

**HABITUAL
DRUNKENNESS AND
INSANE DRUNKARDS**

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Habitual Drunkenness and Insane Drunkards by John Charles Bucknill

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AND

INSANE DRUNKARDS.

BY

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FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS;
LATE LORD CHANCELLOR'S VISITOR OF LUNATICS.



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P R E F A C E.

ON the second reading of the Habitual Drunkards' Bill in the House of Commons, July 3rd, 1878, the introducer of the measure, Dr. Cameron, member for Glasgow, referred to the following articles in these terms:—

“ The articles which had been written by Dr. Bucknill, the Lord Chancellor's Visitor, as the result of his visit to the United States, were marked by strong prejudice, as when he went so far as to say that he was 'out of all patience with maudlin sentimentality. In addressing the House he had endeavoured to abstain from that. (Cheers.) Dr. Bucknill suggested that the best thing that could happen was that the drunkard should ruin himself and his property pass into worthier hands. Dr. Bucknill's statements called forth the most conclusive replies. An institution that he reported closed through failure was closed simply because the State aid that had been expected was not forthcoming. It was said that Dr. Bucknill's reports were founded on superficial and limited information, and that he had not visited asylums the success of which had surpassed the wildest dreams of enthusiastic

supporters. Careful inquiry showed that 60 per cent. of those who had passed through them continued to be sober persons."

To this attack the author replied in the *Times* by the letter which will be found at page 98, and to Dr. Cameron's reply in the same journal by the letter which will be found at page 101, and, so far as the author is personally concerned, he deems those letters an ample justification. But, on reconsidering these articles thus impugned, the author is led to believe not only that they bear internal evidence that they were written without prejudice, but that they afford an unbiassed consideration of the social and medical bearings of drunkenness, which is not undeserving of being placed before the public in a collected form. Perhaps his opinions would have been better appreciated had they been recast into one connected paper; but, under the circumstances, he has preferred to republish them, with all their faults, in the form and in the order in which they were written.

The author has not willingly entered upon this controversy: he has been drawn or driven into it. Interested as a mental physician in drunkenness as one of the great factors of insanity, in his visit to the United States in 1875, he made inquiries on the subject for the sole purpose of informing and satisfying his own mind on a most important matter closely connected with his business in life. His inquiries were made for the sole purpose of eliciting truth, and

he ventures to affirm that none of the gentlemen of whom they were made will aver that they were either superficial or negligent. Others there were whose testimony he had been taught by their own countrymen to discredit, and of these he did not seek information. They have had other opportunities of giving it to the world, of which they have amply availed themselves; but neither the author nor the public have any means of testing the accuracy of their statements. When lunatics are discharged from an asylum as cured, there is some probability that they are cured, at least for a time, as there is a certain ascertainable difference between a man who has been insane and is cured, and one who has been insane and is not cured. But, notwithstanding the information given to the House of Commons, that, with regard to a drunkard, "it could be known by the hands that all danger was removed, and a cure had been effected," it must be admitted that, with regard to propensities, men do not wear the heart upon the sleeve, or even on the hands, and it will be doubted whether the discrimination of the most acute observers can tell which of two sober men is likely to drink too much whiskey when he can get it. Not only did the author visit all the inebriate asylums and homes he could hear of in the eastern States of America, with the exception of one small private institution, but he made diligent inquiries of the numerous able and experienced physicians, by whom he was received with frank friendliness in that country; and he also listened to