day? Two, at all events, I will name; and I think it will be difficult to find any others to which more or greater evils can be traced as sources—I allude to drunkenness and syphilis.

And now, how do we, as a profession, stand with respect to these two scourges? Can we honestly lay claim to having done our best towards either prevention or cure in either of these matters? The mind of the whole nation is at last fairly roused on both subjects; the public is discussing them freely; our statesmen are canvassing them eagerly; our legislators are actively engaged in endeavouring, as far as is possible, to bring the machinery of the law to bear upon both; for the feeling is abroad—widely spread through the length and breadth of the land—that to these two evils may be attributed a large share, at all events, of our diseases, of our accidents, and of the deterioration of our national health and vigour.

To us, as a profession, all parties appeal both for information and for help; and in the former case, though I regret to have to say it, yet truth compels me to admit it, that we are looked to not only as helpers and advisers, but, in many cases, even as primary offenders. Nothing, I take it, can be more true than the assertion that men cannot be made sober by Act of Parliament; but is it not equally true that both men and women may be made drunken, and that only too easily, by misdirected and unwise advice? In how many of the cases of the intemperate is the evil primarily laid to the charge of the doctor? "I should never have taken to the use of wine or spirits if I had not been advised, in the first instance, by my medical man," is the excuse that has many and many a time been made to me when I have felt it my duty to speak plainly to unhappy patients on this subject; and though I know that very often this is only an excuse, yet I cannot hide from myself the fact that, in many cases, there is a grain of truth in the assertion. Many of us have been in times past, and some are still, too much in the habit both of recklessly prescribing stimulants and of fostering the idea that they are an essential part of our aliment. It is against this habit that I would make an earnest appeal. That they are often of the greatest value, and to be replaced by no other remedies, I am quite ready to admit; that without their aid, many a case now saved would sink hopelessly away, we can none of us deny. Ammonia, æther, and such like substitutes, are very well sometimes, and sometimes are of even greater value than either wine or brandy; but to say that they can always take the place of these latter, is a doctrine against which all experience is emphatic, and which, I am sure, will come readily home to every one of us.

Gentlemen, I am no teetotaler, and I do not desire to speak from any teetotal platform; but I am anxious, if I can do so without impropriety, both to speak a word of wholesome warning, and also to save a class of remedies, invaluable when rightly used, from the consequences of careless administration and abuse. Let us take the subject to heart, I entreat you; and especially in the cases of the young and of females, let the prescription of alcohol in any form be a matter of as serious consideration as that of opium or of strychnia, or of any other deadly poison; and when the necessity for their use has passed away, let their discontinuance be as carefully prescribed. The habit of indulgence, when once established, cannot easily be checked; and I would fain wipe away from the hands of the profession the stain of its careless initiation. If, after this course has been adopted, a patient wilfully drifts into their abuse, the fault will clearly be his own, not ours.

And lastly, gentlemen, of syphilis. Of how many frightful maladies would the world be rid of could we but put our heel on this hydra-headed monster and stamp it out of existence? How many hundreds—aye, thousands—of sufferers would learn to bless our endeavours if they only knew to what source rightly to attribute the origination of their ailments? How many of these ailments baffle our utmost skill? How many existences are rendered miserable from the cradle to the grave? and yet how possible is it for us to stretch out a helping hand in this direction? By some far-seeing philanthropists the Contagious Diseases Acts were first promulgated; and though a cry of horror has been raised concerning them throughout the land, it is raised simply in ignorance.

I know that I am speaking to an audience of gentlemen whose opinions may differ somewhat upon this much-vexed question; but I feel that the subject is one of such vital importance that I should be morally guilty if I did not speak out plainly upon it. The cry of horror and of shame that has swelled up throughout the land with respect to these Acts has been a source of infinite satisfaction to me, for it has shown me that the heart of the nation is right in the matters of morality and modesty, and that in this old England of ours the purity of our women is still, as it has ever been, one of the great bulwarks of the nation; but it is a cry raised in ignorance, though fostered from most worthy motives. God forbid that I should seek to further any step that should

tend to lessen the purity of pure English women; but you and I know only too well how deeply changed is the nature of those to whom, and to whom alone, these Acts can apply, and how infinitely below all ordinary standards they have fallen. Surely she who can make prostitution her occupation is beyond the pale of everything but reclamation; and for the sake of humanity, both living and as yet unborn, we are, in my opinion, bound by an inflexible chain of duty to endeavour by every means in our power to check the spread of the illimitable evil which prostitution is capable of inflicting.

They who hold the opinion that the evils which mankind bring upon themselves by their sin should be justly borne by themselves as their punishment, are undoubtedly right; but they have no knowledge, they can have no knowledge, of the dire ramifications of the evil it is sought to check. They forget that the effects of the sins of the father are to be carried by even the third and fourth generations of the children; and it is on behalf of these, the purely innocent, the yet unborn sufferers, that we are pledged to fight. How common to every one of us is the picture of little children brought into the world to pass through a long and weary martyrdom of miserable life; with eyes never destined to behold the glory of God's light; brains never destined to raise them above the level of the brutes; alimentary canals unable to digest the simplest food; bones too rotten ever even to assume the ordinary proportions of health; and bodies defaced, deformed, and crippled, till, instead of bearing the image of the Creator, they become almost too hideous even for the creature to behold.

