The Inebriate as a Producer of Dependents.

BY

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen—I have not dignified my part of the work by writing for you a paper, but I have for my guidance made a few notes. From the program I see I am to speak about Inebriates as Defectives. The inebriate in a certain sense is a defective, but I have deemed it proper to treat the subject on a different line and to speak about—for a few minutes—the inebriate as a dependent and as a causal factor in placing upon the State the responsibility of caring for a large number of dependents.

Before going into the discussion of this subject I would like to be permitted to follow the lines of the Bishop or the example of Bishop Lines and have the privilege of an exhorter, so that I may have the right to "branch."

We read in some of the more or less sensational newspaper articles, usually headed Trenton, about the enormous cost of the institution over which it is my honor to preside in a medical way. These articles are so peculiarly worded one is led to conclude that a fabulous amount of money is drawn from the State Treasury every year to be used at the State Hospital for the Insane at Morris Plains.

Between 1870 and August 17, 1876, the State appropriated, through its Legislatures, $2,511,000, which was the cost of the buildings, their equipment and the lands upon which they are

situated. From these misleading newspaper statements, minds which do not discount the sensational aspect of such articles are led to believe that $2,511,000 is abstracted from the State treasury annually. I want to assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that such is not the fact. In the hills of Morris there is situated a magnificent building, well adapted to the caring for that class of people who are unable to care for themselves or to intelligently raise up their hands for relief, for they can boast of no direct political influence and must depend on the magnanimity of their brethren upon whom so sad an affliction as an unbalanced mind has not fallen. I say that in this beautiful part of Morris county is nestled a grand structure, attractive in architecture, and it stands there as a monument to the State of New Jersey and to her legislators and philanthropists who worked arduously for for its construction, and it is a permanent honor to those who still strive to give it a just and humane maintenance and support. I want further to say about this institution that it represents a great and noble principle of charity; that the appropriations which were made by the Legislatures between 1870 and 1876 were used at a period when building materials were much more expensive and wages for workmen were much higher than to-day. It may be well to remind you that there is not now in that institution one officer who had any part or responsibility in the construction of the buildings or took any part in securing moneys or appropriations to be used for their construction. I would to God I could justly claim a right to a small share of the honor. I would be proud to have taken an active part in rearing that monument; for it is in truth a noble monument to the cause of charity and to the philanthropic principles which more than thirty years ago moved the true statesmen and students of charity to action.

It may be said that "they builded wiser than they knew." But when we look around to offer them the hand of congratulation or take off our hats in veneration to their devotion to the cause of charity, we find that they have been called to reap the reward such as is accorded to the faithful; and we then, with thoughts of great men and noble deeds, give but a passing notice to superficial newspaper criticisms which do not bear analysis, and cast them aside as misdirected energy. The walls of that great institution which have withstood thirty years of the winter's blasts and the heat of the summer's suns still stand and will continue to remain when generation after generation of admirers and critics have passed away; and even then supporting the good work, which I believe is born of God, there will be found the best, the purest and the noblest citizens of the Commonwealth.

I am constrained to say to you a few words relative to the management of the institution referred to, and to remind you that it is a work of great magnitude; that it is carried on and regulated under well fixed principles of discipline and open to the inspection and criticism of the public at all times. But to me it seems to be simply justice that those people who elect to criticise a public charity of such proportions and importance should at least take upon themselves the burden of once in a while availing themselves of reasonable opportunities and facilities in order to obtain the facts of the subject at issue and give to themselves what may be an unusual sensation arising from the writing of a criticism which will bear analysis and will be found to be in accordance with the facts.

In saying a word in behalf of the management of this work I am conscious of having placed myself in the position of being told that I am throwing carnations at myself and other officers engaged in looking after this important State charity. That,

however, is of little consequence if I may be successful in impressing upon this representative body of intelligent men and women the fact that while The New Jersey State Hospital at Morris Plains cost more than two and a half million dollars before a patient was admitted into it, that it does not cost that much annually, and that newspaper articles which seem to carry an intimation with them that the amount which it cost to build it is abstracted annually from the State's treasury just before the Legislature meets, has no foundation in fact.

