THE HORRORS OF ABSINTHE

ITS TIPPLING A VAST NATIONAL EVIL IN FRANCE.

The Chief Ingredient is Wormwood and It Poisons the Body and Burns Away the Brains of Its Victims—The French Army Brought the Curse From Algiers.

During the Algerian war, which lasted from 1844 to 1847, the French army were more in danger from African fevers than from Algerian enemies. Several thing were tried as antidotes or preventives by the skilful army physicians. Finally absinthe was hit on as the most effective febrifuge.

The soldiers were ordered to mix it in small quantities three times a day with the ordinary French wine. The luckless happy-go-lucky privates grew to like their medicine, which at first they swore at bitterly for spoiling with its bitterness that beautiful purple vinegar they fondly fancy is wine. But when absinthe alone began to usurp the time-honored place of claret in the affections of the French army, the evil became an unmixed one.

Absinthe straight as a beverage is a direly different thing from absinthe mixed as a medicine or an occasional tonic. The victorious army on their triumphal return to Paris brought the habit with them. It is now so wide-spread through all classes of Parisian society—and Paris gives the cue to France—that French men of science and publicists regard the custom of absinthe tippling as a vast national evil.

The consequence of theuse—and use of this drug ripens to abuse, even with men of unusual will power—has been in France disastrous to a dreadful degree. Many men of remarkable brilliancy have offered up their brains and their lives on the livid altar of absinthe. Baudelaire, who translated all Poe's works into French, had a terribly grotesque passion for the pleasant green poison. In one of his mad freaks this minor French poet actually painted his hair the same tint as the beverage that corroded his brain, possibly from an odd fancy to have the outside of his head correspond with or match the inside.

Alfred de Musset, who was the French Byron plus a tenderer, naiver touch, also fell a victim to the drug after George Sand gave the final smash to his fragmentary heart. A frightful historic pun occurred in this connection. Towards the end, when the great poet, growing more morose every day, hid from his old companions and was missing from his favorite haunts, one man, not aware of his infirmity, exclaimed: "Why is it that our dear De Musset absents himself from us nowadays?" And a grim wit lispingly answered: "For a woman'th reathon, my friend; he abthinth himthelf jutht becauthe he abthinth himthelf."

Paul Verlaine, a French literateur and criminal, still living, who had a poem in the May number of Mr. Astor's English magazine, is another absinthe fiend, and Guy de Maupassant is reported to have burned his brains away with the same emeraldine flames. The brain disease caused by this drug is considered almost incurable. Far worse than alcohol or opium, it can only be compared to cocaine for the fellness of its clutch on poor humanity.

What, then, is this dreadful drink composed of, and how is it made? The answer is easy enough, though the process, to insure perfection in the evil, is not so. Absinthe may be technically described as a redistillation of alcholic spirits (made originally from various things, potatoes, for instance), in which, to give it the final character, absinthium with other aromatic herbs and bitter roots are ground up, or macerated, in chemist lingo.

The chief ingredient is the tops and leaves of the herb artemisia absinthium, or wormwood, which grows from two to four feet in great profusion under cultivation, and which contains a volatile oil, absinthol, and a yellow, crystaline, resinous compound, called absinthin, which is the bitter principle. The alcohol with which this and the essentials of other aromatic plants are mixed holds these volatile oils in solution.

It is the precipitation of these oils in water that causes the rich clouding of your glass when the absinthe is poured on the cracked ice; double emblems or warnings of the clouding and the cracking of your brain if you take to it steadily. Thus every drink of the opaline liquid is an object lesson in chemistry that carries its own moral.

The continued use of absinthe gives rise to epileptic symptoms as an external expression of the profound disturbance of the brain and nerves. One large dose of the essence of the wormwood, indeed, has been noted as causing almost instantly epileptiform convulsions in animals.

But the drug is not without its uses from a broad point of view. As the name implies, it is an anthelmintic, or a pretty sure cure for certain kinds of animal life that sometimes infest the intestines of men causing pain and death. This peculiar property was well known to the Greeks who had a wine infused with wormwood called absinthites.