It is in behalf of such as these that I venture to ask you to turn your thoughts in the direction of syphilis to-day; and I feel sure that, however widely we may differ in our opinions as to the advisability of the remedy applied, we should all be only too thankful if we could venture to hope that, in the end, the disease might perchance be eradicated.

TREATMENT OF ULCERS OF THE LEG.

By W. E. C. NOURSE, F.R.C.S., Brighton.

HAVING treated nearly five hundred cases of ulcerated legs in the outpatient room during the last thirteen years, perhaps I may be allowed to say a word on the question of success. The results have been neither unsatisfactory nor disheartening; the failures few—perhaps ten or fifteen out of the whole number. The cases comprise varicose ulcers, chronic indolent ulcers, eczematous ulcers, irritable ulcers of all sorts (in some cases most acutely painful), inflamed ulcers, sloughing ulcers, and a variety of others depending on struma, syphilis, heart-disease, œdema from Bright's disease or other cause, low vitality from insufficient food and bad air; or the remains of burns, wounds, bruises, abscesses, etc. Scarcely any of the patients have been confined to bed during treatment, and then only for a few days at a time, to allow poulticing or frequent wetting with lotion. Almost all of them have gone about as usual and followed their ordinary avocations, in many instances doing even laborious work. The plan of treatment has been the application of uniform pressure with strapping, bandages, etc.; the sparing use of ointments or lotions, of stimulants to the ulcers, and of internal medicines, and the unsparing use of pains and trouble to do the work properly; the non-disturbance of the healing process by frequent dressings, the wounds being only uncovered once, or at most twice, a week; the recognition of a low vitality as a common cause in most of these cases involving more or less destruction of tissue; and the consequent strict avoidance of mercury, strong or frequent cathartics, and all forms of depressing medicine, and the allowing to the patient his ordinary diet and mode of living, cutting off only whatever seemed positively excessive or injurious, and the removal from the limb of all ligatures, or anything likely to obstruct the circulation, also of irritant or injurious applications. Among the latter must be classed poultices wrongly applied, the unguentum resinæ, and various homely and more or less dirty plaisters, the mere withdrawal of which was a great step towards cure. Surgeons might lessen the mischief done by such things, as also by quack medicines, by recommending to people some harmless applications and remedies for home use in case of need. Some of the legs had been ulcerated for four, six, eight, or even ten years, without healing; others had been healed and treated in different ways, and had broken out again. Some were in a very offensive condition; some with deep, or extensive, or very numerous, ulcers; some with prominent crops of exuberant granulations; many with none at all. Exuberant granulations were scarcely ever touched with caustic; their presence expedited the cure; nor were cauterising, paring, incisions, or other painful proceedings or applications employed. Relief from pain and distress, with increasing power of using the leg, were gene-

rally felt after the first two dressings; in the more obstinate cases, after three or four. In no instance did any bad consequence arise from the healing of the ulcer. A certain number of the patients presented themselves after one, two, or three years, with a fresh sore, often brought on by the omission of precautions, by privation, or hard work; others may have gone elsewhere for treatment: but in most of the cases, cure was permanent.

BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL.

SATURDAY, JUNE 29TH, 1872.

HABITUAL DRUNKARDS.

THE Select Committee appointed to inquire into the best plan for the control and management of habitual drunkards have considered the matters referred to them, and have agreed to the following Report.

That there is entire concurrence of all the witnesses in the absolute inadequacy of existing laws to check drunkenness, whether casual or constant; rendering it desirable that fresh legislation on the subject should take place, and that the laws should be made more simple, uniform, and stringent.

This is the more requisite, as there is much evidence to show that in large towns and populous districts the great evil of drunkenness is on the increase, attributed in some measure to the higher wages and shortened hours of labour. This does not appear to be equally true of agricultural districts and populations.

That small fines and short imprisonments are proved to be useless, as well by the testimony of competent witnesses as by the fact that the same individual is convicted over and over again, to even more than a hundred times.

That drunkenness is the prolific parent of crime, disease, and poverty, has received much additional confirmation. It is in evidence that a large proportion of the criminals passing through our gaols attributed their fall to drink, one witness having stated the amount as equal to seventy-five per cent. in a particular gaol; about twenty per cent. of the insanity recorded in Great Britain, and about fourteen per cent. in the United States of America, are placed to the same cause; and nearly one-half of the idiots in the latter country are stated to be the offspring of intemperate parents.

That occasional drunkenness may, and very frequently does, become confirmed and habitual, and soon passes into the condition of a disease uncontrollable by the individual, unless, indeed, some extraneous influence, either punitive or curative, is brought into play.

That self-control is suspended or annihilated; moral obligations are disregarded; the decencies of private and the duties of public life are alike set at naught; and individuals obey only an overwhelming craving for stimulants, to which everything is sacrificed.

That this is confined to no class, condition, or sex, and hardly to any age.

