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WASHINGTONIAN HOME,

No. 41 Waltham Street, Boston.

In view of the fearful havoc made every year, all over the length and breadth of the land by intemperance, which both destroys its victims and robs society of their labor and their influence, there are few questions, which, by careful consideration of private and public interest, commend themselves to the christian philanthropist more than this:—"Can inebriety be cured?"

There was a time, when unanimously, the public voice, both of the learned and unlearned, answered in the negative, and but little effort was put forth to arrest the progress of this evil, or secure its victims from its deadly grasp. With the progress of the Temperance Cause, however, the opinion of those, who have taken pains to investigate the matter, has greatly changed, and thanks to the valuable help afforded by the light, shed upon the subject by science, inebriety is now looked upon, not as a vice only, but as a disease, which, with proper care and under the right treatment can be cured.

So mysterious, however, is the nature of that disease, so complex and obscure its character, involving as it does, abnormal conditions of both body and mind, and varying in every case, with individual temperament and characteristics, that it often happens, that even while its existence is admitted, yet less dependence is placed upon medical science for its cure, than upon new surroundings, new habits and new associations. Thus numbers of men—who on recovering from a long course of inebriety, have found themselves in a Temperance atmosphere, and disgusted with the past, have gratefully embraced the opportunities offered them, pledging themselves, attending Temperance meetings, and on every occasion renewing their pledge by new committals to Total Abstinence,—have seemed thoroughly reformed, or cured, although without any aid from the physician. But when, of necessity perhaps, their circumstances became different, and they were deprived of those outward helps to their strength of resolution, upon which, almost unconsciously, they have learned to depend, they soon wavered, and after a while, fell again and again.

It is evident, therefore, that however useful all those influences may be, as *mere outward helps*, something more is needed; for, even admitting inebriety to be merely a mental disease, a species of insanity, inherited or acquired, by some means of which the patient has no knowledge, yet, such are the peculiar relations of mind and body,—the abnormal condition of each acting on the other—that while the morbid developments of the physical system, which result from inebriety, will effectually paralyze all efforts at restraint, the continued indulgence, which the patient is powerless to deny himself, will daily aggravate those infirmities, which render resistance impossible. No effort for renewed self-control can be made, therefore, with a chance of success, without the help, so far as possible, of a healthy system, both mental and physical.

The first attention then, in any rational treatment, must be given to a searching and patient diagnosis of whatever malady may suggest itself, and the application of the proper remedial agents. Indeed, post mortem examinations have established the fact beyond the shadow of a doubt, that undue indulgence in drink, not only intensifies some already prevailing weakness, but produces lesions all through the physical system, so that in reality, there is not an organ of the body, that is not impaired in its functions, by this fatal habit.

The mistake is often made, that in order to cure the disease, the appetite for drink must be removed, hence the nostrums and the panaceas, so widely advertised, which profess to destroy the appetite. It is safe to say, however, that such assumed specifics are based, neither upon common sense, nor upon any number of well authenticated cures. It is not the appetite alone,—that is the morbid craving for stimulants—which constitutes the disease, but that craving, and infirmity of will in resistance, *combined with it*. Remove either, therefore, and a cure has been effected.

As for the appetite, whether it be idiopathic, as is sometimes the case, or induced by the habits of the past life, as it more often is, *it can never be removed by any human skill*. It may be weakened by a long lapse of time, but it will never die, so long as its possessor may live. The efforts of the physician must, therefore, be directed towards the other component part of the disease; in other words, the *will* must be stimulated and strengthened up to the point of total abstinence, by removing, through all the resources of medical and psychological skill, everything which has undermined it in the past, or may enfeeble it in the future. When the power of will once more asserts itself over appetite, or in other words, when the power to practice total abstinence is attained, it is of little practical importance, whether the appetite lives or dies.

The method of cure consists, therefore in applying the proper remedies to the physical condition, thus removing every weakening influence, which past indulgence might have over the will. Then, when the physical system is in the right condition, leaving the mind entirely free, let no man, however long he may have been a slave of appetite, imagine that he is the helpless victim of destiny; he can have power over himself, to repress the cravings of his appetite, for human will counts for something, not only in the modification of physical nature, but in the modification of a man's own nature. "But" to borrow, and apply to the subject on hand, the words of Prof. Geo. E. Day, M. D., of England, speaking on the prevention of insanity, "the will can only be developed by exercise; cannot be fashioned suddenly, and through reflection only; must be a slow and gradual growth, through action in relation to the circumstances of life. Just, in fact, as he gains by practice a particular power over the muscles of his body, associating them in action for the performance of complicated acts, which without previous training, he could no more perform than he could fly, rendering his muscles in this regard, habitually obedient to the dictates of his will, so can he, in like manner gain by practice, a particular power over the thoughts and feelings of his mind, associating them in action, for the definite accomplishment of a definite aim in life, and rendering them in this regard, habitually obedient to the dictates of the will, in the pursuit of its ideal." The right scientific advice to any one, who has suffered from the disease of inebriety, is then, as soon as he has regained his physical health, to strive before all things to develop his will, and by no means to believe that prayer,—if by prayer he means what is too often meant, viz: merely a formal or sentimental invocation for help from on high, and not the sincere and earnest expression of all the energies of the heart and mind—can compensate for lack of will in the conduct of life.

It is for the cure of inebriates by the aid of such means,—that is by restoring to the will its power over appetite,—that inebriate asylums have been established; and the results obtained are of such encouraging nature, as to prove beyond a doubt, the necessity of those institutions for the cure of the particular disease of inebriety, as there are hospitals for the cure of other diseases.

It was for Massachusetts, (the City of Boston, in 1858,) to attempt the first practical demonstration of the above theory, by establishing the Washingtonian Home, where all classes needing its aid were freely admitted, and care and attention bestowed on all alike. Such favorable results were attained as to call public attention to its peculiar work. The State came to its aid, and the Legislature appropriated the sum of three thousand (\$3,000) dollars, the first year, which enabled the institution to enlarge its work and increase its accommodations. Donations were made by individuals, and by other means the institution has been enabled to erect a convenient building, well adapted to the purpose of the institution. It is located at No. 41 Waltham street, a central part of the city.

The institution is now enabled to offer those who seek its benefits all necessary accommodations for the care and comfort of its patients. They will be placed under a proper medical treatment, and all the surroundings will be such as to lead ‘him who will’ to the walks of a higher life. The prices for board and treatment will be fixed in each case, taking into consideration the condition of each individual.

Application can be made in person or by letter to the Superintendent at any time.

ALBERT DAY, M. D.

Supt. and Physician.

May 1st, 1875.

