol. 10, p. 100.

at dinner, with one glass of light port. One or two glasses of claret twice a day is not less than half a pint daily, and this, if the wine is pretty good, is equal to four and a half gallons of alcohol in a year. One glass of port-wine a day is equal to two and a half gallons more. I am supposing the glass of port to be about one-tenth of a bottle. Mr. Gladstone, therefore, consumes about seven gallons of alcohol a year, if he never exceeds these quantities. Now, if the children and young people of the nation drank only water, and if the adults, taking these as twenty millions, all lived exactly as Mr. Gladstone does, we should be in a paradise of sobriety, but the consumption of alcohol would be just what it is at present. It would be 140,000,000 gallons a year. The estimate for 1883 is 148,000,000.* The revenue at the same time would be largely increased, even at the present low wine duty. The duty paid annually by each consumer would be 22s. 6d. on his claret and 15s. on his port, and the total revenue from alcoholic drinks would be £37,500,000. The total cost to the consumers—the annual “drink bill”—would be prodigious, beyond anything ever heard of before; for if the claret were only worth 1s. a bottle and the port only 2s. the annual total would be more than £200,000,000. This, of course, is because even the cheapest port and claret are much dearer forms of alcohol in England than distilled spirits and beer. I venture to think that few persons on hearing the extent of Mr. Gladstone’s very moderate consumption would foresee the results of following his example. It is almost an impertinence to add that, instead of being large, it is the consumption of a very careful and abstemious man. It is not true, therefore, that the total consumption is larger than is consistent with entire sobriety. It might be doubled without a single case of drunkenness occurring anywhere, and it is considerably less than it would be if everyone consumed the ordinary average of sober men. The presence of drunkenness shows only that the consumption is unequally distributed. Besides the water-drinkers a large number of persons get less than their share of alcohol simply because they cannot afford it. The expenditure of the working classes is a sternly restrained expenditure, kept down in every direction by the heavy pressure of necessity, and springing upwards immediately if any portion of the pressure is removed. It is this that makes the difference in consumption when it rises or falls. It is no paradox to say that intemperance itself in all probability *decreases* the national consumption. It does so both by the disgust it creates and by the poverty it occasions. In a large number of cases the drunkard’s friends are led by fear to avoid

what they would otherwise use, and his family are compelled by want to do without it.

But as to the real extent of drunkenness, or its increase or decrease, what is it that we really know? The returns of total consumption, as I have already shown, give no information whatever on this subject. Do we learn any more from the police returns? About 500 persons a day are arrested for drunkenness in England and Wales, the population being 25,000,000. Is this a large number or a small one? Does it indicate a good state of things, or a bad one? Does it tell us anything we want to know?

What number of cases of drunkenness should we expect to find in a population of 25,000,000? Are the drunkards one in ten? One in fifty? One in a hundred? Suppose the last. Assume that out of every hundred persons ninety-nine are always sober; that the hundredth is a drunkard, and that, on an average, he is drunken twice a week. How many cases of drunkenness will really occur? There will be 25,000,000 such cases annually, or 70,000 every day. The arrests being 500 a day, one case in 140 will fall into the hands of the police, while 139 escape altogether. How can we blind ourselves to the senseless folly of supposing that we can learn from the number thus arrested whether the other number is 140, or 120, or 160? Yet, in fact, the number of drunkards must be far greater than this if what is said about British drunkenness is true. Do we really believe that ninety-nine persons out of every hundred are always sober, and that the intemperate are only one per cent. of the population? One person in every thirty is a pauper. Three persons in every thousand are known, or believed to be, thieves. In our great towns one woman in every hundred is an outcast of the streets. How many men have been concerned in her misery, and what proportion do their vices bear in number or in magnitude to the vice of drunkenness? If these numbers seem appalling, it is only because all sins must seem so if they are counted. How many lies are told, how many deceits are practised, how many cruel words are spoken, in a year? and in what respect are the evils they represent smaller than the evils of drunkenness? There is assuredly no common sin of self-indulgence of which ninety-nine out of every hundred are guiltless, and the inevitable conclusion is that these police reports of arrests may tell us something about the state of public order in the streets but can never give us the slightest real information as to the extent of drunkenness among the people. With this, as with all other vices, there is no gauge of quantity anywhere to be found. Our knowledge is limited to that general knowledge which results from general experience, which does enable us to pronounce broadly whether there

has been gain or loss during long periods of time, but is totally unable to discern the extent of daily or yearly changes. It is from this general knowledge, and not from statistics of any kind whatever, that we are able to say, positively, that the habit of drunkenness among the educated classes has, comparatively speaking, disappeared in the last fifty years; and that it has certainly decreased among the rest. But this is the only kind of knowledge we shall ever get on questions of this description; and action in such cases, if based on the belief that we can learn its success or failure by official figures, is based on a fundamental mistake, and can never, by any possibility, lead to anything but error and disappointment.