In these articles we frequently read about the cost of maintenance exceeding that of other institutions. This, of course, refers to indigent patients, as the public have little or nothing to do with the cost of maintenance of private patients. The truth of the matter may be tersely shown by reviewing the laws governing maintenance, which set forth that every public institution for the insane, State or county, gets exactly the same per capita aid from the State's treasury. That is to say, that both the State hospitals and all the county institutions for the insane receive from the State treasury $2 per patient per week. This is regulated by statute and cannot be changed or modified by the managers or other officers upon whom rests the management and control of these institutions.

There are in The New Jersey State Hospital at Morris Plains about one thousand six hundred and fifty patients, and into every room occupied by these patients the sunlight comes during a large part of every day; and these rooms are properly ventilated, well heated and kept in a cleanly and attractive condition; and I am frank to inform you that our patients are warmly and respectably clad, and fed with good, wholesome and substantial food; and this, I regret to say, is not the fact in our great sister State, New York, with which we are frequently compared. In the im-

portant principles I have just mentioned the State institutions of New Jersey, I believe, stand second to none in the country.

I have visited the great hospitals for the insane from Canada to the Gulf and from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean. I have gone through them with a critical eye, looking for their good points that I might introduce them at home; looking for their mistakes that I might not allow our institution to fall into them, and I say to you with much pride that New Jersey has, up in the hills of Morris, an institution which will, with credit to the State, bear comparison with any in the United States, both as to style of architecture and the substantial quality of its construction, its hygienic appointments and the quality and honesty of its administration.

I am sure you will pardon me for digressing in this manner. I have a most positive weakness in this direction, and this weakness characterizes many of my addresses and lectures. Speaking of weakness, I feel constrained to impose a story upon you, after which I promise not to inflict you with story-telling.

A young man and a young woman were engaged to be married. A few weeks before the time set apart for the ceremony the young man said: "My dear, I feel that I should tell you that I am a victim of an idiosyncrasy or peculiar weakness." She said: "Well, what is it?" He replied: "I do not think it worth while to tell you about it at this time." She said: "I think I ought to know." He said: "Well, I am sure you will find it out soon enough." She became somewhat offended, and retorted: "I will not marry you. I will not marry any man who is guilty of those things that you speak of." The young man softened and said: "Sooner than have any trouble, since you take the matter so seriously, I will tell you. I am a somnambulist." She said: "Now, George, what do you think I care for that? I will go there with

you on Sunday mornings, and you can go with me to the Methodist church on Sunday evenings."

I deliver a course of lectures to a class of nurses year after year. Nurses who are required to work sixteen hours a day for from $16 to $25 a month are not inclined at all times to look upon the serious aspect of life, even under the lectures of the teacher, and because I insist upon strict discipline and close attention and hold them down to their work, they sometimes give evidences of dissatisfaction and exhibit a feeling that I am a hard-hearted individual. This is evidenced on occasions when I pay them little compliments, and the applause is so feeble that I am led to think they are limited in their powers of appreciation; but I remember distinctly a particular occasion when my remarks were received with vociferous applause, showing they had a high order of appreciation of what I had said to them. The remarks I made were something like these: "Ladies and gentlemen—I have endeavored, in ten successive lectures, to give you some practical idea of mental derangement, and to teach you, in a general way about the classification, management and treatment of persons suffering from mental disturbances. It now becomes my painful duty to announce to you that this is the last lecture for this session." This announcement was followed by such prolonged stamping of feet and clapping of hands, that, for the time being, I rather wondered if I had really grown eloquent.

That inebriety is a disease is so fully recognized by that part of the medical profession which has given careful study and scientific attention to the subject, and has become so well known to the laity generally that it is wholly unnecessary for me on this occasion to give elaborate consideration to that phase of the subject.

That inebriety is a disease which may be transmitted to the

direct descendants of the inebriate in the form of an abnormal appetite for alcohol is generally admitted by the medical profession. It is further known that certain forms of inebriety are diseases of the central nervous system, and the inebriate parents may and do transmit to their offspring nervous diseases which are not restricted simply to the various forms of inebriety. To be plainer: It is a recognized fact that the habitual drunkard, the dipsomaniac or the daily excessive drinker of alcohol begets children who, because of the parent's alcoholic habits and the toxic condition arising out of such habits, exhibit many of the graver diseases of the nervous system, such as epilepsy, St. Vitus' dance, hysteria, imbecility, idiocy and many forms of mental instability.

