

WHY PEOPLE BECOME INTOXICATED

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I.

Whence the use of intoxicating substances,— of whiskey, wine, beer, hashish, opium, tobacco, and other less common substances,— ether, morphine, muscarine? Why did it begin, and why has it so rapidly spread among all kinds of people, among savages and civilized men alike? What does this mean, that wherever there is no whiskey, wine, or beer, there is opium or hashish, muscarine, and other substances, and tobacco everywhere?

Why must people become intoxicated?

Ask a man why he has begun to drink wine and continues to do so, and he will answer you: "For no reason, it is agreeable, all men drink," and he will add: "For a pastime." Others again, who have never once given themselves the trouble to think out whether it is good or bad that they drink wine, will add that wine is wholesome, gives strength; that is, they will say what has long ago been proved to be untrue.

Ask a smoker why he began to smoke tobacco and still continues to do so, and he will answer: "For no reason, from tedium, everybody smokes."

In the same way, no doubt, will answer the users of opium, hashish, morphine, muscarine.

"For no reason, from tedium, for pleasure, everybody does so." But it is good, for no reason, from tedium, for pleasure, because everybody does so, to twirl the fingers, to whistle, to sing songs, to play the pipe, and so forth, that is, to do something for which it is not necessary to waste natural riches, nor to spend great forces of labour, to do something which does not do any palpable evil to oneself or to others. But for the production of tobacco, wine, hashish, opium, millions and millions of the best lands are taken up, frequently among populations in need of land, by plantations of rye, potatoes, hemp, poppy, grapevines, and tobacco, and millions of labourers — in England one-eighth of the population — are busy all their life producing these intoxicating substances. Besides, the use of these substances is apparently harmful, produces terrible calamities, which are known to all and recognized by them,

and from which more men perish than from all wars and infectious diseases taken together. And people know this; so this cannot happen for no reason, from tedium, for pleasure, only because all do so.

There must be something else in this. One constantly and everywhere meets people who love their children, who are ready for their good to make all kinds of sacrifices, and who at the same time spend on whiskey, wine, beer, or opium, or hashish, or even tobacco, what would either completely provide for their suffering and starving children, or would at least free them from privations. It is evident that if a man, who is put to the necessity of choosing between the privations and sufferings of his family, which he loves, and abstinence from intoxicating substances, none the less chooses the first, he is incited to this by something more important than because everybody does so and because it is agreeable. Evidently this is not done for no reason, from tedium, for pleasure, but there is some more important reason.

This reason, so much as I have been able to understand it from reading about this subject and observing other people, and especially myself, when I used to drink wine and smoke tobacco, according to my observations consists in the following:

During the period of his conscious life a man may frequently observe two separate beings in himself: one – a blind, sensuous being; the other – a seeing, spiritual being. The blind, animal being eats, drinks, rests, sleeps, breeds, and moves as moves a wound-up machine; the seeing, spiritual being, which is bound up with the animal being, does not do anything itself, but only estimates the activity of the animal being by coinciding with it, when it approves of this activity, and disagreeing with it, when it does not approve of it.

This seeing being may be compared with the hand of a compass, which with one end points to the north, and with the other to the opposite, the south, and which along its whole extent is covered by a strip that is invisible so long as that which carries the hand moves in its direction, and which steps out and becomes visible, as soon as that which bears the hand declines from the direction pointed out by it.

Similarly the seeing, spiritual being, whose manifestation in life we call conscience, always points with one end to the good, with the other, the opposite end, to evil, and we do not see this, so long as we do not decline from the direction given by it, that is, from evil to good. But we need only commit an act which is contrary to the direction of our conscience, and there appears the consciousness of the spiritual being, which indicates the deviation of the animal activity from the direction indicated by the conscience. And as a navigator would not be able to continue to work with the oars, the engine, or the sails, knowing that he is not going whither he ought to go, so long as he did not give to his motion the direction which corresponds to the hand of the compass, or did not conceal from himself its declination, so also any man, who has come to feel the

doubling of his conscience with the animal activity, cannot continue this activity, unless he brings it into harmony with his conscience or conceals from himself the indications of his conscience as to the irregularity of the animal life.