In some parts of Germany wormwood is used in lieu of hops for the brewing of certain brands of beer, and it unquestionably has valuable tonic properties. Absinthe is made almost everywhere, except in the extreme tropics. The first effects of it are a profound serenity of temper and a slight heightening of the mental powers, coupled with bodly inertia. This is the general rule, but, as famous physician once remarked of a dreadful disorder in his lecture-room "Gentlemen, the chief glory of the beautiful disease I am now explaining is the remarkable variety of its manifestations."

French Surgery.

It is of interest to note the results of recent experiments made by surgeons in the curing of idiocy in children. Like many other things new in surgery and medicine, these experiments originated in Paris. The idea was conceived that idiocy frequently was caused, where no congenital causes were apparent, by the premature union of the bones of the skull in infants. Acting on this assumption, the French surgeons removed a portion of the bony covering of the skull on several patients, the idea being that the brain had not had room to expand commensurate with the growth of the child. The results in many instances proved the correctness of the theory. In some cases the results were remarkable. In one case an idiot girl of 8 years began to show signs of recovering intelligence the very day after the operation was performed.

AN OCEAN TELEGRAPH POST.

A Bleak Rock in the Pacific Ocean May be One of the Stepping Stones Between Canada and Australia.

A small island in the Pacific was supposed to be the goal and the prize for which two steamers had begun a race from Honolulu when the last American mail to hand was leaving there. As there is no Pacific cable, the issue of that race will not be known on the mainland till the news of it comes by steamer. The vessels engaged in it were the British cruiser Champion and a Hawaiian steamer. Whichever of them first touches Johnson or Neckar Island will plant there the flag of its Government. This island was never coveted before. It is a small rock, out of the way of navigation, lying about four hundred miles northwest of Honolulu. Physically it may be regarded as part of the Hawaiian group, but practically it is not subject to Hawaii or any other country. But this bleak rock, so long shunned and neglected, may be one of the stepping-stones of daily intercourse between

CANADA AND AUSTRALIA.

It would serve, as well as an island richer in natural resources, for a pier on which to rivet one end of a section of the projected cable between Sydney and Vancouver. A more suitable station could of course be found in Hawaii, but the promoters of the Pacific cable aim to have it under exclusively British control. That in fact, is the condition on which they ground their hopes of a guarantee by the British Government of fourteen years' interest on the cost of construction. To attract Imperial aid the line must have strategic value, and that it would not have if it rested at any point on foreign soil. One joint in the cable would undoubtedly be made at some place on the Hawaiian coast near Honolulu if Britain had a foothold there. It was the apprehension that she might take the opportunity to secure one after the deposition of the Queen that alarmed the Jingoists of the United States to attack President Cleveland for his course in the Hawaiian embroglio. Though Hawaii is still independant, its Provisional Government is known to cherish the most

SPANIEL-LIKE AFFECTION

for the United States, whose Executive repulsed its overtures for annexation and took steps looking to the restoration of the Queen. The dread that this slighting treatment might estrange the adventurers who had seized on Goverment in Hawaii and drive them into some bargian with Great Britain was what was operating on the minds of the anti-Administration Democrats and of the Republicans when they were denouncing Cleveland's "policy of infamy." The same terror led them to imagine the most absurd designs on the part of Britain. But the Provisional Government remained steadfast, and expects yet to render allegiance to the United States. It appears to look upon itself as the keeper of the interests of the United States in that part of the world, for its Minister of the Interior was on board the boat which hurried off to take possession of Johnson Island as soon as the errand of the Champion was suspected. That Government is not a neutral one, as it would be if its policy were determined by Hawaiian interests alone. If it is beaten in the race, either it or its principal will be likely to put forward claims to the island based on some supposititous prior title.

AN ATHLETIC ADMIRAL.

Sir Michael Culme-Seymour Wins a Foot Race at Fifty-Eight.

Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour is one of the most popular as well as most distinguished of Great Britain's naval officers. Accordingly everyone was highly pleased at the Mediterranean fleet athletic sports held recenty at Malta, when he won in fine style the veterans' handicap race for officers above thirty-five years of age. Commander Burney, of the Hawk, ran a good second from scratch. The Admiral who succeeded the late Admiral Tyron in the command of the Mediterranean squadron, joined the service as far back as 1849, and is fifty-eight years old—quite a respectable age at which to win a foot race. He served with distinction in the Baltic during the Crimean war and commanded the naval operations against the Chinese in 1856 and in 1858. He is of Irish descent and comes of a stock distinguished in naval history. Large numbers of spectators gathered to witness the proceedings, which were enlivened by the mass bands of the fleet, and the prizes were afterward distributed by Lady Culme-Seymour, who seemed to take especial pleasure in handling the meed of victory to her gallant husband.—[N. Y. Herald.

Women Gamblers in England.

Theevil habits of betting and gambling are increasing most of all among women, says an English paper. Mothers of families bet away their husbands' wages and pawn clothes and furniture to obtain funds for gambling purposes. Hundreds of young women engaged in factories bet regularly. Some see the bookmakers personally, others send their money through middlemen. Betting among ladies is on the increase, and the drawing-room sweepstakes are becoming popular. This is a tremendous indictment, yet I do not propose to refute it. It is a deplorable state of things, but even if the "half has not been told," it is within the pale of credibility. "Gambling is on the increase among women." Betting is largely practised and with disastrous effects on the family life by the mothers of England, who are constantly and proudly enough proclaimed the social saviours of our land.

AN UNEXPECTED LESSON.

"I didn't enjoy the sermon at all this morning," said Mrs. Fisk. "It seemed to me Dr. Prescott went out of his way to say odd things, and I am sorry to notice he is beginning to put on pulpit airs, something I especially detest in any minister."

"What do you mean by little pulpit airs, wife?"

"Why, didn't you notice how every little while he shrugged a shoulder?" and Mrs. Fisk drew up one shoulder in exact imitation of the minister's movement. "Then there was an affected way of glancing with great rapidity from right to left, as if startled by his own ideas."

Again, Mrs. Fisk mimicked the pastor, turning her eyes from side to side in so ludicrous a manner that her husband laughed outright, and little Dot burst into a loud peal of laughter, too.

"It's such queer little mannerisms as those," she added, "that I call pulpit airs, and, as I said before, I detest them! I only wish some one would tell Dr. Prescott how he spoils the effect of what he is saying by assuming such looks and attitudes."

Mrs. Fisk and her husband had just returned from church, and little Dot, seated on the floor was paying such fixed attention to what her mother was saying that her father asked, laughingly, "And what do you think of pulpit airs, little Dot?"

"I a-tests 'em!" said Dot, emphatically.

This caused a merry laugh at Dot's expense, for the little four-year-old was particularly fond of getting hold of words altogether too large for her little pucker of a mouth. The dinner bell ringing just then effected a change on the subject.

It was only Monday afternoon, however, that Dr. Prescott called on Mrs. Fisk, and the servant thinking her mistress was at home, admitted him. On discovering that Mrs. Fisk was away, the girl returned to the parlor, and was surprised to find Dot carrying on what appeared an animated conversation with the minister.

When Mrs. Fisk returned she saw her pastor's card in the salver on the hall table and later in the afternoon as she sat sewing, with Dot seated, as usual, on the floor, surrounded by her beloved dollies, the waitress, in passing, looked into the room and said.

"I suppose you saw Dr. Prescott's card, ma'am?"

Mrs. Fisk replied that she had seen it, and was sorry not to have seen the gentleman himself.

As the girl passed on, Dot looked up and remarked, in a tone of great satisfaction:

"I seed him, and I telled him I did a-*test* pulpit airs."

"What!" Mrs. Fisk started so and spoke with such energy that Dot started, too. Then she added, more quietly, "Dot, tell mamma just what you said to Dr. Prescott."

The child began again with a satisfied air, as if sure of commendation for having worthily performed a needed duty.