The program sets forth that I am to deal with the inebriate as a defective. I prefer to speak to you of the inebriate as a dependent and the producer of dependents.

Several speakers have expressed a preference for the term "backward" in speaking of defective children. I do not think well of the term backward in this application. It is a term too general in its significance to even have a faint semblance of anything specifically scientific. When one speaks of a mentally defective child there can be little room for mistake as to the exact significance of the term. The term imparts the idea that the child, in the power of mind manifestations, is not up to the normal standard and that it is due to deficiency of brain development.

A backward child would be understood by many to mean a diffident and shy or timid child, who at the same time might be mentally strong and with well developed brain; while a forward child would be looked upon as one exhibiting tendencies or characteristics of a child not well trained or as one manifesting traits of character usual in persons much older. The forwardness

would most likely be a form of precocity characteristic of mental instability; so that the terms "backward" and "forward" have such a general use in the English language and are so indefinite that to apply them in the treatment of a subject which should be handled with definiteness seems to me diverging too far from scientific lines, and I shall not adopt these terms even in these very general remarks.

I have started out with the proposition that as an outcome of habitual drunkenness, dipsomania or inebriety in the parents, the children have frequently transmitted to them a neuropathic taint, an abnormal warp of the central nervous system, a predisposition to mental unbalance or an unsteady mental equilibrium. Not only have I subscribed to this, but I have gone further and stated to you that parents who are victims of alcoholism in its various pronounced forms beget children who not only more readily manifest many of the functional neuroses, but who show the pernicious results of alcohol in the exhibition of insanity, epilepsy, idiocy, imbecility, chorea, and to these I would add that the children of such parents not infrequently appear to have inherited criminal tendencies, even when there is no history of criminality in the parents.

Assuming that I am correct in this statement, is it not made clear to you that the habitual drunkard or the inebriate is the producer of offspring who become dependents upon public charity; is it not clear that through the inordinate use or excessive indulgence in alcoholic liquors a large proportion of the population of our institutions for the insane, for idiots and feeble-minded is furnished?

The good-thinking people throughout every civilized land maintain as a principle of charity that it is the duty of every commonwealth to care for, according to its ability, those who,

by virtue of disease, whether inherited or acquired, are incapable of caring for themselves.

The great majority of our public institutions are founded on the two cardinal principles with which you are familiar: First, the protection of society against that which is offensive and dangerous to it. This may be considered as a police regulation. Second, the humanitarian, charitable or Christian principle, the helping of those who are unable, because of defects or disease, to help themselves, and, when possible, to restore them to health of body and mind.

It is here the strong arm of the Commonwealth must come, in the true sense of pure humanity and charity, to the rescue or assistance of the afflicted and unfortunate portion of its citizens; it is in the exhibition of true charity that the real milk of human kindness flows for the betterment of our weaker and sadly-afflicted brethren; it is in the solution of these problems of public charity we discover our real statesmen, men who willingly devote their best energies to advance the interests of humanity and better the condition of persons who can give nothing in return; men who lift their voices in behalf of legislation that will work for the good of the body politic, even though it does not operate to make votes for the party they represent; men who stand up fearlessly for a class of humanity unable to make a fight in its own behalf. These are the true statesmen, whose names will live after them, and whose works will stand as monuments to be admired by succeeding generations.

To return to the special subject under consideration, I ask you, if it is clear that inebriety, or an inordinate appetite for alcohol, increases our dependent classes and necessitates the building or the enlarging of asylums for the insane, epileptics, feeble-minded, idiots, etc., why would it not be wiser if, by judicious

legislation, the strong arm of the law be interposed to prevent this rapid increase of the dependent classes, made dependent by alcoholism? The old adage that "prevention is better than cure" applies here with great force.

I claim that since it is clear that inebriates are persons suffering from disease and whose nervous systems are deranged, and that since in a large percentage of these persons it is clearly out of their power to throw off the abnormal appetite which besets them, and since that for this reason they become a disturbing and dangerous factor in society, the wreckers of homes, the destroyers of families, the parents of defective and diseased offspring, the multipliers of dependents and criminals, that a law should be enacted which will protect society against such actively-pernicious agencies in the production of defectives, insane wrecks and criminals.