Man's whole life, it may be said, consists only in these two activities: (1) the bringing of its activity into harmony with conscience, and (2) the concealment of the indications of his conscience for the sake of continuing life.

Some do the first, others the second. In order to accomplish the first there is but one method, – a moral illumination, the increase of light in oneself, and attention to what it illuminates; for the second, – for the concealment of the indications of conscience, – there are two methods: an external and an internal one. The external method consists in occupations which distract the attention from the indications of conscience; the internal one consists in the obscuration of conscience itself.

As a man is able in two ways to conceal from his view an object in front of him, by an external distraction of attention toward other, more striking objects, and by a soiling of the eyes, so also may a man conceal from himself the indications of his conscience in a twofold manner: by an external distraction of attention through all kinds of occupations, cares, amusements, plays, and by an internal soiling of the organ of attention itself. For people with a dulled, limited moral sense external distractions are frequently quite sufficient to prevent their seeing the indications of conscience as to the irregularity of life. But for morally sensitive people these means are frequently insufficient.

The external methods do not completely distract the attention from the consciousness of the discord between life and the demands of conscience; this consciousness impedes life, and men, to have the possibility of living, have recourse to the indubitable inner method of the obscuration of conscience itself, which consists in the poisoning of the brain by means of intoxicating substances.

Life is not such as it ought to be according to the demands of conscience. The strength is lacking to turn life in accordance with these demands. The distractions which may divert one from the recognition of this discord are insufficient, or they have become tedious, and so, to be able to continue to live in spite of the indications of conscience as to the irregularity of life, men poison, for a time stopping its activity, that organ through which the indications of conscience are manifested, just as a man who purposely throws dust into his eyes would conceal from himself what he does not wish to see.

II.

Not in the taste, not in the gratification, not in the distraction, not in the pleasure lies the cause of the universal diffusion of hashish, opium, wine, tobacco, but only in the necessity of

concealing from oneself the indications of conscience.

One day I walked along the street, and passing by some drivers who were conversing, I heard one of them say to another, "Everybody knows a sober man feels conscience-stricken

A sober man feels conscience-stricken at what does not so affect a drunken man. With these words was expressed the essential fundamental cause for which men have recourse to intoxicating substances. Men have recourse to them, either that they may have no stricken conscience after committing an act which is contrary to their conscience, or that they may in advance bring themselves to a state in which they can commit an act which is contrary to their conscience, but toward which they are drawn by their human nature.

A sober man feels conscience-stricken to go to lewd women, to steal, to kill. A drunken man has no such feeling, and so, if a man wants to commit an act which his conscience forbids, he intoxicates himself.

I remember the declaration of the cook under trial, who had killed a relative of mine, an old lady, whose servant he had been. He said that when he sent away the chambermaid, his mistress, and the time came for action, he started for the sleeping-room with a knife, but felt that a sober man could not commit the act he had undertaken, — "A sober man is conscience-stricken." He went back, swallowed two glasses of whiskey, which he had provided for himself in advance, and only then felt himself ready to commit the deed.

Nine-tenths of the crimes are committed in this manner, — "To brace myself I will take a drink !"

Half the falls of women take place under the influence of wine. Nearly all the visits to lewd houses are made in a drunken condition. Men know this property of wine to drown the voice of conscience, and consciously use it for this purpose.

Not only do men intoxicate themselves in order to drown their conscience, — knowing the action of wine, they, with the intention of compelling other people to commit acts which are contrary to conscience, purposely get them intoxicated, organize the intoxication of men, in order to deprive them of their conscience. In a war soldiers are always made drunk, when it becomes necessary to fight a hand-to-hand fight. All the French soldiers were at the stormings of Sevastopol made drunk.

