Connecticut’s Lowered Death Rate

Mr. Deets Pickett, secretary of the research department of the Methodist Deaconess Institute, Prevention and Public Morals, has been good enough to send us from Washington a statement, which begins in the careful manner of a prohibitionist. The wage prohibition went into effect there has been a steady decline in the death rate. For instance in the State of Connecticut Pickett quotes statistics compiled by the Census Bureau to show that while the annual death rate from 100,000 of Connecticut’s population ranged from 17.7 to 16.6. During the prohibition period, price of alcohol went up to the rate to 1926 the rate was from 11.4 to 13.5. Quot consist of statistics.

Mr. Pickett would like to have us believe that this striking decrease was brought about by the prohibition laws. But he pays Connecticut the compliment of saying that its death rate “is the lowest in the neighboring ‘nullifying’ States.” We should be even more impressed with the conclusions that “the Research Secretary of the Methodists” states that the statistics were not for the fact that the death rate in wet and wick countries during the period needed above a damp climate, a climate that has a lower death rate than any other country, and which, while acknowledging the blessings of enforced compulsory abstain is very specific to Mr. Pickett’s deductions. If he will look into the scientific point of view the vital statistics of as many countries, he will find that these states, too, is to repeat a constantly falling death rate. But that it is not seen to have leave this continent to find satisfactorily proof of the adverse phenomenon. As an additional statistic from the wet provinces of Canada, which show that since they have not remained their analyses they have experienced an improvement in the death rate! It would be ridiculous to argue that the favorable death-rate situation in these over-super- sate is due to the alcohol they consume. It is just as likely that the lowered death rate in the United States is due to prohibition. In the first place there is very little evidence actual prohibition, and secondly it is difficult to believe that prohibition liquor has any favorable influence on health.

A research secretary, if he were really de- voted to research and intent on giving sound conclusions, would pay, it seems true, some attention to the great epidemic of infectious diseases that set the death rate during the period immediately preceding Vol- uminium. Also we should suppose, he would be forced to pay some attention to the recent triumph of medicine in conquering infectious diseases. With respect to the newborn babe there has been, since 1856, a gain of 20 years in life expectancy. But the life expectancy of those who have attained the age of 20 remains practically where it was a century ago. Dr. Morris Fishbein, editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association, is as enthusiastic over the statement that in 1850 a child came into this life with an expectation of living a child born in 1850 had an expectancy of 66. In 1858 one who had reached the age of 25 might expect to live 25.3 years and in 1926 a person of that age might expect to live 26.4 years longer.

That is, in this period of 70 years, with all the strides made in sanitation, with the greater knowledge of disease, its spread, and care, a person of 25 might expect to live 1-10 of a year longer than a person of the age of 25 in 1856.

Thus it is seen that the great improvement in the death rate has to do almost exclusively. Whatever the history lives may be far fewer babies die during the first year of life than ever before. A great many more of them survive the diseases of childhood, thanks to the brilliant discoveries in the field of pro- venience and medicine.

These Mr. Pickett want us to believe that prior to prohibition children were killed off by their consumption of alcoholic beverages, and that a beneficent law has now saved them from their indirect deaths. It is the facts here stated, that is about the only conclusion that can be drawn from his statistics. The lowered death rate in both wet and dry countries has precious little to do with alcohol one way or the other. The death of infants is the result of man’s conquest of infectious diseases.

How much further the process can be car- ried, no one can safely predict. It is reason- able to suppose that healthy children will have a constantly better chance than those that grow up. But what of the human race after the age of 25 is reached? The wonder of a child’s gain in his life expectancy is 75 or more years seems to mean much difference whether they pursue constancy or whether a paternalistic government under- takes to dry them up.

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