

*Significance - Alcohol*  
*Physical Effects*

— THE —

# DISEASE OF INEBRIETY

— AND ITS —

## SOCIAL SCIENCE RELATIONS.

By T. D. CROTHERS, M. D.,  
SUPERINTENDENT OF WALNUT LODGE, HARTFORD, CONN., EDITOR OF  
JOURNAL OF INEBRIETY, ETC.

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## THE DISEASE OF INEBRIETY AND ITS SOCIAL SCIENCE RELATIONS.

It is impossible to approach this subject from any side of exact science, without a feeling of awe, and a consciousness that we have come to a great "Dark Continent" which borders and crosses the path of human progress. The confusing theories, superstitious notions, and widely varying efforts to prevent and cure this evil, all deepen the impression that this is one of the greatest political and social science topics of the century. A view of the subject from this point, brings out many facts of great interest.

Inebriety, in any view, means bankruptcy of body and mind, and not only destruction of the individual, but of the race, in this and the next generation. The term includes a vast army of persons recruited from all classes, and changed from producers and law abiding citizens, to consumers and disorganizers of society. The number of inebriates has been variously estimated at from two to five hundred thousand in this country; which, in all probability, is an estimate approximately correct. The most prevalent theory which explains the presence of this vast army of inebriates is, that drunkenness is a vice and moral defect; a spiritual disorder that is curable by conversion, by the pledge, and by rousing up the will power. It is a curious fact, that this theory is a striking repetition of history in the efforts to treat insanity as a moral depravity and possession of the devil. The same spirit of the past would ascribe to all mystery a spiritual origin. A wider study of inebriety shows that it comes from conditions that are physical, not moral. Instead of the heart being deceitful and desperately wicked, it is a diseased and defective organism. Inebriety is closely allied with the rush of civilization, and becomes more prominent where this is most intense. Seen nearer, inebriety is clearly an expression of the inability of the brain force to keep pace with the revolutions of thought, and the changes of occupation and surroundings.

In the struggle of mind over matter, and brain over muscle, all intellectual development is exotic unless associated with physical growth along the line of natural laws. Hence, inebriety, insanity, and other nervous affections are marks of failure, and penalties



that we pay for ignorance and neglect. The fact is well established that inebriety, insanity, idiocy, pauperism and criminality, are interwoven together,—all branches of the same family, and all increasing. In a large proportion of cases, inebriety is the primary affection from which the others spring; if it were a moral disorder, it would diminish with the growth of morality and intelligence, but, notwithstanding the advance in these directions, it is rapidly increasing. The revenue returns for a quarter of a century bring out this fact clearly. In 1862, the revenue collected from liquors was six millions; in 1882, it had reached eighty-six millions, an increase far beyond that of the population; yet this does not indicate the enormous increase in sales by the local dealer, of which there are no records. Other evidence is found in the statistics of police courts and commitments to jail.

It is a fact of historical interest that inebriety was recognized as a disease long before insanity was thought to be other than spiritual madness. On old papyrus found in one of the tombs of Egypt, dating far back into antiquity, was found a clear recognition of the disease of inebriety. Herodotus wrote, four centuries before the Christian era, "that in drunkenness, both body and mind are sick." Diodorus, Plutarch, Chrysostom, and Ulpian, the Roman jurist, all clearly wrote of the disease of inebriety, before and after the beginning of the Christian era. From that time down, this view was mentioned here and there, until Dr. Rush, in 1790, brought it into great prominence.

By a strange shifting of events, insanity, which was supposed to be a spiritual affection until a comparatively recent date, is now studied as a physical disorder, while inebriety, which was regarded as a disease twenty centuries ago, is still invested with the superstition of a spiritual origin. At last, within a quarter of a century, it is beginning to be recognized in this country. But the same old battle is being waged about it which every new truth of science has had to fight.

The disease of inebriety may be termed suicidal insanity. It is an affection of the central nervous system, in which the dominant insane impulse is to use certain narcotic agents for their effect, irrespective of all consequences. The physiological and pathological state is one of exhaustion, for which the drug used, masks and intensifies every condition. In most cases, a state of defective brain exists before alcohol is first used, and this agent develops

the defect into full disease. The craving for alcohol is a false demand of the disordered governing centres which begins at a certain point, and marches down in a regular order of events. Like the switch on the main track of a railroad, it is the point of departure from which inebriety begins. This is the place where certain physical conditions act to turn the current of life into the side track, or switch off the train of health from the through line.