Everybody knows of men who have become insensibly drunk in consequence of crimes which tormented their conscience. Everybody may observe that men who live immorally more than any other are prone to use intoxicating substances. Gangs of robbers and thieves, and prostitutes do not live without liquor.

All know and recognize the fact that the use of intoxicating substances is the consequence of bites of conscience, that in

certain immoral professions intoxicating substances are used for the sake of drowning one's conscience. All know also and recognize the fact that the use of intoxicating substances drowns the conscience, that a drunken man is capable of acts which he would not have the courage to think of in his sober state. All agree to this, but, – strange to say, – when in consequence of the use of intoxicating substances there do not appear such acts as murder, violence, and so forth; when intoxicating substances are not taken as the result of some terrible crimes, but by men of professions that are not considered by us to be criminal, and when these substances are not taken at once in a great quantity, but constantly in moderate quantities, – it is for some reason assumed that the intoxicating substances no longer act upon the conscience, drowning it.

Thus it is assumed that the daily drinking by every well-to-do Russian of a glass of vodka before each meal and of a glass of wine after it, by a Frenchman of his absinthe, by the Englishman of his port and porter, by a German of his beer, by a well-to-do Chinaman the smoking of his moderate amount of opium, and the smoking of tobacco, is done only for pleasure and by no means affects men's consciences.

It is assumed that, if after this customary intoxication no crime has been committed, no theft, no murder, but certain stupid and bad acts, these acts have come of themselves, and were not provoked by the intoxication. It is assumed that if no capital crime has been committed by these men, they have no reason to drown their conscience, and that the life led by the men who abandon themselves to constant intoxication is absolutely good, and would be just as good if the people did not become intoxicated. It is assumed that the constant use of intoxicating substances in no way obscures their conscience.

Although everybody knows by experience that the mood changes from the use of wine and tobacco; that what without a stimulus would make a person feel ashamed now no longer causes shame; that after each ever so small bite of conscience a man is attracted to some kind of intoxication ; that under the influence of intoxicating substances it is hard to reflect upon one's life and condition, and that the constant, regular use of intoxicating substances produces the same physiological effect as a single immoderate use of it, – it seems to moderate drinkers and smokers that they do not at all use the intoxicating substances for the purpose of drowning their conscience, but only because they taste good and give pleasure.

But a man need but seriously and impassionately think of this, without excluding himself, in order to understand that, in the first place, if the use of intoxicating substances at one time in large quantities drowns man's conscience, the constant use of these substances must produce the same effect, because the intoxicating substances always act physiologically in the same way, always exciting and then dulling the activity of the brain, whether they be taken in large or in small doses; in the second place, that if the intoxicating substances have the property of drowning the

conscience, they have this property at all times, both when under their influence a murder, a theft, an act of violence is committed, and when under their influence a word is said which would not be said without them, and people think and feel as they have not thought or felt before; and, in the third place, that if the use of intoxicating substances is necessary for thieves, robbers, prostitutes, in order to drown their consciences, it is just as indispensable to people who busy themselves with professions which are condemned by their consciences, even though these professions may be considered lawful and honourable by other people.

In short, it is impossible to avoid seeing that the use of intoxicating substances in large or small quantities, periodically or constantly, in the higher or in the lower circles, is provoked by one and the same cause, – the necessity of drowning the voice of conscience, in order that the discord between life and the demands of conscience may not be seen.

III.

In this alone lies the cause of the diffusion of all intoxicating substances and, among others, of tobacco, almost the most widely diffused and the most harmful of all.

It is assumed that tobacco cheers one up, clarifies one's thoughts, attracts people toward itself like any other habit, without ever producing that effect of drowning the conscience, which is recognized in the case of wine. But one need but look more attentively at the conditions in which a special necessity for smoking is manifested, in order to become convinced that the intoxication by means of tobacco, like that by means of wine, acts upon the conscience, and that men consciously have recourse to this intoxication, especially when they need it for this purpose. If tobacco merely cheered one up and clarified one's thoughts, there would not be this passionate need of it, particularly in certain definite cases, and people would not say that they would prefer to be without bread than without tobacco, and would not often actually prefer smoking to food.

