

**EXTRACTS FROM A SPEECH DELIVERED AT SYDNEY TOWN HALL BY SIR THOMAS ANDERSON STUART, M.D., DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE.**

Does alcohol prevent a man from becoming a good soldier? I answer that it does, and I proceed to give my reasons.

Discipline is the first quality of a soldier; it is the foundation of all military efficiency. Unless the soldier obeys the orders of his superior officers, and acts promptly and intelligently in support of his fellows, no plan of military operations can be carried out, and the man is a nuisance and a danger. Now, this is the kind of man produced by the influence of alcohol, for even a single dose—and that not a very large one—lessens self-control and will-power, and with these we may take prudence, with the sense of responsibility and conscientiousness—in a word, the higher functions of the brain.

Alcohol acts on the body as a chemical substance, just as you have seen acid eating into iron, and in the action of alcohol on the body it first attacks the brain, and first of all that part of the brain the development of which distinguishes the man from the brute. That is why alcohol debases a man and reduces him to the level of the beasts that perish. In the course of the development of man—that is, in the course of evolution, in what is called “the ascent of man”—it was this part of his brain which was last developed; in the process of degeneration set up by the action of alcohol, it is the first to go. The case is entirely paralleled by that of many insane persons, who, as to their mere bodies, are strong enough, and may live for many years, nevertheless society has found it necessary to shut them up in a madhouse. Now, the man who is “in liquor” is temporarily insane, unsound, and that is not the kind of soldier we require. Thus the ascent of man, which occupied untold millions and millions of years, is undone, and the descent of man is accomplished, it may be in a few minutes. Then, again, still speaking of the moral qualities, alcohol excites the sexual passions at the same time that it lessens the self-control of the individual, so that Bacchus and Cupid and Venus so often go together in pictures and statuary. The drink-shop, indeed, is

a common entrance to the brothel. One in every three prostitutes is infective, and so venereal disease is the frightful source of shame and inefficiency among soldiers, chiefly, of course, the young men and recruits. The men from the country and the backblocks, unused to the temptations of the city life, are those who are most ready to fall victims to the lure. The statistics of the segregation camps are sorrowful reading, and of this the indirect cause in a large proportion of cases is alcohol.

Some time ago I said that alcohol was the most soul-destroying, body-destroying, nation-destroying, substance that had ever been known. The first part of this I have already dealt with here. And now about nation-destroying. Is any argument really necessary? The nation is a group of individuals. If the component individuals are largely poisoned they are no longer efficient, and such a nation is bound to go down before a more efficient nation. The Kaiser knows this. On November 24, 1910, while addressing the military cadets in Berlin, he said: “Victory in the next war will go to the nation with the least consumption of alcohol,” and he urged his hearers to become abstainers. In the beginning of the war, the Russians recognised this, and by the act of the Czar, the manufacture and sale of vodka (Russian spirits) was abolished in the Russian Empire, and every account that comes to us from our Ally shows that the Czar was right, his people more prosperous and better in every way, and the army more efficient than anyone ever dreamed was possible. The French have followed in prohibiting the manufacture and sale of absinthe for all time, and the English, in spite of “the trade,” have restricted the sale and consumption of intoxicants to a very considerable extent.

**A NEW YEAR THOUGHT.**

Build on resolve and not upon regret,  
The structure of thy future. Do  
not grope  
Among the shadows of old sins, but let  
Thine own soul's light shine on the  
path of hope,  
And dissipate the darkness. Waste  
no tears  
Upon the blotted record of lost years,  
But turn the leaf, and smile, oh!  
smile, to see  
The fair white pages that remain  
for thee.

**FRENCH WAR MINISTER AND DRINK.**

At a meeting of the French Chamber, during a discussion on a demand for the regulation of the drink shops in the areas occupied by the armies, a petition emanating from the publicans of Marseilles in favour of less stringent regulations was referred to. General Gallieni, the Minister for War, made short work of this and other appeals, and spoke with soldierly directness on the drink evil. He said: “When I read manifestos like that of the publicans of Marseilles I am compelled to tell you that I am, as Minister of War, the guardian of the health of our soldiers, and also of that of the young men of the 1917 class, just called up, for whom the Chamber and the Senate unanimously demanded that special measures of precaution and hygiene should be adopted. I wish to speak frankly, and to give my clear opinion. I consider that the vendors and the publicans in a large number of localities in the interior are among those people profiting by the war who deserve the least consideration. For my part, I shall always do what I can to place obstacles in the way of their pernicious activity. All the worse for them if their war profits are not what they expected! It will be a great benefit to our race, and a great benefit to our army and our country.”

**ORGANISING FUND.**

**TREASURER'S REPORT.**

The following amounts have been received for the Organising Fund since the last report:—

Branch Donations.—Pahiatua, £1 11s; Port Chalmers, 15s; South Invercargill, £2; Morrinsville, 10s; Waipawa, 7s.

Per Miss Powell.—Mesdames Linda Ferguson, R. Glendinning, and Haynes, of Dunedin, £1 1s each; Mesdames A. S. Paterson and W. Brown, of Dunedin, £1 each; Mesdames McGruer and John Taylor, £2 2s each; W. D. Hunt, £2; and W. Henderson and J. Hensley, £1 1s each, all of Invercargill; Messrs A. F. Hawke, £2 2s; J. E. Watson and J. McQueen, £1 1s each, all of Invercargill; Mr I. McGibbon (Gore), £1 1s; Mrs W. Sherman, £1; smaller sums, £3 10s.

Total receipts, £28 7s. Expenditure for the same period, £8 10s 8d.

NELLIE BENDELY,

N.Z. Treasurer Organising Fund.  
Auckland, 5th March, 1917.