

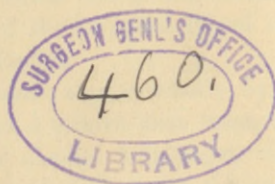
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VIEWS OF DR. A. BAER
ON
DRUNKENNESS

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[*Reprinted from* THE ANDOVER REVIEW]



W. H. DUNN (A.)

ALIAS OF DR. A. B. B. B.

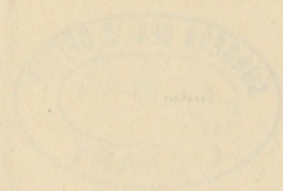
OR

DRUNKENNESS

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF THE DRUNKENNESS OF THE PEOPLE"

BY



VIEWS OF DR. A. BAER ON DRUNKENNESS.

THE simplest things are not the most simple when studied. The good and sincere total-abstinence advocate has a high moral aim in view, and shows his loyalty by his sacrificial spirit, and thinks his case so clear and simple that he never doubts it.

To insist on total abstinence from wine in France and beer in Germany is like objecting to the use of coffee and tea in England or America. The question of total abstinence is manifestly a local one; it is relative to the country, or even state, city, or town. To insist that drinking is either right or wrong in the absolute sense is an attempt to make the relative absolute, which is a contradiction. There are two distinct questions, the purely ethical and the purely scientific; and while they are separated for convenience, they are in reality together, for in the end the facts decide the "ought." The practical ethical question seems to turn on this point: to what extent the use of a thing should be prohibited when it is abused. Many ethical difficulties are not between good and evil, but between two evils, as to which is the lesser.

It will be interesting to follow one of the recent European investigators, Dr. A. Baer,¹ of the Imperial Board of Health, and Chief Prison Physician at Berlin.

In the past, wine was used almost wholly by the well-to-do classes, and beer was of such a nature that harm was out of the question. Excessive use of alcohol first began with the art of distillation, and with the obtaining of strong concentrated whiskey from corn, potatoes, and the like. With the universalizing of the use of whiskey, a series of phenomena have appeared, which are designated by the word "alcoholism."

The climate is an important factor. Drunkenness is more frequent in cold than in warm countries, and is more brutal and

¹ *Die Trunksucht und ihre Abwehr*, von Dr. A. Baer. Wien und Leipzig, 1890.

injurious in its effects as we go north. Yet this is not always true, for within the last ten years alcoholism has greatly decreased in Sweden, and increased in southern France and northern Italy. In tropical regions it is at present spreading fast, and with great injury, especially in newly-discovered lands. The accustoming one's self to the use of alcohol causes, sooner or later, a feeling of need for it; alcoholism is not, therefore, an inborn instinctive need, but an acquired one. Experience teaches that the longer this vice exists in a nation the greater the vice becomes. Persons who misuse alcoholic drinks, especially whiskey, often become sick and die sooner than the moderate drinkers and non-drinkers. When alcohol is taken habitually, and when misused, it injures the whole constitution: all tissues and organs, and especially the blood, suffer sooner or later a pathological change, with which susceptibility to disease is increased. Alcohol intoxication not only calls out diseases and disturbances that the non-drinker does not have, but it gives rise to a greater morbidity. It is an old experience that in epidemics of cholera, dysentery, and small-pox, drinkers are attacked in larger numbers, and with greater intensity, than non-drinkers. The bad constitution of the blood, the weakness of the changed heart-muscles, the sunken energy of the nervous functions, and the frequent accompanying disease of the brain, give a bad course to every disease, and a high mortality. The greater mortality of drinkers, as compared with non-drinkers, is shown by the figures of the "United Kingdom Temperance and General Provident Association," an insurance company founded since 1847:—

Year.	TOTAL ABSTAINERS.		GENERAL DIVISION.	
	Deaths Expected.	Actual Deaths.	Deaths Expected.	Actual Deaths.
1866-70	549	411	1008	944
1871-75	723	511	1268	1330
1876-80	933	651	1485	1480
1881-85	1179	835	1670	1530
1886-87	553	390	713	700
	3937	2798	6144	5984

In the "Total Abstainers' Division," 71 per cent. of the expected deaths occurred; in the "General Division," 97 per cent. Other companies give similar figures.

