

# **ALCOHOLISM. A CHAPTER IN SOCIAL PATHOLOGY**

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Alcoholism. A chapter in social pathology by W. C. Sullivan

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**W. C. SULLIVAN**

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PATHOLOGY**



# ALCOHOLISM

A CHAPTER IN SOCIAL PATHOLOGY

BY

W. C. SULLIVAN, M.D.

MEDICAL OFFICER IN U.S. PRISON SERVICE



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TO  
SIR EVELYN RUGGLES-BRISE, K.C.B.,  
*Chairman of the Prison Commission,*

UNDER WHOSE ENLIGHTENED ADMINISTRATION  
SCIENCE AND HUMANITY HAVE BECOME THE GUIDING  
PRINCIPLES OF THE ENGLISH PENAL SYSTEM,  
THIS WORK IS RESPECTFULLY  
DEDICATED.

## PREFACE

THE object of the following essay is to give, in as concise a form as is compatible with clearness and accuracy, a summary of the fundamental data of the drink question, having regard more particularly to the connection of alcoholism with industrial conditions. The predominant importance of this latter aspect of intemperance is, as a rule, very inadequately recognised in the discussion of the liquor problem in this country; and in the practical schemes that most commend themselves to the temperance reformer little, if any, account is ever taken of it. In this fact lies the *raison d'être* of the present volume, which, it need hardly be added, is designed merely to point out the omission, and has no pretension to repair it.

In dealing with so vast a subject it would obviously be impossible, without burdening the text with notes, to give exact references to all the writers whose works have been laid under contribution. In most instances, however, where statements are made on the authority of individual observers, it will be found that the source of information has been indicated sufficiently to enable it to be readily traced in the 'Bibliographie des Alkoholismus' of Abderkalden

(Berlin, 1904: Urban und Schwarzenberg), which is familiar to most students of inebriety. To that invaluable work, and to the treatises of Baer and of Grotjahn, I have to express my deep obligations. For the material embodied in the historical sketch of alcoholism I have been chiefly indebted to Bertholot's '*Histoire de Chimie*,' to Cunningham's '*History of English Industry and Commerce*,' and to Lecky's works. In the chapters on the physiological action of alcohol, on drunkenness, and on chronic alcoholism, the '*Psychologische Studien*' of Kraepelin, Maudsley's '*Pathology of Mind*,' and Lancereaux's articles in Raige-Delorme's '*Dictionnaire de Médecine*' have been of special assistance. And, of course, in dealing with the social and industrial conditions of the labouring classes Mr. Charles Booth's monumental work has been constantly consulted.

For valuable advice and assistance in revising the proofs I have to thank my friend and colleague, Dr. J. H. Parker Wilson.

Finally, I have to express my special indebtedness to the Prison Commissioners, who have allowed me to make free use of the opportunities afforded by my official position. It is on the study of the human documents of alcoholism which have thus been brought within my reach that this essay is mainly based.

W. C. SULLIVAN.



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# ALCOHOLISM:

## A CHAPTER IN SOCIAL PATHOLOGY.

### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTORY AND HISTORICAL.

THE word "alcoholism" is used currently in two meanings: in the narrower sense, to indicate the intoxication of the individual organism by alcohol, being then further distinguished as acute or chronic; and in a wider sense, without qualification, as a synonym of the drink question, to indicate the group of problems which depend on the prevalence of alcoholic excess in a community.

The use of a single word to subserve these two meanings, though liable at times to cause some misunderstanding, has the very decided advantage that, as the original connection of the term is with individual pathology, it keeps constantly before the mind the close relationship of the individual to the social aspects of alcoholism. And this is, in the study of the drink question, a matter of the first importance; for the beginning and the end of that

question, the causes which lead to alcoholic excess and the effects which follow from it, alike find their explanation in the state of organic function in the drinker. The origin of alcoholism is in the power that alcohol possesses of inducing certain modifications in that state; and the social conditions which lead to the various forms of excess are operative in the long run through their influence in making such modifications desirable. And, as the immediate action of alcohol on the organism thus accounts for the causation of excess, so its more remote effects shown in the tissue changes of chronic intoxication are the source of those morbid impulses and those degradations of function which are the essential elements in the graver social results of intemperance.

For this reason the study of alcohol and alcoholism in the individual is the proper and natural introduction to the study of alcoholism as a problem of sociology. That is the plan which it is proposed to follow in this essay. The first portion will be devoted to an analysis of the physiological action of alcohol, and more especially of its influence on mental and muscular function, and to a discussion of the acute and chronic intoxications and their influence on conduct. The facts set out in this part of the inquiry will then be taken as a guide in the second and third parts of the book, the former dealing with the social and industrial causes of alcoholism, and the latter with its relation to the different social phenomena in whose origin it plays a more or less important part.