That cook who cut his lady's throat said that, as he entered the lady's sleeping-room and cut her throat with a knife and she fell down with a rale and the blood burst forth in a stream, he lost courage. " I could not finish her up," he said, " and I went out of the sleeping-room into the sitting-room, where I sat down and smoked a cigarette." Only after he had intoxicated himself with tobacco, did he feel sufficient strength to return to the sleeping-room, where he finished up the old lady and rummaged through her things.

Apparently the necessity for smoking was at that moment evoked in him, not by the desire to clarify his thoughts or cheer himself up, but by the demand for drowning that which kept him from accomplishing what he had undertaken to do.

Every smoker may observe in himself this definite necessity for

intoxicating himself with tobacco at certain difficult moments. I remember when it was during the period of my smoking that I used to feel a special necessity for tobacco. This was always in such minutes when I was anxious not to remember what I did remember, when I wanted to forget, not to think. I am sitting alone, doing nothing, and I know that I must begin to work, but I do not feel like working. I smoke a cigarette, and continue to sit. I promised somebody to call on him at five o'clock, and I have stayed too long in another place; I recall that I am late, but I do not want to think of it, – so I smoke. I am excited, and I tell a man a lot of disagreeable things, and I know that I am doing wrong, and I see that it is time to stop, but I want to give vent to my excitability, and I smoke and continue to excite myself. I play cards and lose more than I intended to limit myself to, – and I smoke. I have placed myself in an awkward situation, I have acted badly, have made a mistake, and I must recognize my situation, in order that I may get out of it, but I do not wish to recognize it, – so I accuse others, and I smoke. I write and am not quite satisfied with what I write. I ought to give it up, but I want to finish writing what I have planned, – I smoke. I quarrel, and I see that my adversary and I do not understand and cannot understand one another; but I want to express my thoughts, – I continue to talk, and I smoke.

The peculiarity of tobacco, as compared with other intoxicating substances, besides the ease with which one is intoxicated by it and besides its apparent harmlessness, consists also in its portativeness, so to speak, in the possibility of applying it to small, separate cases. To say nothing of the fact that the use of opium, wine, hashish, is connected with certain appliances which one cannot always have, while one can always carry about tobacco and paper, and that the smoker of opium, the alcoholic, excite horror, while a tobacco smoker does not represent anything repulsive, the superiority of tobacco over other intoxicants is this, that the intoxication from opium, hashish, wine, covers all impressions and actions received and produced during a certain sufficiently long period of time, while the intoxication from tobacco may be directed to every separate occasion. You want to do what ought not to be done, so you smoke a cigarette, you become intoxicated to the extent you wish to be, in order that you may do what ought not to be done, and you are again fresh, and you can think and speak clearly; or you feel that you have done what ought not to be done, – again a cigarette, and the unpleasant consciousness of a bad or awkward act is destroyed, and you can busy yourself with something else.

But, to say nothing of those individual cases in which every smoker has recourse to smoking, not as to a gratification of a habit and a pastime, but as to a means for drowning the conscience in the case of acts which are to be committed or have already been committed, – can one fail to observe that strict, definite interdependence between the manner of life of people and their bias for smoking ?

When do boys begin to smoke ? Almost always when they begin to lose their child innocence. Why can smokers stop smoking the moment they get into more moral conditions of life, and begin to smoke again the

moment they fall into a corrupt sphere ? Why do almost all gamblers smoke ? Why do women who lead a regular mode of life smoke least of all women ? Why do all prostitutes and insane persons smoke ? Deducing what is due to habit, it is evident that smoking stands in a definite relation to the demand for drowning the conscience, and that it attains this aim.