Sweden, which, up to recent times, was considered the most drunken land, owed this state of things principally to the excess of small saloons and to a very small tax on whiskey. The great decrease in the number of these saloons, in connection with an increase of the whiskey tax and with a temperance movement, has lessened drunkenness to a great extent. As the use of whiskey decreased, the number of sick and dead from alcoholism lessened also. In Norway, also, a bad legislation had a similar effect in spreading drunkenness. With the decrease of consumption of whiskey, that of beer increased; and no land has shown more improvement through the decrease of drunkenness than Norway. In Russia, the alcohol consumption is great in certain parts, but in Russia as a whole, it is not so considerable as one would expect from the amount of alcoholism. The results of the abuse of alcohol are in a great measure due to the climate and the social condition of the masses. Besides the raw climate, there is an insufficient nourishment, almost wholly vegetable, which drives to whiskey; which is not taken in small quantities, and regularly, as in other nations, but seldom, and in large quantities, on holidays (ninety-six yearly), in family celebrations, in market-days. Recently, alcoholism has decreased. In Holland, with its wet, foggy climate, and great number of seaports, there has always been a large consumption of alcohol, increased by the exceedingly large number of licensed places, and especially from the fact that whiskey is sold in many kinds of business (baker's, hairdresser's, etc.); as a consequence, there is a great increase of insanity through dipsomania and delirium tremens. In France, in former centuries, alcoholism was hardly known so long as wine was the alcoholic drink. But by the great exportation of wine, and by the recent appearance of oidium and phylloxera, and a like alcohol production from turnips, corn, meal, and potatoes, the alcohol consumption has gradually increased, and its consequent misuse has followed. The consumption of alcohol has more than trebled within fifty-five years. Where wine is least used, there is the greatest consumption of whiskey. The number of suicides is directly proportional to the increase in alcohol consumption. The number of fatal accidents due to alcohol has shown a constant increase.

In Italy, the consumption of alcohol is, on the whole, very small. It is larger in the northern provinces; more recently, it has increased as the consumption of wine has decreased. In Austria, it is a sad fact that the consumption of beer is decreasing, while that of whiskey is increasing. In Germany the consump-

tion of both beer and whiskey has been increasing. The use of beer, as compared with whiskey, varies very much in different provinces of Germany: in the east and northeast much whiskey and little beer; in the west and northwest, much of both; in the south, very little whiskey, but a great deal of beer (Bavaria); the increase of the consumption of whiskey is mainly due to its large production and very great cheapness. The consumption of alcoholic drinks within the last ten years, especially strong drinks, has been aided by the rapid increase in the number of saloons.

The relation between drunkenness and crime is not always a parallel one. Crime is not alone conditioned by the quantity or intensity of intemperance, for it owes its rise to many social conditions also; but all these unfavorable conditions are aided by drunkenness, and in this sense the abuse of alcohol increases crime very greatly. It can be said that with the increase of intemperance and of drinkers (by no means identical with the increase of alcoholism), the number of criminals and crime increases. Misuse of alcohol means poverty and pauperism, which are the main sources of crime. The injury of drunkenness to family life cannot be reckoned, but daily experience teaches that nothing disturbs the family life as much; the boys fall into idleness, slothfulness, and finally into crime; the girls become the booty of prostitution.

Some of the preventive means against intemperance are: (1.) Education of the children of the working-classes in an orderly, industrious, and economic life. (2.) Construction of healthy dwellings for the working-classes, so that an over-crowded room may no longer encourage the workingman to seek the saloon. (3.) Better food, so that he may not be tempted to make up for this want by a temporary supply of whiskey, which deceives him in causing him to suppose that he is gaining strength. (4.) Public coffee-houses, with home-like surroundings, papers to read, etc., etc. (5.) Formation of temperance societies, which in many ways warn others against the evils of intemperance. While the total-abstinence societies have done much good, yet a very practical organization exists in Switzerland which has three categories of members: (a) Those who are total abstainers; (b) those who take the pledge for a certain length of time; and (c) those who assist the society in a financial way. In this way a unified action can be gained, without losing the aid of those who are in favor of all efforts against the evil of drink, yet are not so rigid personally as to be total abstainers. (6.) The establishment of inebriate asylums, where the habitual drinker may be rescued.