We already have upon our statute books an act of the public laws (Session 1881, Chap. 188, page 236) relative to habitual drunkards. This act is an amendment of an act approved March 3, 1853. This law, now in force, provides that application be made to the Chancellor for the commitment of habitual drunkards, and that he in turn may issue a commission in the nature of a writ *de lunatico inquirendo,* to make inquiry into the habitual drunkenness of the person named in such writ; and if the person, upon inquiry, be found to be an habitual drunkard, dangerous to society and incapable of caring for himself and his estate, a guardian may be appointed who shall have a right to place him in either of the State hospitals or any private institution where habitual drunkenness or mental derangement may be properly treated.

This law has been a blessing to the State of New Jersey, but the field of its operations is too restricted, since it only contem-

plates the care and treatment of such habitual drunkards as either have means sufficient to maintain them in the hospital to which they are committed, or have friends who are able and willing to pay for such maintenance and care.

Another feature of the commitment process which limits the operation of this law to the few, is the expense which attends the legal proceedings necessary to make the commitment. In each case the cost of the proceedings committing a person ranges from $180 to $250, the difference in cost largely depending upon the conscience of the counsel employed.

I think you will agree with me that a poor man who is a victim of inebriety is as capable of doing as much harm in a community and is as dangerous a factor to society as a rich one suffering from the same nervous disturbances or vicious habits; he is just as likely to kill his wife or to become the father of defective children, just as likely to become a criminal and the the father of criminals as the man of great means. Then why shall our legislators tell us, by their actions, if not in so many words, that it is wise to protect the integrity and safety of society against the dangerous calamities which are the outcome of habitual drunkenness in the wealthy and leave us at the mercy of the poor who suffer from the same disease?

I called the attention of the managers of The New Jersey State Hospital at Morris Plains to this matter in my official annual report of 1903, and we had introduced into the Legislature a bill providing for the commitment of such indigent habitual drunkards and inebriates as were clearly a danger and detriment to the public welfare. This bill provided for a less elaborate form, and less expensive process of commitment than the law now in operation, and made ample provision for the care and treatment of persons so committed. It was introduced into

the House of Assembly, passed that body, went to the Senate and passed up to the third reading, but on the last day it, with numerous other bills, got "lost in the shuffle." There was no one behind it who could keep it on top of the file. There were no corporate interests to be helped by it and there was nothing in it to indicate that it would be a political benefit to any particular locality. Many of you know how important bills in this manner fail, and it is not my duty on this occasion to discuss that subject.

Had the bill become a law, I believe its beneficent effects would have been so apparent to all good citizens of the State that there would never have come up a disposition or developed a power to repeal it.

Under the laws of the State now, persons who are temporarily insane from the effects of alcohol are committed to the State hospitals, but in a few days the alcohol is eliminated from their systems, their mental balance becomes adjusted and the duty of the hospital authorities is to discharge them. They are committed as insane persons, and not as inebriates or habitual drunkards, and the hospital authorities have no legal right to detain them after their symptoms of mental derangement have disappeared.

These patients whose mental derangement is brought about by the poisonous effects of alcohol and whose mental equilibrium is restored in a week or two must be sent away from treatment, although it is clear that the grave disease, which is the foundation of their mental aberration, still exists.

Now, what is the consequence? They leave the portals of the institution in possession of their liberty and also in possession of a most vigorous thirst for alcoholic liquors, and a large percentage of them, before they reach their homes, get into a state of beastly intoxication and maniacal excitement and exhibit crim-

inal tendencies. I have, acting under legal advice, been forced to discharge .dangerous habitual drunkards who, before they reached their homes, became so violent under the influence of alcohol that officers had to be called to take charge of them.

I believe this to be a most serious problem; in fact, I know it to be one worthy of the attention of the good-thinking men and women of our State. It is a problem that pulpit orators have seemed unable to solve, though it must be admitted that their earnest pleadings in the interest of sobriety and upright conduct have done marked good in this direction.

A permanent remedy must come in the form of legislation, and I believe it should be done somewhat after this manner: That a law be passed making it imperative upon the two physicians who make certificates for the commitment of the insane person whose insanity is the outcome or result of acute alcoholic intoxication, to so certify, and that the judge of the court reviewing these certificates, upon finding that such person who has become insane and violent from the effects of alcohol and who has habitually shown evidences of violent tendencies and has made manifest that he is a person whose conduct seriously affects the safety and integrity of the community in which he lives, that such judge may state in his "order of approval" of the commitment, that the committed person shall be detained for treatment of habitual drunkenness or inebriety even after the mental unbalance has been restored.