Any reasonable action for the purpose of decreasing drunkenness must be founded on general principles, on a grave consideration of what human beings really are, and how they really can be influenced; and the first conclusion forced upon us will be that though the legal regulation of the sale of alcohol is necessary for the preservation of public order and the protection of the revenue, it is impossible that it should ever have much effect in preventing drunkenness.

Drunkenness is a personal vice, an act of self-indulgence, not an act which inflicts direct injury upon other people, and the experience of all times and places has emphatically declared that laws are nearly powerless against personal vices. It is never possible, in fact, to put effective difficulties in the way of their indulgence, for the things desired are always things that the world generally uses, and has a right to use; and punishment has no restraining power, because the chance of its infliction for vice alone is always as small as possible. When no one is directly injured hardly anyone will prosecute, and the offender always knows that he can offend with impunity if he only takes a little care.

These are permanent and world-wide truths. It is only when we forget them that we dream of curing vice by legislation, and it is melancholy in the extreme to see that, nevertheless, they are perpetually forgotten.

Temperance is not promoted by attempts to do what cannot be done, and drunkenness is really lessened only when we act upon its moral causes. The upper classes have been cured by the growth of higher tastes, the increase of home comforts, and the attraction of better pleasures. Instead of being coerced into sobriety by external restraints, their facilities for drinking were never greater than at the present time. The lower classes will be cured by the same means, and by no others. By what fatuity do we treat them and their betters as if they were creatures of two different kinds?

The alcoholic question, however, is not one of sobriety only ; it is also a grave question of diet.

Modern fanaticism has a special courage of its own, the courage that is not the least afraid of any harm that may happen to other people ; and the total abstainer proposes with a light heart to make, if he could, a change in the diet of the world of which no living soul could foresee the consequences. That the habitual diet of a nation or a race affects both its physical and mental development is assuredly true, but neither science nor present experiments can tell us beforehand the result of any special food in the course of many generations. It is not from science that men have learned what they should eat and drink. It is from personal experience : the deliberate and persistent choice of mankind through immemorial ages in any article of food is *primâ facie* conclusive evidence of its utility, and this evidence in favour of the general use of alcohol as part of the daily diet comes before us in the strongest form that could possibly be conceived. The people who have used it least are savages, Hindoos, and Turks. The best portions of mankind have lived habitually, both in eating and drinking, on the most stimulating food that the kind earth yields us. The feeblest portions have always lived upon weaker food. And every nation that has done any good in the world, Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome, Christendom at large, all modern Europe, the United States, the British Colonies, all without exception have brought up their splendid races on a diet in which alcohol has formed a constant and essential part. Warm countries are covered with vines in order to make it. Cold countries grow barley and hops in similar quantity for the same purpose. Its production constitutes one of the very largest branches of civilised industry. The capital employed and the number of persons engaged in it almost exceed calculation. And a small sect, who after forty years of perfect freedom in discussion have not succeeded in persuading their fellow-countrymen to reduce their average consumption in the very least degree, are yet proposing to pass laws which shall actually prevent the use of a thing so prized and sought after for the last four thousand years !

That laws of such a nature might possibly be passed in England is too well known in the history of political intrigue. Their ultimate fate is also known ; but it is time for all men of sense to repudiate this folly—to tell these people that their ideas are childish, and to separate themselves entirely from acts directed to such an end.

When individuals, whatever their personal attainments, under-

take to tell us that the world would be better without alcohol, we must ask them what they really know about it, and on what grounds their judgment has been formed; and, in fact, we may tell them plainly that sound reasons for such a judgment cannot possibly exist till they can contrast the result of the world's past experience with another equally conclusive. The question of food is not a question of what is possible, but of what is best; and when science attempts to determine this, it finds itself very quickly among problems which it cannot solve, but which experience settles immediately. In this case, we know that the inferior races of the earth have been brought up without alcohol, and the superior races with it; and to say that the first have been right and the second wrong is to put fancy above experiment.