"I telled him I did a-*test* pulpit airs. And he said, 'What you mean, little girl?' And I say, 'You sticks up your shoul'er, and you goes this a-way,'" and Dot opened her brown eyes to their utmost extent and wriggled her little body about in her desire to look as wild as possible.

"What else did he say, and what did you say?" asked Mrs. Fisk, her voice fairly trembling with excitement and anxiety.

"He say, 'Who telled you that, little girl?' And I say, 'Miss Mittikens!'" and Dot threw back her head and laughed merrily.

"Was that all he said?" asked mamma.

"No; he say, 'Who is Miss Mittikens?' And I say, 'Ole Mother Hubbard!' And he laugh and say, 'Who ole Mother Hubbard is?' And I say, 'Little ole Marm Step-and-fetch it!' and the unconscious Dot laughed harder.

Mrs. Fisk despite her trepidation, had to laugh, too, but she asked again:

"And what did Dr. Prescott say then? Tell mamma truly, Dot,"

"He never say 'nother word, only pinch my cheek and say, 'Oh, you little michief, you!'"

Mrs. Fisk felt a little relieved. She had shown such a predilection for silk mittens all winter that her husband had sportively called her Mrs. Mittikens, and, of course, Dot had learned the name by heart in a very short time. Then because of her fondness for a rather shapeless house dress, he had occasionally dubbed her old Mother Hubbard. The appellation, "Little Marm Step-and-fetch-it," Mr. Fisk had applied to Dot herself, because of her alacrity in running little errands, and knowing, as he did, that the longer a name he could find the better she would like it.

Mrs. Fisk took Dot on her lap, and, looking at her steadily, said, gently, but with some decision:

"My little Dot, I want you to tell me truly, Did you say anything at all to Dr. Prescott about papa or mamma?"

Dot shook her head with decision in her turn, as she replied:

"No! truly rooly, I didn't say mamma nor papa one single time."

Then Mrs. Fisk added, lightly, not wishing to impress the matter further on the childish mind:

"You must never speak to any one of that again. Now remember, Dot!"

And the innocent Dot reassured her, promising "truly rooly" never to tell it to Dr. Prescott again, nor to any one else, "ever anymore."

In talking the matter over with her husband that night, Mrs. Fisk concluded with the remarks:

"I did not realize for an instant that the little midget would understand in the least what I was saying, much less treasure up and remember it. But it shows that parents cannot be two careful what they say before children, and especially about others. As to my mimicry, I am simply ashamed of it, and I acknowledge frankly my criticisms were unnecessarily uncharitable and severe. I can only say I have learned a lesson not soon to be forgotten."

Not very long afterward Dr. Prescott preached an admirable sermon to which Mrs. Fisk listened with a forced air of placid attention, although her heart fluttered in little uneven bounds, at several points in the discourse. There was entire absence of any superfluous mannerisms, but only a very earnest, impressive air, as the good man admonished Christian parents to beware lest their style of conversation prove anything but beneficial to the younger members of the family.

He reminded his hearers, that let a preacher be ever so faithful and ever so sincere, his teaching would lose all power and his precept all value—in fact, his influence for good would be totally lost upon the young people of the household—if he was criticized unfavorably in their hearing. A single remark, he argued, of a detrimental character was sufficient to destroy the most earnest efforts on the pastor's part.

And the sermon was one that could have been listened to with marked profit by many a well-meaning but thoughtless parent.

PROGRESS IN AFRICA.

Aspects of the Congo Country Nine Years Ago and Now.

A German named Martin, who recently made a seven months' trip up the Congo river, tells some interesting things about the present condition of the settlements and enterprises along that great stream, and has thus furnished a text for the well-known African traveler, Dr. Baumann, who contrasts the present aspects of the Congo country with what he saw nine years ago, when he went over the very same ground.