Heredity is one of the most prominent physical conditions, which becomes a switch point in the history of the case. It is estimated that over sixty per cent. of all inebriates inherit a defective brain and nerve organization. Consumption, insanity, pauperism, and many other effects, all spring from this source and follow each other. Thus, the parents who are inebriates or insane, will be followed by inebriate or insane children. Consumption, criminality or pauperism, will appear in the children of inebriates or insane. When any one of these affections are present in the parents, some other form of these disorders, or the same, may appear in the children. Moderate drinking always leaves an impress on the next generation in defective brain and nerve organization. In heredity from inebriety there is transmitted a special nerve defect which, from certain exciting causes, will always develop into inebriety, or one of its family group of disorders. In moderate drinking and inebriety there is an absolute certainty of the transmission of physical and mental defects which will break out in some form of disease, confirming the statement that the sins of the father are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

Another prominent switch point in the causation, is injury to the brain or spinal cord from blows, shock and disease. For instance, a blow on the head, an injury to the spinal cord, or a wound in any part of the body, or else hemorrhage or acute disease, which have left a profound impression on all the organs, and from which recovery is slow, is often followed by inebriety, beginning with a craving for spirits to relieve a sense of exhaustion. Another form of injury that is obscure, but equally prominent as a cause of inebriety, is mental shock,—that is, the effect of sudden grief, alarm, loss, sorrow, or any great emotional change, which has in some way deranged the balance of the system, bringing on obscure nerve paralysis, and a form of suffering that finds relief in the narcotic effect of alcohol. This series of causes are numerous



and have not attracted attention yet; but they explain clearly many mysterious cases, where previously temperate men have become inebriates after some great loss or suffering.

Under the general terms *strain* and *drain*, are found a great variety of causes that bring on inebriety, as seen in the army of overworked and underfed men who are strained mentally and physically, who live and work in the most unsanitary ways and surroundings. Alcohol taken as bitters, or in any form, is a most seductive narcotic, quieting the protest of the abused organs; exploding a train of disease, or developing one under a mask of restoration. These are only intimations of the vast chains of physical causes entering into all cases of inebriety, where the use of alcohol is only a symptom.

When the symptoms of inebriety are grouped and studied together, it is found that they are all alike, and follow a uniform progressive march from stage to stage. That is, notwithstanding all the obscurity, the halts and changes in the progress of the case, they all follow the same road, pass over the same bridges and reach the same terminus. This is not a matter of accident or chance, but the action of some physical laws that will be known and studied in the future.

Another fact seems to be indicated from a great variety of evidence, existing as yet merely in outline, but still sufficiently clear to be recognized: viz., that inebriety moves in waves and currents, or, like an epidemic, prevailing for a time with great activity, then dying away; both endemic and epidemic at times. The statistics of persons arrested for inebriety, extending over a long period, indicate certain years in which it prevailed to an alarming extent, then declined to a minimum. This tide-like movement is sometimes well defined, then obscure; but through it all there appears a progressive regularity that is significant of some great laws and forces. In 1879, Dr. Westphal read a paper before the Medical Society of Sweden, which showed from statistics that, in 1874, a maximum period or high tide of inebriety took place in that country. From these statistics he showed that this tidal movement had gone on progressively for a period of seventeen years, reaching its highest point in 1874, then receding in about the same ratio at which it had begun, very like the movements of the planets, passing the perihelion and starting back to the aphelion of their course. It appeared also that the mortality from

inebriety reached a high level or point at this time, and was also declining. Lunier, of Paris, in a study of delirium tremens from hospital statistics of France and Germany, found that a period of the highest mortality had occurred in 1876, and declined from that time. Dr. Morris, of Australia, found from statistics that an inebriate wave had reached a maximum point in 1862, and declined from that time to 1874, when the record was made. In different sections of England a similar wave was noted (from statistics) to occur about 1881, and from that time to decrease. In Massachusetts, the convictions for inebriety seemed to have risen to a high point in 1873 and in 1875, and to have declined from that time. Mr. Bourne read a paper before the English Statistical Society in 1882, on the *national expenditure upon alcohol*.