The statements concerning the physical effects of alcohol have very seldom been the result of any systematic experiments conducted with skill and care; but there are some exceptions, and I shall refer to an important one. Dr. E. A. Parkes some years ago undertook an examination of the effects of alcohol upon healthy men, and communicated the results to the Royal Society.* Various interesting questions were determined; but that which concerns us here is the general fact that no symptoms of injury of any kind were detected unless the quantity of alcohol taken had exceeded four ounces of proof spirit in a day, or unless the whole of this was taken at once. Now, four ounces a day is nine gallons a year; and the result of the investigation, as might indeed be expected, confirms the common experience of mankind. We have seen that in strictly sober consumption ten gallons a year is a common quantity, and that twelve gallons appears about the natural average. Dr. Parkes found, also, that when the quantity was doubled, distinct symptoms of injury were discovered, and this again is in accordance with experience: for twice the quantity, which is eighteen gallons a year, approaches that limit of twenty-two gallons which is found in the diet of high living; and though many men retain their health upon this diet, it is well known to be dangerous, and its effects have to be neutralised by change of air, exercise, bathing, and medicine.

Dr. Parkes' experiments were made in the true spirit of scientific inquiry, and he was careful to claim no more for their results than was strictly proved. They were tried on only a few individuals, and for short periods; and the actual permanent effects of any system of national diet can be known only as part of the national history. But the immediate physiological effects of alcohol on ordinary human beings were clearly ascertained, and the fact is

* *Royal Society Proceedings*, Nos. 120, 123, 136, 150.

demonstrated that, whether beneficial or not, four ounces in twenty-four hours is at least an innocuous quantity.

One other result was recorded which appears to have passed unnoticed, but which may point to the most valuable of the effects of alcohol. A man, kept at work during the experiments, stated that he thought he worked as well without the alcohol as with it, but that "it seemed to give him a kind of spirit which made him think he could do a great deal of work." That is to say, it did not increase his power of doing work, but it made him *more willing to do it*. This is the characteristic difference between the European races, who are the great consumers of alcohol, and the rest of the world.

The opponents of the total abstinence party write generally under a very natural but very mischievous restraint. They are afraid lest anything they say should encourage or seem to encourage intemperance in drinking, and an air of timid apology is thrown over their reasoning. It is time to speak in a more manly tone. The real extent of drunkenness, the actual evils caused by it, and the actual good resulting from any decrease in it, are all habitually exaggerated; but there are no two opinions as to the character of the vice, and the wish to get rid of it is universal. This ought to be understood as a matter of course, and it ought to be needless for any man to defend himself from any suspicion to the contrary.

My object has been to unmask an extraordinary deception, and to direct attention to some important facts and equally important fallacies concerning the consumption of alcohol. Total abstinence is like a patent medicine: it is advertised everywhere as a cure for most human ills, in glowing words and at a vast expense, and it attracts a constant stream of persons who try it for a time and abandon it speedily. The numbers who join the party are recorded with a flourish of trumpets. No one ever hears the number of those who leave. But that there is never any permanent increase in the proportion of persistent water-drinkers has been sufficiently proved by the unchanging nature of the consumption and its practical identity with that of the whole civilised world. The agitation will doubtless be continued, nor is there any reason to think that any remonstrance as to its method of procedure will have any effect on its professional advocates. It rests with the nation generally to consider the position into which it is being drawn, and to determine whether in the immediate future reason or fanaticism is to gain the upper hand.

The following table has been compiled from official returns, and gives at one view a complete history of the consumption of alcohol in the United Kingdom during the last half century.

TOTAL CONSUMPTION.—UNITED KINGDOM.