At that time there were only a few squalid grass huts on the side of Matadi, 90 miles from the mouth of the river. The place is now a small city with about 2,000 population, forty or fifty European buildings, a hotel, stores, and mission houses. This transformation has been wrought by the Congo railroad, of which Matadi is the seaward terminus. In 1885 Baumann toiled painfully over the Palahalla hill, finding himself only a few miles beyond Matadi after a hard day's work. Now the steam cars daily whisk their passengers, in less than an hour, around and above this hill to the plateau overlooking the Congo. In three days after Martin reached Leopoldville he was able to take a steam boat for the upper river, and if he had missed the boat he would not have been compelled to wait long for another; while in 1885 those who wished to go to the furthest reaches of navigation had an opportunity to embark only once in five or six months. In 1885 there was a great scarcity of carriers on the road leading round the cataracts, while Martin compares this road to an ant-path, so numerous were the caravans of heavy-laden porters trudging in single file.

In Bangala Baumann lived in a miserable clay hut and had nothing but manioc to eat, while Martin sojourned in a comfortable brick house, and enjoyed the fruits and vegetables of a fine garden. A well-kept station of the State now stands there, where nothing but wilderness existed in 1885. Baumann scarcely heard rubber mentioned on the Congo, though it is now one of the chief articles of trade.

Mr. Martin's poisoned arrow did not hit the mark. What he meant to do was to give a very unfavorable impression of the Congo State. What he succeeded in doing was to furnish material for one of the most careful and scientific of African explorers to prove that, considering all the disadvantages, the State is moving along the path of progress at a highly commendable pace.

The Great Coal Strike

As the coal strike continues in the United States from day to day the employment of great numbers of factory hands becomes precarious, and as a destructive agency the strike is having far reaching results. It is estimated that the strikers are losing $250,000 a day in wages, and in the course of a very few weeks wage-earners in hundreds of factories, which must either have coal or close, may be deprived of their means of subsistence. Many manufacturers, viewing the over-crowded condition of the labor market, and reflecting that after a summer's idleness they could command their own rates of wages, do not care whether they close or not. Thus if the strike continues, wages may be forced down in many or all of the highly organized industries. Although small quantities of fuel have been imported from Nova Scotia and Wales, the supply from these sources, upon which a duty of 75 cents a ton is imposed, cannot bring much relief. According to the American Consul at Cape Breton, the miners of Nova Scotia receive better pay than do those of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia, and in the opinion of at least one Pennsylvania paper the present McKinley tariff duty is insufficient. Unquestionably the demand of the strikers is more reasonable than is that of the protectionist paper.

It Frightened Him.

Binks was calling on the apple of his eye. He picked up a volume of "Lucille," and ran across an inscription on a fly-leaf.

"Ah! a present?" he remarked.

"Yes, from a dear friend, oh, ever so long ago—nine or ten years."

"So long as that?"

"Oh, yes. I was quite a little girl."

When three weeks had gone by, without the regular nightly appearances of Binks, and it began to look as though he meant it, she looked up the book and found the explanation in the inscription.

It read:—"To Miss Clara, on her twenty-fifth birthday."

The fly-leaf is torn out now.

In France a woman may become a doctor, a lawyer, a member of the Board of Education, and may even be decorated with the cross of the Legion of Honor: but she may not witness a legal document. She occupies an important place in art, business and commerce, but she cannot possess her own earnings if she is married.

More women are employed in Government positions in England than anywhere else in the world.

Medical men die off more rapidly than other professional men. Between the ages of 45 and 65, two doctors die to one clergyman.

FROM MANY LANDS.

Some Interesting Items From All Parts of the World.

India has 132,000 lepers.

Turkey has had but two strikes.

Venice is built on eighty islands.

There are thirty varieties of bamboo.

Chinese botanists can grow oaks in thimbles.

The average life of a ship is about twenty-six years.

The tea plant needs a moist heat for growth.

Tramps are practically unknown in New Zealand.

Horses succumb to cold quicker than any other animal.

The average life of American-built ships is eighteen years.

The war material of France is valued at $500,000,000.

The Czar of Russia takes 300 trunks with him when he travels.

The magnesium light was first applied to art photography in 1864.