In a history of the progress of consumption of spirits from 1857 to 1881, it was found that from 1857 to 1876 there was a progressive increase of spirits used each year out of all proportion to the growth of population. This increase was regular, following some unknown law of progression up to its point of maximum intensity in 1876. From this time a similar progressive retrograde march has set in, and each year since a steady ebb backward is clear from statistics. This is confirmed from the revenues levied on grains, sugar and molasses, converted into spirits, which, in 1876, were larger than ever before, and has steadily declined from that time. This is an additional evidence of this wonderful cycle or drink orbit.

These are some of the hints of great unknown laws which govern the march of inebriety. If future studies should confirm these statements, they would explain the strange temperance revivals which spring up from the slightest causes and sweep over the country, dying away with the same mystery and suddenness. These wave-like temperance movements, which are felt in all societies, in churches and legislative halls, are more than the first rumblings of a great revolution of public sentiment. They are the reactions of inebriate waves, or the backward swing of the pulse of public opinion from some high tidal point of inebriety. The same principle runs through all nature,—the struggle and effort to adjust the lost balance of forces, to neutralize and remedy the wrong. The temperance movements are psychological and controlled by law, not accidents or chance conditions. This is a frontier line of scientific investigation, and who can tell what future studies in this field will reveal?



An exact study of all the facts concerning inebriety will show that it is preventable, and can be diminished or cured as positively as other afflictions. What can be done in a single instance is evidence of the possibility from a wider application of the same forces. In prevention, the man who inherits an inebriate and neurotic disposition, or a defective brain and nerve organization, can be taught to avoid all the conditions of life which favor the growth of this disorder; he can be taught to avoid alcohol, and every form of mental strain or drain. Children from inebriate, insane, or defective parents, require a special education, and if left to themselves and the present educational methods, will certainly be wrecked. It is a fact beyond all doubt, that the education of today, applied irrespective of the natural capacity of the person, and along unphysiological lines, literally destroys and unfits a large class for healthy and rational living. Often the ignorance and ambition of parents, who are educating and pushing their children into positions of life for which they are unfitted, is the direct cause of an early decay, of which inebriety, insanity, and kindred affections are the symptoms or expressions. It is the strain on the organism unfitted by nature or education to bear it, by which education, instead of developing and strengthening the body and mind, literally weakens and makes it more incompetent for the duties of life.

Thus it is clear that prevention through education, teaching the sources of danger, and the surroundings and conditions of life, by which it can be avoided, is a thoroughly rational and practical door of escape. In the same way we can prevent fevers by removing the causes and conditions from which they come. Inebriety can be diminished and controlled with the same certainty as small pox, or any contagious fever. The principle is the same, viz., to remove the causes, and quarantine the victim, in the best possible conditions for returning health. To take away alcohol is only to remove one factor; the physical conditions which call for it must also be removed. If the man is in health, and living a natural life, alcohol is never demanded; it is only when the vigor and quality of the brain are impaired that alcohol comes in. Here it is a question of physical causes, known and unknown, and no theological mystery. This social science problem (in which the prevention of the loss and suffering to society is concerned), opens a field of absorbing interest. The perfection and development of society

turns on the number of its diseased and defective members. Society is elevated when the number of these diseased persons are diminished, and is likewise lowered when this class increases. The miseries and burdens which come from these sources are always a source of peril to property, to law and order. These, as general principles, are truisms to this Association, and bring out more prominently the presence of inebriety. The various authorities, who have estimated the number of these defective classes that are traced directly to inebriety, have varied widely, thus clearly showing that the facts are not all in yet. These studies have placed inebriety as the active cause of from fifteen to fifty per cent. of all insanity, from thirty to eighty per cent. of all idiocy, from sixty to ninety per cent. of all pauperism, and from fifty to eighty-five per cent. of all crime. These are the highest and lowest estimates, and indicate, beyond question, that inebriety is one of the most prominent causes in the development of all these disorders. The mortality from this source is a further confirmation, and, no matter what the exact figures may be, its magnitude and prevalence come under the observation of every one. Every society and community furnish the most startling illustrations to the exact observer.

Here, we can realize the forces at work from which a large part of the burdens and miseries of society spring; burdens and losses that are not limited to this generation, but are perpetuated into the next. This vast army of inebriates and defective persons are the certain promise of a similar tide of misery, sorrow and loss in the future. The neglect to care for the inebriate, or to remove the conditions from which he springs, will be seen in the increasing number of criminals and paupers, and in demands for new insane asylums in the future; in the same way that neglect of all sanitary conditions about our homes, and of healthy living, today will surely react in disease and death tomorrow. Thus, the evils we deplore, and the burdens we are called to bear, are growing up in our midst, and the seeds of all these evils are cultivated and springing up as surely as the oak follows from the acorn. Science indicates clearly that inebriety is both a curable and a preventable disorder which should come under medical care and control as much as yellow fever or cholera. The injury to society from this source has been recognized for a long time, and legal efforts to diminish and control it, are matters of more than passing interest.