Years.	Population.	Used in Brewing.				
		British Spirits.	Foreign and Colonial Spirits.	Wine.	Malt.	Sugar.
		Gallons.	Gallons.	Gallons.	Bushels.	Pounds.
(Up to 1854 the Malt used for distilling in Scotland was included in the returns, and the quantity of Beer if estimated from the quantity of Malt is greater than the truth. Deduction is made for this.)						
1840	26,500,000					
1850	27,500,000					
1860	28,700,000					
1861	28,800,000	19,330,000	5,200,000	10,780,000	44,330,000	9,000,000
1862	29,200,000	18,880,000	5,100,000	9,800,000	39,710,000	10,000,000
1863	29,400,000	19,420,000	5,400,000	10,480,000	46,330,000	8,000,000
1864	29,600,000	20,380,000	6,250,000	11,450,000	47,000,000	4,000,000
1865	29,800,000	20,970,000	6,730,000	12,060,000	48,330,000	7,000,000
1866	30,000,000	22,140,000	7,800,000	13,320,000	49,000,000	27,000,000
1867	30,300,000	21,000,000	8,310,000	13,750,000	46,900,000	40,000,000
1868	30,600,000	21,100,000	8,360,000	15,150,000	48,000,000	41,000,000
1869	30,900,000	21,980,000	8,140,000	14,840,000	49,000,000	33,000,000
1870	31,200,000	22,960,000	8,400,000	15,160,000	51,200,000	32,000,000
1871	31,500,000	24,580,000	8,890,000	16,230,000	50,300,000	29,000,000
1872	31,800,000	27,550,000	9,030,000	16,870,000	55,400,000	47,000,000
1873	32,100,000	29,300,000	10,220,000	18,020,000	57,500,000	69,000,000
1874	32,400,000	29,820,000	10,630,000	17,280,000	58,000,000	97,000,000
1875	32,700,000	30,300,000	11,780,000	17,340,000	57,300,000	98,000,000
1876	33,100,000	29,800,000	11,500,000	18,670,000	58,800,000	93,000,000
1877	33,400,000	30,280,000	10,680,000	17,670,000	56,500,000	107,000,000
1878	33,800,000	28,930,000	10,430,000	16,270,000	56,400,000	124,000,000
1879	34,100,000	27,280,000	9,540,000	14,900,000	48,700,000	127,000,000
1880	34,500,000	28,800,000	8,470,000	15,850,000	Malt duty repealed	
1881	34,900,000	28,620,000	8,290,000	15,640,000	and levied on Beer	
1882	35,300,000	28,550,000	8,290,000	14,430,000	instead.	
1883	35,700,000	28,710,000	8,230,000	14,380,000		

From 1860 wine is taken as containing 30 per cent. of Alcohol (proof spirit) ; Beer, as containing two gals. of Alcohol per bushel of Malt or per 26 lbs. of

GALLONS OF ALCOHOL (PROOF SPIRIT) CONSUMED.

In Spirits.	In Wine.	In Beer.		Total Consumed.	Total per Head per Annum.	Report of Lords' Committee, 1879. Page 18.
		From Malt.	From Sugar			
0·97	0·10	3·0	nil.	{ Duties nearly uniform. Duties altered. }	4·07	{ 4·07 4·00 3·97 }
1·04	0·10	2·82	0·04		4·00	
0·93	0·10	2·90	0·04		3·97	
24,530,000	3,230,000	88,660,000	700,000	117,120,000	4·05	From the annual reports of Inland Revenue and Customs.
23,980,000	2,940,000	79,420,000	770,000	107,110,000	3·66	
24,820,000	3,140,000	92,660,000	610,000	121,230,000	4·12	
26,630,000	3,430,000	94,000,000	300,000	124,360,000	4·20	
27,700,000	3,620,000	96,660,000	540,000	128,520,000	4·31	
29,940,000	3,990,000	98,000,000	2,070,000	134,000,000	4·46	
29,310,000	4,120,000	93,800,000	3,070,000	130,300,000	4·30	
29,460,000	4,540,000	96,000,000	3,150,000	133,150,000	4·35	
30,120,000	4,450,000	98,000,000	2,540,000	135,110,000	4·37	
31,360,000	4,550,000	102,400,000	2,460,000	140,770,000	4·50	
33,470,000	4,870,000	100,600,000	2,230,000	141,170,000	4·48	
36,580,000	5,060,000	110,800,000	3,600,000	156,040,000	4·90	
39,520,000	5,400,000	115,000,000	5,300,000	165,220,000	5·14	
40,450,000	5,180,000	116,000,000	7,460,000	169,090,000	5·21	
42,080,000	5,200,000	114,600,000	7,540,000	169,420,000	5·18	
41,300,000	5,600,000	117,600,000	7,150,000	171,650,000	5·18	
40,960,000	5,300,000	113,000,000	8,220,000	167,480,000	5·00	
39,360,000	4,900,000	112,800,000	9,540,000	166,600,000	4·92	
36,820,000	4,470,000	97,400,000	9,770,000	148,460,000	4·35	
37,270,000	4,750,000	110,000,000	{ Total Beer. }	152,020,000	4·40	
36,910,000	4,690,000	107,800,000		149,400,000	4·28	
36,840,000	4,330,000	108,100,000		149,270,000	4·23	
36,940,000	4,310,000	107,300,000		148,550,000	4·16	