The observation as to what extent smoking drowns the voice of conscience may be made on almost any smoker. Every smoker, in surrendering himself to his passion, forgets or neglects the very first demands of social life, which he demands from others and which he observes in all other cases, so long as his conscience is not drowned by tobacco. Every man of our medium degree of education regards it as impermissible, rude, and inhuman for his own pleasure to impair the quiet and the comfort, and much more the health, of other people. Nobody will permit himself to wet a room in which people are sitting, to be noisy, yell, to let in cold, hot, or foul air, to commit acts which interfere with others or harm them. But out of one thousand smokers not one will feel any embarrassment at filling with foul air a room, the air of which non-smoking women and children breathe. Even though smokers usually ask the persons present, " Does it incommode you ?" all know that these persons are supposed to answer, " Not in the least" (although it cannot be agreeable for a non-smoker to breathe the infected air and to find ill-smelling stubs in glasses, cups, plates, on candlesticks, or even in ash-trays). But even if adult non-smokers were able to endure the tobacco, this can in no way be agreeable and useful to children, whose permission nobody asks. And yet honourable people, who are humane in every other respect, smoke in the presence of children, at dinner, in small rooms, infecting the air with the tobacco smoke, without feeling therewith the least scruples.

People generally say, and I used to say so, that smoking contributes to mental work. This is unquestionably so, if one considers the amount of mental work. A smoker, who therefore has ceased to value strictly or to weigh his thoughts, imagines that a mass of ideas has sud-denly come to him. But this does not mean at all that he has acquired a mass of thoughts, but only that he has lost control over his thoughts.

When a man works, he always recognizes two beings in himself: one – the worker, the other – the one who puts a value on the work. The stricter the valuation, the slower and the better is the work, and vice versa. But if the valuator is under the influence of intoxication, there will be more work, but its quality will be lowered.

" If I do not smoke, I shall not be able to write. Thoughts do not come to me; I begin writing, and I cannot go on," people generally say, and so did I say. What does this mean ? Either that you have nothing to write about, or that what you wish to write about has not yet matured in your consciousness, but only begins to present itself dimly to you, and the appraising critic, who lives in you and is not intoxicated by tobacco, tells you so. If you did not smoke, you

would give up what you have begun, and would wait for the time when what you are thinking about has become clear to you, or you would try to think out what dimly presents itself to you, or you would consider the objections that have arisen and would strain all your attention to elucidate your thoughts. But you light a cigarette, the critic within you is intoxicated, and the impediment to your work is removed: what to you, sober from tobacco, has seemed insignificant again presents itself as significant; what has seemed obscure no longer appears as such; the objections that arose before you have disappeared, and you continue to write, and write much and fast.

IV.

"But is it possible that such a small, such a tiny change as a slight intoxication, produced by a moderate use of wine and tobacco, can produce any important consequences? Of course, if a man fills himself with opium or hashish, or with wine, so that he falls and loses his reason, the consequences of such an intoxication may be very serious; but a man's being under a very slight influence of liquor or tobacco can in no way have any serious consequences," people generally say. It seems to people that a slight intoxication, a slight dimming of one's conscience, cannot produce any serious results. But to think thus is the same as to think that it may hurt a watch to strike it against the stone, but that sand getting into the middle of its mechanism cannot hurt it.

The chief work, which moves all human life, does not take place in the motion of human hands, feet, spines, but in the consciousness. For a man to do anything with his feet and hands, it is necessary first for a certain change to take place in the consciousness. And this change determines all the subsequent actions of a man. But these changes are always very small, almost imperceptible.

Bryullov corrected the study of one of his students. As the student looked at the changed study, he said: "You barely touched the study, and it is entirely changed." Bryullov answered, "Art begins only where the barely begins."

This utterance is strikingly correct, and not merely in relation to art, but also to life. It may be said that true life begins—where the barely begins, where the infinitely small changes that are barely perceptible to us begin. The true life does not take place where great external changes occur, where people change places, conflict, fight, kill one another, but only where barely perceptible, differential changes occur.