That the moderate use of alcoholic liquors is unattended by any bad effects, while there is much to prove that excess in ardent spirits is far more deleterious than similar excess in wine or beer. There are also strong reasons for believing that some considerable amount of helpless drunkenness and frenzied intoxication is due to adulteration, or to the use of new spirits containing substances of the nature of ethers.

That it is in evidence that there is a very large amount of drunkenness among all classes and both sexes, which never becomes public, or is dealt with by the authorities, but which is probably even a more fertile source of misery, poverty, and degradation, than that which comes before the police-courts; for this, no legal remedy exists, and, without further legislation, it must go on unchecked. Legislation in such cases was strongly advocated by all the witnesses before the committee.

That the absence of all power to check the downward course of a drunkard, and the urgent necessity of providing it, has been dwelt upon by nearly every witness; and the legal control of an habitual inebriate, either in a reformatory or in a private dwelling, is recommended, in the belief that many cases of death resulting from intoxication, including suicides and homicides, may thus be prevented.

That this power is obtained easily, at a moderate cost, and free from the danger of abuse and undue infringement of personal liberty, has been stated in evidence, by quotations from American and Canadian statutes, as well as by the witnesses from America.

That, though the habit of frequent or prolonged intoxication leads in the end to insanity, yet there is a difference between the paroxysm of

intoxication and insanity proper, so distinct as to forbid the plea, in bar of punishment, that an offence was committed while drunk; still, placing inebriates in lunatic asylums (except for a very brief period—*e.g.*, during a paroxysm of *delirium tremens*) is improper, and should not be allowed. The presence of recovering inebriates in an ordinary hospital for the insane, is prejudicial to the other inmates in various important particulars, while the discipline and diet needed for the insane are unsuitable for the convalescing inebriate.

That the question of providing more efficient laws against initial or casual drunkenness arises so naturally out of this inquiry, that suggestions to remedy the avowed inadequacy of the law are here offered.

That the fine of five shillings imposed by the 4th and 21st of James I, was a much heavier fine at the time it was enacted than it is now, and it might be expedient to raise it to a sum not exceeding forty shillings. The fine should be recorded against the individual in a Drunkards' Register, and be made progressive; and to the fine should be added the costs often incurred by the police or the public in conveying the offender to the station. This should apply to cases of common street-drunkenness, usually classed as "drunk and incapable."

That, after three convictions within twelve months, the magistrates should be empowered to require the offender to find a surety or sureties for sobriety and good conduct for a fixed period, and in default of the same, or in case the surety is forfeited by a fresh offence, then to sentence the offender to a considerable period of detention in an industrial reformatory for inebriates, as hereafter recommended. The system of sureties has been applied with excellent results in Sheffield; and though it appears practicable under the common law, it would be well to repeal the old statutes and enact new.

There is good reason for believing that such a measure would not only have much restrictive influence on the drunkard, but would bring the efforts of relatives and friends, and especially of the surety, into active exercise.

That all fines and convictions should be registered and recorded in the Drunkards' Register, and the Court of Petty Sessions should have the power of estreating the recognisances when forfeited, without being obliged to resort to the present slow and expensive mode of recovery.

That, when an offender has been called upon to find sureties, and has been unable to do so, or when by a fresh offence he has forfeited them, or when he has been called upon a second time to find sureties, he should be deemed and registered as an "habitual drunkard", and as such may be sent to an industrial inebriate reformatory, by magistrate's order, for a term of not less than three nor more than twelve months, the time to be governed by the frequency of the offence.

That, when acts of violence or other offences are superadded to the drunkenness, the ordinary punishment awarded by law to those offences should be carried out; and if the offender comes under the definition of an habitual drunkard, a committal to a reformatory may form part of the sentence, or it may be left to the discretion of the magistrate to send him at once to an inebriate reformatory.

That it is in evidence as well from those who have conducted and are still conducting reformatories for inebriates in Great Britain, as by those who are managers of similar institutions in America, that "sanatoria", or inebriate reformatories, are producing considerable good in effecting amendment and cures in those who have been treated in them.

The average number of cures is stated to be from thirty-three to forty per cent. of the admissions, this percentage being based upon subsequent inquiry, from which the cures appear to be as complete and permanent as in any other form of disease, mental or physical. The average time occupied in effecting these cures is stated at from twelve to sixteen weeks in America. For the English institutions, the period has been longer.

That the proportion of cures is not larger, is attributed by all the witnesses to a lack of power to induce or to compel the patient to submit to treatment for a longer period; and that power is asked for by every one who has had, or still has, charge of these institutions. Without such a power, it appears that the results must be imperfect, disappointing, and inadequate to the efforts made.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

The recommendations of the Committee are:

1. *Definition.*—That sanatoria or reformatories for those who, "notwithstanding the plainest considerations of health, interest, and duty, are given over to habits of intemperance, so as to render them unable to control themselves, and incapable of managing their own affairs," or such as to render them in any way dangerous to themselves or others", should be provided.

2. These should be divided into Classes A and B.

A. For those who are able, out of their own resources, or out of those of their relations, to pay for the cost of their residence therein. These, whether promoted by private enterprise or by associations, can be profitably and successfully conducted.