The law assumes the correctness of the theological theory of inebriety, which affirms it to be a vice, and one phase of a wicked and vicious heart. The remedy of course is punishment by fine and imprisonment; the practical result of which is to produce the very effects sought to be removed. It is the universal experience of judges and prison authorities, that the punishment (by fine and imprisonment) of inebriates, never cures or prevents drinking, but, on the contrary, weakens and enfeebles the victim, rendering him less curable. Very much in the same way, the punishment of insanity and witchcraft always made its victim worse. In 1879, Massachusetts punished by fine and imprisonment, 14,000 inebriates, and in New York, in 1880, 54,000 commitments for the same cause were recorded. If these were all cases of the first commitment for this cause, it is the universal testimony of the best judges that ninety-nine per cent. of all these cases would be returned to prison for the same reason, sooner or later, while over seventy per cent. will merge into paupers and criminals. Thus, the object of this treatment, (to cure the victim, and prevent others from falling in this way,) is not accomplished, but the very opposite conditions are increased and intensified. The startling fact is sustained by the best evidence, that the legal treatment of inebriates, actually builds up and strengthens this disorder, and makes its victims more thoroughly incurable. Some of the reasons for this will be apparent in a review of the facts. The inebriate is always debilitated, and suffers from impaired brain and nerve force. Alcohol has broken up all healthy action of the body. In the prison treatment, both the quality and quantity of the food are ill adapted to restore or build up the weakened organism. The hygienic influences of jails and prisons are wanting in every respect, and adverse to any general healthy growth of body and mind. The psychological and mental influences of the jails are of the worst possible character for health. The surroundings and the associates precipitate the victim into conditions of mental despair, from which recovery is difficult. The only compensation to the inebriate is the removal of alcohol, and the State, in doing this, most terribly unfits him, and makes him more and more helpless for the future.

Thus, while civilization is one of the sources from which inebriety is produced, the blundering effort to remove it by penal treatment is an actual factor to intensify and increase the disorder. The treatment of inebriety from a scientific point of view, has

passed the stage of experiment, and is supported by a great variety of experience and collateral evidence that is not disputed. Probably the largest class of inebriates in this country are without means of support, and may be termed the indigent and pauper class. They are more or less non-supporting, and becoming burdens on the community every year, and on the tax payer. This class should all come under legal recognition, and be committed to work-house hospitals, built for this purpose in the country, on large farms in the most favorable surroundings. These hospitals should be training schools, in which medical care, occupation, and physical and mental training could be applied for years, or until the inmates had so far recovered as to be able to become good citizens and self-supporting. Such hospitals should support themselves from the labor of their inmates, having been built from moneys received from a tax on the liquor dealers, or a license fund, independent of the tax payer or of State support.

These places would receive the class who are now sent to jail, and those who are neglected until they have passed into chronic stages, and become inmates of prisons and insane asylums. A very large proportion of these persons could be made to support themselves while under treatment, and, in some instances, do more. The hospitals would naturally divide into two classes. The first would receive the better or less chronic cases, and the second would have the incurables, and those whose recovery would be more or less doubtful. In one case, the surroundings and discipline would be more adapted for the special inmates than in the other, but the same general plan of treatment would be followed in each.

In the one, recoveries would follow, and a large class would be restored to society, and become producers; in the other, the cases would be housed, and made to take care of themselves, which would be an immense gain to society of itself. Private enterprise should be encouraged by legislation to provide small hospitals for the better class, and those who would not be willing to go to public asylums. Here, the commitments should be both forced and voluntary, and the restraint combined with the fullest appliances of science for the end to be accomplished, blending seclusion, good surroundings, and every possible means to build up and make recovery possible. Such places would attract the over-worked business and professional man, the clerk or the artisan



who is on the borders of inebriety, and who would find relief, rest, and help, long before it was too late. Without the publicity of a large asylum, they would always attract a class of persons, who need rest and quiet, in the best hygienic surroundings and conditions of living; also they would attract the benevolent, and receive large endowments, because founded on the principle of helping those who help themselves. All would be conducted on the same general plan, only varying in minor particulars to meet each class of cases.