The successful treatment of the alcoholic is by no means a simple proposition; it does not simply mean to get out of the entire system all of the alcohol which is in any form lying in the tissues. It must be borne in mind that the habitual drunkard has educated his nervous system to a more or less regular stimulation and carried this stimulation to a point of toxicity, and then in

turn his nervous system has increased its demands for stimulation both as to frequency and the quantity to be taken.

It is well known to everyone here to-night, and especially to the physicians, that the nervous system is easily educated to call out at regular periods for food, stimulation, rest and exercise. This is what we term habit. A person who has his meals for a long period at seven, twelve and eight will become hungry at these particular hours, but he may move into a community or take up business or social obligations which make it necessary that his meals must be taken at different hours. It will require weeks for one person and months for another before he can get his nervous system out of the habit of demanding food at the hours to which he has accustomed it. He will at these particular times feel a sense of hunger, but after a while he breaks up that habit and his nervous system becomes accustomed to the new regulations; so it is with changing the hours of rising and retiring, of mental and physical rest, of responding to the various calls of nature, and so it is in the matter of changing the amount of stimulation to which the nervous system has become accustomed. In the treatment of the habitual drunkard this important characteristic of the nervous make-up of the human being must be taken into the fullest consideration; alcoholic drinks may be withdrawn, tonics, good food, exercise and diversion substituted, but it takes a considerable length of time, varying with the individual and the intensity of his thirst, the duration of his habit and the peculiarities of his nervous make-up.

The alcoholic person may show all the evidence of mental and physical health and yet at more or less regular intervals there will come upon him an intense desire or thirst for alcoholic stimulation. It requires a prolonged treatment to break up this habit of the nervous system, especially in persons of a marked nervous

temperament or of an inherited neuropathic taint, and for this reason it is clear to him who studies faithfully the needs of the inebriate that, first, he must be separated from alcoholic liquors for a prolonged period—not a week or two, but in some cases months and in others a year or more, so that the abnormal habit of the nervous system to demand alcohol whenever there is a feeling of depression, disappointment, worry, business embarrassment, mental strain or domestic complication, may be broken up; he must be toned up by appropriate medicines, surrounded by hygienic conditions, given regular baths, massage, methodical exercise and a moral support which will strengthen his will-power to do that which is right and avoid that which is wrong. In this way he may be brought to his normal standard and to a consciousness of the importance of keeping away from that which has been his curse—alcoholic drinks.

If we can provide for people who are the victims of alcoholic excesses treatment such as I have outlined, and provide that the poor as well as the wealthy may have access to our institutions where such treatment can be given, and by the enactment of appropriate laws make their detention compulsory in such cases as demand it, we will have done something for the betterment of this particular class of unfortunates; we will have done more, in that the betterment of society at large, to a marked degree, will have been advanced. Our work will not only have been one of reformation and simple philanthropy, but of mercy and Christianity. If by having enacted a law which will restrain the drunkard, cure him of his habit and restore him to society as a healthful and reputable member, we can prevent the rapid increase of mental defectives and epileptics which fill our asylums, and criminals which fill our jails and prisons, we not only will thereby do much to decrease the number of dependents in the various

State institutions, but will have promoted a public welfare that cannot be readily estimated.

It is our duty as public citizens to deal kindly with our brethren, to look after those who are unable to look after themselves; to support the weak and give to the poor, and I may say here that in the commonwealths of this great country, where the best educational advantages are given, where the truest statesmen are reared and where the sense of justice, truth and mercy is most manifest, there will be found the greatest, the most magnanimous care of the State's dependents in every form.

I am constrained to quote to you, in conclusion, from Christmas Evans, a Welsh divine, who in one of his flights of oratory said: "When God first conceived the idea of the creation of man he called before him the three great attributes which constantly await on the Throne of Grace—Justice, Truth and Mercy—and said: 'Shall we make man?' Justice said: 'Oh, God, make him not, for he will trample upon Thy law.' Truth said: 'Make him not, for he will pollute Thy sanctuaries.' Then came forward Mercy, kneeling and looking up, pleading with tears, and said: 'Oh, God, make him and I will go with him in all the dark paths through which he may have to tread;' and God made man and said: 'Go and deal with thy brother.' "