

BRITAIN'S SOCIAL STATE

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Britain's Social State by David Lewis

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DAVID LEWIS

**BRITAIN'S
SOCIAL STATE**

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BY

DAVID LEWIS,

One of the Magistrates of Edinburgh.

"Every day's experience goes to confirm me in my opinion that the Temperance Cause lies at the foundation of all Social and Political Reform."

—Richard Cobden.

THIRD THOUSAND.



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CONTENTS.

	CHAP. I.	PAGE
INTRODUCTION,		1
	CHAP. II.	
INTOXICATING DRINKS USELESS FOR DIETETIC PURPOSES. —Is Alcohol Food? Alcohol and Digestion. Alcohol and Fatty Degeneration,		4
	CHAP. III.	
ALCOHOLIC LIQUORS PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY PER- NICIOUS.—Alcohol a Poison. Action of Alcohol on the Stomach, Liver, Kidneys, and Brain. Insanity,		24
	CHAP. IV.	
THE DRINK SYSTEM SUBVERSIVE OF MORALITY AND SOCIAL ORDER.—Seductive Character of Strong Drink. Strong Drink and the Family Circle. Strong Drink and Crime. Juvenile Delinquency. Pauperism. Prosti- tution. Degraded Condition of Lapsed Masses. Perils of our National Future,		44
	CHAP. V.	
THE DRINK SYSTEM A SOURCE OF COMMERCIAL DE- PRESSION.—Drink and the Working Classes. Emi- gration. Commercial Depression. Capital and Labour,		98
	CHAP. VI.	
THE DRINK SYSTEM ANTAGONISTIC TO RELIGION.— Destruction of Grain. Sabbath Desecration. Sup- pression of Sunday Traffic. Drink and Discipline. False Position of the Church. Sunday Schools. Home Missions. Foreign Missions,		113

	PAGE
CHAP. VII.	
SCRIPTURE AND STRONG DRINK.—The Wine Question. Christ at Cana—Was the Wine Intoxicating? . . .	154
CHAP. VIII.	
REMEDIAL MEASURES.—Sanitary Reform. Education. The Gospel. Total Abstinence,	170
CHAP. IX.	
PHYSICAL ADVANTAGES OF ABSTINENCE.—Abstinence and Exposure. Abstinence and Extreme Heat. Ab- stinence and Extreme Cold. Abstinence and the Army. Abstinence and Longevity,	186
CHAP. X.	
LEGISLATIVE PROHIBITION THE DUTY OF THE STATE.— Nature and Design of Civil Government. Specialities of the Drink Traffic. The Liquor Traffic Incompatible with National Sobriety. Prohibition of the Traffic a Necessity. Practical Results of Prohibition. Con- clusion,	207

BRITAIN'S SOCIAL STATE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE social condition of the United Kingdom is a subject attracting general attention. How the sinking and suffering masses are to be elevated, and the renovation of society secured, is a problem demanding the consideration of every thoughtful member of the community. All classes are concerned in its satisfactory solution, and no one is entitled to regard it with indifference. In an especial manner it demands the prompt attention of statesmen, ministers of religion, and all whose peculiar function it is to look to the cultivation of humanizing agencies, and to the correction of all that tends to degrade the people. In scanning the state of British society the most superficial observer cannot fail to discover that Intemperance occupies a most prominent position in our social degradation, and is consequently an evil against which the friends of humanity should unite, and wage a war of uncompromising hostility.

We can conceive of few things more painful to an enlightened and reflective mind, than to bring up before his view the fearful prevalence of this vice,

and to brood over the tide of temporal and spiritual desolation with which it inundates the homes of his countrymen. While he opens the records of his country's shame, and gazes upon the panoramic views of crime, pauperism, disease, and premature death, caused by this wide-spread evil; and while he reflects upon the scenes of wretchedness and misery ever coming under his observation, he feels as if overwhelmed in difficulty and despair, and disposed instinctively to shrink from the consideration of such a subject. Believing, as we do, that the safety of our country and the temporal and spiritual welfare of thousands of our people depend upon the eradication of this vice, we regard it as the duty of all who seek the improvement of society and the elevation of the masses, to ponder well the evils of the drink system, the destructive character and extent of which, we hesitate not to say, are as yet comparatively unknown.

So lamentably ignorant are the great mass of the British people of the true nature and debasing tendency of intoxicating drinks, and the demoralizing influence of the drinking customs, that instead of being up and at work for their subversion, they with an unaccountable infatuation, are endeavouring to throw around them the shield of respectability and religion, and maintaining and defending them with an energy and a zeal as if life itself were dependent upon their continuance. Unmindful of their responsibility, and regardless of the danger by which they are surrounded, they may be compared to a crowd of

children sporting themselves in the streets of a great city, while the foundations are being shaken and removed by the first heavings of an earthquake. For as surely as cities have been overthrown by such convulsions, so surely is strong drink gathering the elements of a moral earthquake at the base of our social structure, which, if not removed, will ultimately explode and shake to its foundations our social organization, and arrest the progress of those moral and religious institutions which are the pride and glory of the British empire.

For nearly forty years special attention has in this country been directed to the evils and enormities of the drink system, and the practice of abstinence from all intoxicants has been pressed upon the attention of the people, as the only efficient remedy for drunkenness. As the object of this work is to demonstrate the manufacture, sale, and use of alcoholic liquors as beverages to be the prolific source of those social evils with which our country is afflicted—and to propound, illustrate, and enforce the principles of the Temperance movement—we do so under the conviction that temperance reform is indispensable to the elevation of the people. Other charitable and philanthropic movements may ply their disinterested efforts with unwearied zeal, but experience proves that upon the triumph of the Temperance Reformation must depend their failure or success.