

Professional Review.

THE DRINK PROBLEM.

An interesting book, which is edited by Dr. T. N. Kelynaek, M.R.C.P., is "The Drink Problem, in its Medico-Sociological Aspects," published by Messrs. Methuen, 36, Essex Street, Strand, W.C., price 7s. 6d.

The drink problem is one which we have always with us, and it has been dealt with from many aspects. First from the humanitarian standpoint. All honour to many men and women, clerical and lay, some of the noblest of their sex, who, while the medical profession, always conservative, threw the weight of their professional authority in favour of the liberal use of alcohol, and the clergy as a body stood aloof from the temperance movement, or asserted that total abstinence was "contrary to the Bible," dared to brave public opinion, and, seeing the misery, the degradation, and the crime caused by the general and excessive use of stimulants, were not afraid to endure scorn and ridicule by declaring themselves pledged to abstain from all intoxicating drinks in order that they might help men and women—who had gone down into the depths of degradation by an over-indulgence in drink—to regain the position they had lost, to become once more useful members of the community, and to save their souls alive. Such work, albeit it was unscientific, had the very greatest value as a factor in social well being.

The book under consideration shows the present position of medical opinion, and includes a series of most interesting scientific articles, from different standpoints, by medical experts of high repute.

Dr. Kelynaek contributes the introductory chapter, in which he says:—

"The drink problem rightly considered is essentially a medico-sociological one. It is but a part of that wider field of medical and sociological inquiry which deals with the bodily and mental well-being of the human unit, and the happiness and efficiency of the units when gathered into domestic, municipal, and national groups.

"The scientific spirit, which is providing motive power to present-day movements for the development and protection of society, and the elevation and restoration of the individual, demands that the evil which men term intemperance shall be investigated according to the rules of modern research, and shall be submitted to the stringent tests of accurate inquiry. . . .

"The drink problem is of great antiquity. It is only in comparatively recent times that there has been anything like a clear recognition of the importance and necessity of endeavouring to illumine its dark corners by the light of science. The widespread calamity resulting from intemperance long since stirred the emotions and energised the activities of thoughtful and patriotic enthusiasts both in this country and America. Amidst the apathy, ignorance, and obstruction of the many, the reforming few may well be pardoned for initiating and carrying on

an agitation which was not devoid of extravagances and fanatic zeal, and adopting educative and advocating legislative measures which to-day we have no difficulty in designating as crude and lacking scientific precision."

The fourteen chapters constitute a valuable contribution to medical literature on the subject, and the book must be of extreme interest to all who concern themselves with this great social problem. Each chapter has its own special interest. Dr. Harry Campbell deals with "The Evolution of the Alcoholic"; Dr. Sims Woodhead with the "Pathology of Alcoholism"; Dr. T. Claye Shaw with "The Psychology of the Alcoholic"; Dr. Theo. B. Hyslop with "Alcoholism and Mental Disease"; Dr. Stanley B. Atkinson with "Medico-Legal Relations of Alcoholism," Dr. Arthur Newsholme with "Alcohol and Public Health"; Dr. Mary Scharlieb with "Alcoholism in Relation to Women and Children"; Dr. William C. Sullivan with "The Criminology of Alcoholism"; Dr. Ralph H. Crowley with "Alcoholism and Pauperism"; Dr. E. Claude Taylor with "The Teaching of Temperance"; Dr. Robert Jones with "Alcohol and National Deterioration," and Dr. V. H. Rutherford, M.P., with "Alcohol and Legislation," while the Editor in a final chapter on "The Arrest of Alcoholism," deals with the "Solution of the Drink Problem."

It is impossible in the limits of a short review to indicate even briefly the many interesting points raised in this book. Perhaps one of the most important chapters is that by Dr. Rutherford, M.P. In connection with legislation, he shows that the principal standpoints are the educational, ameliorative, restrictive, and preventive. The educational he considers perhaps the most important because "laws which have not the sanction of the majority of a free and informed people are deprived of much of their efficacy."

"Conditions of labour cannot," says Dr. Rutherford, "be ignored in the discussion of intemperance. The longer the hours of employment, the more monotonous and precarious the work, the closer and more poisonous the atmosphere, the smaller the wages, and the keener the struggle for existence, the greater will be the inducement to drink. Whatever tends to reduce the standard of life, and whatever injures man's self-respect and sense of independence must tend to increase the craving for artificial excitement and alcoholic intoxication."

Dr. Kelynaek, dealing with "The Scientific Basis of Temperance Reform," says: "The principles of hygiene as applied to the maintenance of healthy life, are now being extended to the management of those who are suffering from a departure from the normal. Such a line of therapeutic action, together with the results of modern experiment and recent experience, regarding the pharmacological and pathological action of alcohol is doing much to restrict the employment of alcohol as a desirable and safe medicament."

The book is one which should be studied by all who are interested in the national welfare.

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