The first step is to recognize the fact, that the inebriate, whether continuous or periodic, has, to a greater or less degree, forfeited his personal liberty, and become a public nuisance, and a great obstacle to all social progress and civilization. Also that he is suffering from a disease whose influence affects society, and every member of the community in which he lives, from which he can not recover without aid from other sources; making it absolutely necessary that he should be forced into quarantine on the same principle as a small-pox or yellow fever case. It is simply carrying out the highest principle of self-preservation, to take care of this class, and thus protect them and the community in which they live.

Most naturally the means to accomplish this should come from the license revenue, on the principle that every business should provide for the accidents and injuries which follow from it. Railroad companies and other corporations are required to pay damages for the accidents which follow their business, and this is conceded to be justice! but today the tax on the liquor traffic is used to support courts and jails, where the inebriate, by fines and imprisonment, is made worse and more incurable. Thus literally the business of selling spirits is increased, by the almost barbaric efforts of courts and jails, and every person so punished is made a permanent patron of that business. Against this all the teachings of science, and all practical study, utter loud protests. The practical success of Work-House hospitals for inebriates is demonstrated in every self-supporting jail and state prison in the country, where the obstacles are greater and the possibilities of accomplishing this end more remote; also in asylums of both insane and inebriate, and the many varied sanitariums and hospitals all over the country, where the capacity of self-support, and the curability of these cases are established facts. More than that, these hospitals

would relieve society of great burdens of suffering and loss; and the diminution of insanity by treating the inebriate would become a practical certainty, the extent of which we can have no conception of at present. It is impossible at this time to realize the practical results of housing and treating the inebriate, but there are positive indications that its effects would be felt in all circles. One of the great fountain heads of insanity, criminality and pauperism would be checked, and a new era would dawn in the evolution of society.

These are some of the teachings of science, which like lights along the shore, stand out clear and unmistakable above the fogs of ignorance and doubt. These are the great "head-lands" from which a knowledge of the laws and forces must begin, and lines along which we shall find out the sources and forces developing inebriety and the vast armies of the defective classes, and the means to prevent and cure them. The practical bearings of this subject are as yet in their infancy. We have not crossed the frontier lines of research. To the scientific man, the possibilities of restoring the inebriate and stamping out inebriety, to a large degree, is only limited by our want of knowledge of the laws and means to accomplish this end. We pause on the confines of this almost unknown realm of social science, and looking over into the darkness before us, are assured that the same eternal reign of law and order exists here, of cause and effect, of circumstances and conditions, of positive physical forces, the same which develop the typhoid fever case, the consumptive, the idiot, the pauper, the insane or the inebriate, obeying some unknown germ force, but always following a line of laws as fixed and eternal as that which governs the planets. Along this border line science is gathering her forces, and no one can predict what facts and discoveries will be made in the future.

My purpose would be unaccomplished did we not enter an earnest plea to lay aside all theories of religious teachers and reformers, and examine inebriety from the side of exact science. To demand the facts concerning the physical conditions and circumstances from which inebriety springs, and when these have been gathered from many sources, by many accurate observers, then we shall have data from which to determine the laws and means for cure and prevention. Like a problem concerning the stars above us, our only approach to its solution is along the line of



accurately observed facts; studied in this way, inebriety and its remedy will be no mystery.

A summary of some of the facts mentioned will bring out the subject more clearly. (1.) Inebriety as a disease, was noted in antiquity, and has ever been considered a form of insanity, marked by a progressive march or order of events, from certain physical causes, on to death.

(2.) The march of inebriety is in waves and currents controlled by some unknown law, clearly within the range of a wider knowledge to prevent and remedy.

(3.) The treatment of inebriety by penal methods is disastrous to the victim, actually intensifying and making the disorder more incurable.

(4.) Physical treatment and isolation in special work-house hospitals, where the best conditions of physical and mental health can be applied and maintained for a long time, give the largest promise of cure and permanent restoration, and are the means suggested by nature and scientific study.

(5.) As a question of economy, simply, it would be an immense gain to the tax-payer and society to thus quarantine these persons, and make them self-supporting. This is a fact whose practical character is well assured in many ways.

(6.) No progress can be expected in the solution of this problem until the subject is studied from a higher point as a question of fact, and along the line of great natural laws.







