



Our Foreign Letter.

ALCOHOLISM IN GERMANY.

EVERY year Germany consumes two thousand million marks worth of alcoholic beverages. The average for each individual is 6.44 litres of wine, 106.3 litres of beer, and 13.9 litres of brandy—a quantity valued at 40 marks (£2). As the average annual income of a German is 400 marks (£20), the tenth part of the entire income of the population is expended in drink.

Statistics of chronic cases of alcoholism treated in the Hospitals of Germany show a steady increase in numbers. Between 1886-1888 the census showed a rise from 24,497 to 32,833 cases. The census of 1885 proved that German lunatic asylums received 1,614 cases of delirium potatorum, and that 603 cases of suicide were traceable to the influence of alcohol.

Among the worst class of convicts, it was proved that more than half of all crimes were committed by people who were accustomed to excessive indulgence in alcohol. Thus, for example, 63.2 per cent. of cases of manslaughter were committed by drunkards. Prisoners confined for offences against social morality belonged in 77 per cent. of cases to the same class of maniacs.

In the Congress of the "German Association against the Abuse of Alcohol," in Düsseldorf (October, 1893), Landsrat Klausner addressed the meeting on the origin of drunkenness and crime, on which occasion he quoted the startling results obtained by an English Medical Commissioner in 1874. This gentleman was commissioned by Government to investigate the connection of drunkenness and crime. In one prison he found six relations. This caused him to follow up the ancestry of so strikingly criminal a family. He traced these related prisoners to a drunken and vagabond woman, born in 1740, and still living at the commencement of this century. He was able to discover her direct descendants, to the number of 834. Of these 387 were vagabonds, beggars, or inhabitants of the workhouse; 76 were criminals, among whom were seven murderers. The number of the years different members of this family had spent in prison gave an added result of 116. For 734 years they had been the recipients of national support. In the fourth generation nearly all the women were morally depraved, while the men were criminals. The representative of the fifth generation was seven years old. He was in the workhouse. "It was calculated," said Landsrat Klausner, "that this family had cost the State five million marks."

Speaking on the same subject, Dr. Baer (of Berlin) remarks: "When I contemplate the vastness of 'alcohol-misery' that I have seen pass before my

eyes in the twenty years of my present profession, and reflect on the indifference and frivolity with which the entire question is treated—even in Parliament—I am inclined to doubt the sanity and solidity of our society."

"There are more asylums for the cure of drunkenness in Germany," says Herr Schneider, an earnest student of social conditions, "than in all the rest of Europe put together, and yet ten times that number would be too small to receive those who might be termed drunkards, whose numbers Dr. Stark estimates at 303,000."

Three great associations combat the spread of alcoholism in Germany: the "Good Templars"—an order organised on masonic principles—the "Society of the Blue Cross," and the "German Association against the Abuse of Alcoholic Drinks." It is generally known that the order of the "Good Templars" is of American origin, and was founded in 1852. Since then it has spread over a considerable part of Europe. In 1892 the census of German members gave a result of about 2,000. Most of these belonged to the lower classes of society. The somewhat dramatic ritual and affectation of secrecy peculiar to the "Good Templars" order renders it unpopular with many otherwise staunch upholders of the temperance movement, while the severity of its regulations on total abstinence are keenly suggestive of reaction.

The "Society of the Blue Cross" requires temperance of its members, exacting total abstinence only in cases of severe temptation, or moral weakness. In the census of 1892 this society numbered 1,320 German members. In Switzerland it claimed no less than 8,000, while its "Handbook on the Temperance Question" is employed in 2,000 schools. In Belgium and other countries the "Blue Cross" has numerous juvenile branches, for the government of which the teachers of public schools are responsible.

The "German Association against the Abuse of Alcoholic Beverages" (formed 1883) counts many social leaders among its members. Its leader, Oberbürgermeister Struckmann-Hildesheim is unwearied in his endeavours towards enlisting the sympathies of Government in the temperance movement.

Numerous lesser societies, organised on independent principles, follow more or less usefully in the wake of these three pioneer associations.

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