

PALMERSTON NORTH HIGH SCHOOL.

FORM VI.—PRIZE ESSAY.

"Happy the State whose people learn in youth

To conquer evil with the sword of truth."

How much happier we should all be if everyone learnt to conquer one of the worst evils in this world,—the evil of alcoholic drinking. How much sin, misery, poverty, and crime would be saved if the people all learnt to conquer the habit of intemperance! For that intemperance is one of the curses of mankind is well known. Therefore, if so much suffering is caused through this alcohol, why does not everyone strive to keep right away from it.

The evil effects of taking alcoholic beverages are easily discerned in the state of the human body. There is nothing which acts with more serious consequences than does the effect of intoxicating liquors. If only a small amount of alcohol is taken into the body, it can be oxidised and turned into energy and heat. Even so, however, it is valueless as a food, and must be considered as a poison.

First, let us consider how it impairs the digestive system. Alcohol taken into the stomach soon plays havoc. It causes an extra flow of gastric juice, which is of no use in digestion, because there is not sufficient food taken into the body for the extra juice to act on. It causes inflammation of the walls of the stomach, and the mucous lining of the stomach becomes ulcerated. Thus digestion is made more difficult. Then the effect of alcohol on the liver is just as serious. The action becomes slow, congested and torpid, so that digestion is difficult. Fatty substance collects round it, and after a time the liver becomes shrivelled and hard, so that it cannot aid in the process of digestion.

Let us now consider the evil effects of this alcohol on the brain. It becomes partly paralysed, with the result that the rapidity to receive external impressions, the discrimination of the senses, and the power of concentration is considerably lessened. With the continual use of alcohol, the effect is subsequent insanity.

Then there is the heart to be considered. Since the heart is one of

the vital organs of the body, should we not think of the danger we are incurring in taking in alcohol? The action of the heart is increased for a time, so that we are often under the impression that alcohol strengthens the heart. But this is a very wrong idea, for after a time fat collects round the heart, and the heart-beat is slackened, with the result that it cannot perform its work properly. How many cases of death from heart disease are due to the taking in of alcohol into our systems!

Again, continued use of alcohol causes deterioration of the tissues of the body. Thus the changes which old age brings about are hastened, and life is shortened. Consider also the serious effects on the corpuscles in the blood. The white corpuscles fight down the germs; therefore, if we take in alcohol, they lose their power, so that germs of disease find an easy entrance into the body. Then the red corpuscles are soon worn out, and the blood becomes impure.

When we drink alcoholic beverages, it deadens the nerves in the blood and in the skin, and causes flushing. This gives a sensation of warmth, but it is a mere fallacy, for the body really loses heat in this way.

Then there is the danger to the kidneys. The filtering power of the kidneys is lessened, and all kinds of ailments result. The kidneys are of much importance, and this alcohol impairs their work so much! How many people, as a result of this alcohol, suffer from Bright's disease!

Thus it can easily be seen how dangerous is alcohol to the system, and never has it been so clearly seen as it is now in the present war. Kitchener is earnestly entreating the people to give up this great curse. If the people would resist the temptation, poverty, sin, crime, insanity, and misery would be exchanged for a brighter and happier life. Thus we should all strive to leave alcohol entirely alone, and always bear in mind Lord Wolseley's saying, that "Drink kills more than all our newest weapons of warfare."

IN THE FIELD.

My last notes were written just as I was leaving Gisborne for Tokomaru Bay, where we arrived after about five hours' steam on the *Mono-wai*—Auckland bound. It was certainly a novel sensation to be put into a basket, slung up on a crane like a bale of goods, being finally deposited upon the deck of the launch, which, if there is any sea on, is bobbing up and down like a cockle-shell. On the whole, though, in calm weather, it is preferable to the method at Gisborne roadstead, where you walk down the gangway, and when you reach the bottom are told to wait, and you hang suspended while the launch descends into the trough of a wave, and when she rises seize the critical moment and wildly precipitate yourself into the arms of a waiting sailor. In very rough weather the steamers do not call at either port, and the passengers are carried on, but, happily, such was not my experience.

Tokomaru is a most charming spot, the deep blue waters of the Bay backed by hills of an exceptionally vivid green, the cliffs at either end curving around protectingly. I never wearied of feasting my eyes upon the scene from my window at the Mission House, where I spent a happy week with Miss Davies, who is in charge of the Church of England Maori work there. Tokomaru Bay has the name of being a most drunken place, but a very strong temperance sentiment exists among the women, and, contrary to expectation, I organised a strong branch. The chief difficulty was a geographical one, the population being situated at the extreme ends of the bay, with a stretch of something like two miles between. However, we held a meeting at one end on the Monday afternoon, and enrolled several members, and on the Tuesday traps and motors were kindly placed at our disposal, so that most of the members were conveyed to the other end for the second meeting, where we organised. Miss Davies was already a member of the Napier Union, so she was elected President, with a Vice-President, Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer at her end, and a Vice-President, Secretary, and assistant-Treasurer at the Freezing works end. The membership reached 20 before I left, and the new branch had decided to take up Cradle

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