

COMING GENERATION.

PRIZE ESSAY.

USES AND ABUSES OF ALCOHOL.

The Ashburton W.C.T.U. recently arranged an essay competition among the pupils of the public schools. About 200 children took part, the successful writer being Trissie Brunton, of the High School, with the following production:—

"Alcohol is a volatile fluid formed by the fermentation of certain sugars. Until recently there has been little accurate, i.e., experimental, knowledge of the properties of this drug, and the popular belief that the effect of alcohol was beneficially soothing and stimulating has been accepted without criticism. But modern scientific research has proved the fallacy of this belief, and eminent physicians who have made a thorough study of alcohol and its effects on the body tell us that alcohol is a poisonous drug, and is invariably placed side by side with chloroform, ether, strychnine, and opium, and is described as a narcotic poison.

"The scientific evidence now at the command of the medical profession has enabled physicians not only to find out that alcohol is a narcotic poison and does not aid the human economy in the way popularly supposed, but also to go further and to prove that the structure and functions of the different organs are actually impaired by it. Experiments have been made to prove that cell-growth is retarded and ultimately stopped by relatively small doses of alcohol, and it is due to this that the body of a person who drinks before he is properly grown becomes stunted.

"Further investigations prove that alcohol damages the digestive organs, and causes an extra supply of gastric juice to flow into the stomach. This juice is wasted in the absence of food, and serious injuries may result. The effect of alcohol on the kidneys is disastrous. It causes this organ to become fatty, to swell, and, in some cases, to shrink. The cells of which the kidney is composed lose their elasticity and power of contraction, and allow a colloidal matter, called albumen, in the blood to escape. Alcohol causes the liver to become coat-

ed with small swellings, which are liable to bring about the drinker's premature death. The effect of alcohol on the heart is to act as a stimulant at first, but after a few minutes the stimulating effect wears off, and in its stead a feeling of depression overtakes the person who imbibes. The heart beats more slowly, and, as a consequence, the body becomes colder, though in reality the victim thinks his body is warmer, owing to the blood which the alcohol sends to the surface of the body. Alcohol has its greatest and most fatal effect upon the brain. Doctors have proved that it diminishes the rapidity of thought, weakens the will, warps the judgment, awakens in man animal passions, and results in strife, insanity, and crime. It diminishes and, in time, breaks down all self-control. After its brief, exciting effect on the brain, there follows a prolonged period of depression or reaction, which is often unbearable to the drinker. This, together with the steady impoverishment of the body of the 'alcoholic,' is often responsible for many cases of suicide. It is the opinion of Dr. Sullivan that alcohol is the cause of many tragic and premature deaths, which deprive the State of comparatively young and valuable lives. The verdict, while temporarily insane, often infers that the brain of the victim has been acted upon by alcohol, which deprives it of all energy and control, and only a very morbid outlook on life remains, causing the drinker to act as he would never do in his full senses.

"The majority of military authorities at the present day state that the total abstainer is the best soldier. He can march better, and is a superior fighter to the drinker. A great General has said that of 30,000 men on a route march those who were unable to keep up were 'not the little men, not the big men, they were the drinkers, and they dropped out as clearly as if they had been marked with a huge letter on their backs.' Lord Grenfell, the leader of an expedition in Egypt, stated as far back as 1886 that 'his men drank the Nile, and nothing added, and he says: 'Never have I seen a force of men so fit as that force employed upon the Nile.'

"It is a well-known fact that the late Lord Kitchener allowed his men no intoxicants, but encouraged them

to drink cold tea while on route marches.

"Only the 'abuses' of alcohol have been mentioned so far. The 'uses' are few. A great physician writes that if alcohol were abolished only the doctors would suffer, as it is a drug more easily procured and cheaper than any other, and is therefore extensively used by them in their work. But every doctor realises that this drug, used by many nations as a beverage or as a medicine very often, without the least discrimination, causes physical deterioration, insanity, crime, and poverty. Dr. R. R. Kime says: 'What we need is a universal house-cleaning, banishing alcohol from the home, and a universal demand from the public that physicians use this drug less as a medicine.'"

ANY SOLDIER SON TO HIS MOTHER.

If I am taken from this patchwork life
By some swift outburst of an unseen arm—
The death that strikes my comrades day and night—
I pray you make of it no cause of tears,
I beg you grieve not for me overmuch.
And for your comfort I would pen this thought:
The joy you had of me in childhood's days
When in your arms I played or cried
—or prayed
(Those soft, warm arms! Can you
—or I forget?)
Will still remain with you when I am gone.
It is so real now, that memory;
Not death itself can rob you of your child.
The boy I was, the man I grew to be,
Despite the mother's tender hopes and fears,
How distant, how detached and cold they seem.
And so, sweet mother, here I stand to meet
My fate, this night and any night; but still
Your child, imperishable whilst you breathe;
As in the cradle, so until the end.
—N. G. H. in "London Spectator."

The healing of the world is in
Its nameless saints. Each separate star
Seems nothing, but a myriad scattered stars
Break up the night, and make it beautiful.