

THE HERITAGE

In the "Southern Cross" of August 9th, in the series entitled "Having a Baby," an article appeared under the heading, "Your child cannot inherit acquired characteristics." Highly scientific terms are employed in the statements made to establish the truth of this, and to the casual reader it would seem to mean much more than it really does. Unless real knowledge as to the ensuing specially typed sub-heading, "Drunkenness acquired," were brought to bear on the article, it would be fatally easy for the conclusion to be drawn that a drunken parentage could not affect the child, unless he were brought up in, and subjected to, the influences of surroundings which had produced the drunkenness of the parent. This is a terribly dangerous idea for anyone to hold. The apparent suggestion is that there need be no apprehension as to the development of the child, if he is removed from the immediate environment.

That this is untrue is clearly and terribly certain. The writer of the articles does NOT in fact, say this. Care is taken to avoid the actual laying down of the principle. "Drunkenness," it says, "cannot be inherited." The whole issue is blurred in this sentence.

What is "drunkenness"? It is the state, or habit of being drunk. Of course, a "state" or "habit" cannot be inherited. The first is a temporary condition, and the second comes as the result of practice.

Think, for a moment, of the children of, say, musical parents. They cannot be born musical performers. The son of a sailor is not born a sailor, and the child of a thief is not born dishonest. But no one can say that such children are not likely to exhibit, at an early age, the right trend in the direction of becoming musical artists, mariners, or thieves. While no suggestion is made that this follows in every, or even in a majority of cases, we claim that a sufficient weight of evidence is available to prove that it very often does happen that the musical parents' child shows, at an early age, his musical bias; that the little lad of the sailor loves anything connected with a boat, and will in many cases, "follow the sea"; while the dishonest streak of a thieving parent will show up unmistakably in his poor offspring.

The article referred to makes a point of the power of environment, but says no word to warn mothers and fathers of the dread possibility of inherited TENDENCY.

It used to be thought that tuberculosis was an inherited disease. Research has shown that it is passed on by infection, and that the same source of infection is responsible for the appearance of the disease in those of the same family. But, research has also shown that a very marked tendency towards its development is found among those of a family in which it has occurred. That this may be

guarded against is a thing for which we have reason to be thankful, but the fact remains that while one person can be exposed to infection and suffer no ill effects, it would be dangerous in the extreme for another, because of the predisposition.

What is true of tuberculosis, is even more true of the drinking danger. It is the absence of this fact that makes the article under consideration something to deplore. Of all the dangers which can beset the unborn child, there is not one so much to be feared and dreaded as that of the drinking TENDENCY.

A little while ago I heard of a child, a little girl born of drunken parents. Her mother died at her birth and she was taken away from the home and brought up in surroundings where drink was never used. She had never seen or tasted it in her life. At the age of seven she was in the street when someone accidentally broke a bottle of brandy, the contents of which ran out on the pavement. An eye-witness said that the child lay down and lapped up the liquid. My authority for this story is unimpeachable. What about this child's inheritance? Other instances are told bearing out the truth that an INHERITED TENDENCY can be transmitted.

God forbid that we should appear to imply that there is no help to be found for such children as are likely to have this dread thing to face in their lives. Environment, training, example, and above all else, the love of Christ, are set against the evil power, and in many cases, triumph. But let no man or woman imagine that indulgence in drinking habits can be relied upon to pass over the unborn children without danger of many kinds.

Of the physical dangers, too much cannot be said.

Dr. Fraser Harris says: "Possibly one of the most fruitful sources of the birth of infants who will later become imbecile is in the alcoholic sperms of the father."

Dr. Watt Eden says: "I do not think it can be disputed that alcoholic consumed by the mother will pass into the foetal circulation."

In the case of this deadly peril, a factor should be noted which differentiates it from the inheritance of such other tendencies as those mentioned above. In the musical, sea-faring, thieving possibilities there is not the actual, material, physical effect brought about by the use of alcohol. Here is a definite thing; whose effects are as marked as if they were written down. How can anyone who has the well-being of the child, or of the nation, at heart, write or say anything to lessen the vigilance of the parent? That the sins of the fathers are still visited upon the children is a natural law which operates as it has ever done. By all means, let every effort be made to save the innocent victims, but let us

DEPARTMENTAL WORK

METHODS DEPARTMENT

August 12th: A successful School of Methods was held by the Auckland District W.C.T.U. There were two sessions, well attended by representatives of various Unions. Mrs. Kasper conducted the School.

At the Devotional period a paper from the World's Spiritual Superintendent, Mrs. Lee-Cowie, was read, and the members took part in repetition of favourite passages of Scripture and Sentence Prayers.

Mrs. J. Williams gave a study on Public Speaking, and five members gave speeches on "Why is Scientific Instruction in Schools a Necessity?" A talk on Parliamentary procedure was given by the Superintendent. At noon, the Noontide Hymn was sung, and after prayer came the Luncheon adjournment.

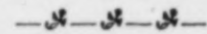
Re-assembling at 1 p.m., a hymn and prayer opened the session. A talk on Chairmanship, and studies of the following Departments were taken: Anti-gambling, Medical Scientific Temperance, Notable Days, Educational Bureau, and "How to fill in a Questionnaire" for the Five-fold Plan."

Mrs. J. Cook, Dominion Superintendent for the "World W.R. Bulletin" gave a talk on this department, gaining two new subscribers. A practice of choruses and prayer brought the school to a close.

A. KASPER,
Superintendent.

PEACE DEPARTMENT S.O.S.

The Dominion Superintendent of the Peace and Arbitration Department, Mrs. Mackie, 194 Rolleston Avenue, Linwood, Christchurch, is anxious to receive any reports of work done in this department as soon as possible. Please do not wait till the end of the year if you can report now.



NEW SUBSCRIBERS TO "THE WHITE RIBBON"

From 10th August to 10th September, 1946.

Maungakarama, 5; Eden, 1; Inglewood, 1; Karori, 1; Bryndwr, 1; Linwood, 1; Reefton, 1; Christchurch, 7; Riccarton, 2; Winton, 3. Total, 23. Total number from 1st February to 10th September—143.

see to it that no words of ours shall lull the guilty parent into a false security.

The subject is too vast for full investigation here. Insanity, deformity, imbecility, and the tendency to disease tell the tale to all who will use their eyes and brains. God grant that the truth may be made plain for all to see.

—M.C.