The state should limit the consumption of whiskey to the smallest quantity possible, by (1) the lessening of production, and the imposing of a tax. From experience in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Switzerland, and France, this has lessened the so-called small house-distilleries, which have been one of the greatest causes of house-drunkenness; here whiskey is made for local consumption, and, on account of primitive methods, is of very bad quality. (2.) As to the extreme measure of prohibition, it cannot be carried out in thickly populated States, where the intemperance of the people is really great, and it is not necessary where drunkenness is not extensive among the people. (3.) A high tax on whiskey. The consumption of alcohol increases in proportion to the cheapness of whiskey. (4.) A moderate tax on the lighter alcoholic drinks. Beer is the greatest enemy of whiskey; it must, therefore, be of good quality, and not dear, but strong alcoholic beers should be taxed very high; coffee, tea, chocolate, and all necessary articles of food should be made cheap, and of good quality. (5.) A lessening of the number of licensed places. The need for whiskey is not a natural one, but artificial. To increase the saloons increases the number of drinkers. The whiskey trade does not follow the law of supply and demand, but rather that of demand and supply. The easier it is for every individual to find whiskey at all times, places, and prices, the more he will drink until it becomes his unconquerable vice. The lessening the number of licensed places, in connection with a high tax on whiskey or other strong drinks, is the best means that the state can employ for the control and repression of drunkenness, and it is in those lands in which political and industrial freedom is valued the most that the severest measures against the whiskey business are undertaken. (6.) Punishment of the saloon-keeper, when he sells to persons already drunk, or to minors not accompanied by relatives. (7.) Inspection of the liquor traffic, both as to place and time of sale. The sale of whiskey in groceries should be absolutely prohibited, because women with a tendency to drink are here very easy victims.

The repression of public drunkenness by punishment of the drinker has been tried in many countries, but with little success. Many things are forbidden in the interest of public order and well-being, and though not necessarily in themselves immoral, produce conditions which easily lead to immorality, or are otherwise dangerous to society. Yet it is rather cruel to permit saloons at every corner, and cheap whiskey, and then to punish drunkenness.

Measures against the habitual drinker are: (1.) Placing the drinker under guardianship. This course would not differ materially from doing the same in case of the spendthrift and the insane. It would lessen the chances of wife and family becoming paupers, and would not only be for the good of the drinker, but a warning to others. (2.) Placing in inebriate asylums. In the later stages of habitual drunkenness, there is a considerable number of cases of insanity, and the insanity takes the most different forms, as chronic mania, epileptic insanity, delusional insanity, general paralysis, and other phases of incurable insanity. In other cases, alcoholic excess is a symptom of a diseased nervous system, where there was insanity before drinking commenced. In the first stages of mania, melancholia, and general paralysis many are driven to the use of alcohol. Dipsomania is a form of insanity, and is periodic. Besides all these, there are a number of drinkers on the border line between health and disease, who, on account of their inherited mental weakness, and consequent irritableness, through overwork, are given to alcoholic excesses. There are a still greater number of habitual drinkers who are not insane, but, through long abuse of alcohol, cannot resist drinking; they reach such a degree of volitional and intellectual weakness, of irritability and stupidity, indifference to customs and position, and mistrust and carelessness towards their family, that it is a question whether they are not a common danger to society. The number of these persons among those suffering from chronic alcoholism is by far the greatest, and Gauster¹ says that they are the most dangerous, because their condition is latent, and attacks can appear suddenly. Should such drinkers be left to go free in life?

¹ *Jahrb. für Psych.* 1889, VIII., Heft III.