There are estimated to be 1,000,000 Germans in the United States.

Most workers in Switzerland labor about eleven hours a day.

Diamonds so small that 1,500 go to the carat have been cut in Holland.

Only 10 per cent. of German school boys are said to go in for athletics.

In less than 300 years Great Britain alone has spent £1,359,000,000 in war.

In 1887 France had 85,545 schools, 136,800 teachers, and 6,308,000 scholars.

The largest apes have only sixteen ounces of brain; the lowest men have thirty-nine.

The otter excels every animal in swimming. Its speed is superior to that of many fishes.

Newfoundland is without reptiles. No snake, frog, toad or lizard has ever been seen there.

A mosquito has twenty-two teeth in the end of its bill—eleven above and the same number below.

One of the most sacred spots in the Holy Land is being disfigured by advertisements of Dublin stout!

A watch is said to tick 157,680,000 times in a year, and the wheels travel 3,558¾ miles per annum.

There is one Chinese, one Portuguese, and one Cherokee newspaper printed in the United States.

The Chinese, Japanese, Malays, Siamese, New Zealanders, and North American Indians are beardless.

In Corfu sheets of paper pass for money; one sheet buys one quart of rice or twenty sheets a piece of hemp cloth.

A new cigarette machine has been invented that will feed, roll, paste, and make 10,000 perfect cigarettes in ten hours.

Dew has a preference for some colors. While a yellow board attracts dew, a red or black one beside it will be perfectly dry.

The world's oyster fisheries produce annually 4,439,000,000 oysters, one half being consumed within three days after they are taken.

The Victoria Railway bridge over the St. Lawrence at Montreal, contains 3,000,000 cubic feet of masonry work and 10,500 tons of iron.

In one auction room in London during a single season over half a million birdskins from the West Indies and Brazil were sold.

Most of the numerous temples throughout China are painted red; everything lucky and pleasant among the Chinese is of vermilion color.

The dollar in Perak, Straits Settlements which ten years ago was equal to 4s. English money is now only worth 1s. 11d. owing to the over-cheapness of silver.

The first notice of the use of coal is in the records of the Abbey of Peterborough, England, in the year 850, which mention an item of twelve cartloads of "fossil fuel."

The tiger makes short work of the buffalo in Sumatra. Therefore, to avoid its enemy the buffalo rests at night in the river, with only its nose and horns above the surface.

The principal wheat-exporting countries of the world are in the order named:—The United States, British India, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Australasia, and Argentina.

A new torpedo-boat is now being built at Havre for the French Government which is to be the fastest in the world. The speed, if nothing is wrong in the calculation, will be from 29 to 30 knots per hour.

According to a report by the French Minister of Finance, 148,808 families in France have claimed exemption from certain taxes recently voted by the Parliament, on account of having seven or more children.

A project is on foot to introduce into the United Kingdom the edible lichen of Japan. It is gathered off the granite rocks in the Japanese mountains and contains large quantities of starch and other gelatinous substances.

The Sultan of Turkey not only has a rigid censorship of the Press, but he has ordered that no newspapers be published until the afternoon, so the censors will not have to forego their morning nap in order to supervise them.

When a settler in the North-West Territory wants to go back to Ontario to be married, the Canadian Pacific Railway sells him a matrimonial ticket at the usual rate, and, on presenting the return coupon and a marriage certificate, he is entitled to free transport for his bride.

There is one peculiarity about New Orleans—it is a city of rats. New Orleans is below the river bed, and it is all times low and damp. The city is not clean, and large wharf rats, multiplying in the business portion of the city, swarm in droves.

Mrs. Margaret M'Dowal, a Scotchwoman, who died in 1768, aged 106 years, married and survived thirteen husbands. But even this old lady was eclipsed by one Gay, a Frenchman, who was courageous enough to marry sixteen wives, and yet he died childless.

Edison, the inventor, prefers women machinists for the delicate details of his electrical machines. He says that they have more fine sense about machinery in one minute than most men in their whole existence. He backs up his statement by having 200 female employes in his works.