Ilaskdlnikov's true life did not take place when he killed the old woman and her sister. As he killed the old woman herself, and especially her sister, he did not live his true life, but acted like a machine, — he did what he could not help doing: he exploded the charge with which he had long been loaded. One old woman was dead, another lay before him, the axe was in his hand.

llaskdlnikov's true life did not take place when he met the old woman's sister, but when he had not yet killed one old woman ; when he had not yet been in a strange apartment with the purpose of killing; when he did not have the axe in his hand; when he did not have the noose in his overcoat, to hang the axe in; when he did not even have the old woman in his mind, and, lying on his sofa, did not even reflect on the old woman and whether it was right, or not, by the will of one person to wipe another useless and harmful man from the face of the earth, but reflected whether he ought to live in St. Petersburg or not, whether he ought to take money from his mother, and on other questions which had nothing to do with the old woman. It was, then, in this sphere which was independent of the vital activity that the questions were answered as to whether he would kill the old woman or not. The questions were not decided when he, having killed one old woman, was standing with the axe before the other woman, but when he was not acting, but only thinking, when nothing but his consciousness worked and in this consciousness were taking place barely perceptible changes. It is then that for the regular solution of the rising question the greatest clearness of thought is of especial importance, and then one glass of beer, one cigarette may interfere with the solution of the question, may put off the solution, may drown the voice of conscience and contribute to the solution of the question in favour of the lower animal nature, as was the case with Raskdlnikov.

The changes are barely perceptible, but from them come the most enormous, most terrible consequences. From what will happen when a man has made up his mind and has begun to act, many material things may change, houses, wealth, men's bodies may be ruined, but there can happen no tiling more than what has lodged itself in man's consciousness. The limits of what may happen are given by the consciousness.

But from barely perceptible changes, which take place in the sphere of consciousness, there may happen the most unexpected and most significant consequences, for which there are no limits.

Let no one think that what I say has anything in common with the questions about the freedom of the will, or determinism. Discussions about these subjects are superfluous for my purpose, or for any other purpose. Without solving the question whether a man can act as he wants to (a question which, in my opinion, is not correctly put), I speak only of this, that, as the human activity is determined by barely perceptible changes in the consciousness (no matter whether the so-called freedom of the will is assumed or not), it is necessary to be particularly attentive to that state in which these barely perceptible changes take place, as one has to be particularly attentive to the condition of the scales by means of which we weigh objects. We must, in so far as this depends upon us, try to put ourselves and others under conditions in which the clearness and delicacy of thought which are indispensable for the regular work of the consciousness will not be impaired, and not act in a contrary way, by trying to encumber and confuse this work of the consciousness by the use of intoxicating substances.

A man is both a spiritual and an animal being. A man can be moved by acting upon his spiritual being, and he may be moved by acting on his animal existence, – even as a watch may be moved through the hand or through the chief wheel. And as it is more advantageous to guide the motion through the inner mechanism, so it is more advantageous to move a man – oneself or another – through the consciousness. And as in a watch we must take the best care of what most advantageously moves the inner mechanism, so we must in man look after the purity, the clearness of the consciousness, by means of which it is most advantageous to move a man. It is impossible to have any doubts about this, and all men know it. But there appears the necessity for deceiving oneself. People do not wish so much that their consciousness should work regularly, as that it should seem to them that what they are doing is regular, and they consciously use such substances as impair the regular working of the consciousness.

V.

People drink and smoke, not for no reason, not from tedium, not for pleasure, because it is agreeable, but in order to drown their consciences. And if this is so, how terrible must the consequences be ! Indeed, imagine what the building would be which men would not build with a solid level, to straighten the walls, nor with a T square, to measure the angles, but with a soft level which would adapt itself to all the inequalities in the wall, and with a square which would be adjustable and adaptable to any acute or obtuse angle.

And yet, thanks to the self-intoxication, this very thing is being done in life. Life does not agree with the conscience, and so the conscience is made to bend to life.

This is being done in the lives of separate individuals; this is also being done in the life of all humanity, which is composed of the lives of individuals.

In order fully to understand the whole significance of such intoxication of one's consciousness, let every man well recall his spiritual condition at every period of his life. Every man will find that at every period of his life there stood before him certain moral questions, which he had to solve, and on the solution of which depended the whole good of his life. For the solution of these questions a great straining of the attention is necessary. This straining of the attention is labour. But in every labour, especially in its beginning, there is a period when the labour appears difficult and agonizing, and human weakness urges the desire to drop it. Physical labour appears tormenting in its beginning; still more tormenting is mental labour. As Lessing says, men have the property of ceasing to think when the thinking begins to present difficulties, and, I shall add, especially when the thinking begins to be fruitful. A man feels that the solution of questions before him demands strained, frequently agonizing labour, and he feels like rejecting it. If he did not have any internal means for intoxicating

himself, he would not be able to expel from his consciousness the questions which arise before him, and he would involuntarily be led to the necessity of solving them. The moment questions that are subject to solution begin to torment a man, he has recourse to these means and saves himself from the unrest which is evoked by the agitating questions. The consciousness stops asking for a solution of them, and the unsolved questions remain unsolved until the next enlightenment. But at the next enlightenment the same is repeated, and a man for months, and years, and often during his whole life, continues to stand before the same moral questions, without moving a step toward their solution. And yet it is in the solution of the moral questions that the whole motion of life consists.

What takes place is like what a man would do, who has to look through roiled water to the bottom, in order to get out of it a costly pearl, and who, not wishing to enter into the water, should consciously roil the water, as soon as it began to settle and become transparent. During a whole life a man who intoxicates himself frequently stands motionless on the same once acquired, obscure, contradictory world-conception, at every successive period of enlightenment pressing against the same wall against which he pressed ten or twenty years ago, and which he cannot break down because he consciously dulls that acumen of thought which alone could break through it.

Let each man recall for himself that period during which he has been drinking and smoking, and let him verify the same on others, and he will see one constant feature which distinguishes people who surrender themselves to intoxication from people who are free from it: the more a man is subject to intoxication, the more he is morally immobile.

VI.

The consequences of the use of opium and hashish, as described to us, are terrible for individual persons; terrible are the familiar consequences from the use of alcohol by confirmed drunkards; but incomparably more terrible are the consequences for the whole of society which result from that moderate use of whiskey, wine, beer, and tobacco, which is considered harmless, and to which the majority of men are subject, especially the so-called cultured classes of our world. These consequences must be terrible, if we recognize, what we cannot help recognizing, that the guiding activities of society – the political, official, scientific, literary, artistic activities – are produced for the most part by men who are in an abnormal state, by drunken men. It is generally assumed that a man, who, like the majority of the men of our well-to-do classes, uses alcoholic drinks every time he partakes of food, on the following day, during the period of his work, is in an absolutely normal and sober state. But this is quite untrue. A man who on the day before has drunk a bottle of wine, a glass of whiskey, or two mugs of beer, finds himself in the usual condition of intoxication or oppression which follows upon the excitation, and so in a mentally depressed state, which is

intensified through smoking. For a man who smokes and drinks constantly and moderately, to bring his brain into a normal state, he must pass at least a week without the use of wine or of tobacco.¹ But this can hardly ever be.

¹ But why are people who do not drink or smoke frequently on an infinitely lower mental and moral level than those who drink and 360

Thus the greater part of what is being done in our world, – by men who guide and instruct others, and by men who are guided and instructed, – is not done in a sober state.

Let not any one take this as a joke or exaggeration: the monstrosity and, above all, the senselessness of our life is chiefly due to the constant state of intoxication, which the majority of men induce in themselves. Is it possible that people who are sober would calmly do all that is done in our world, – from the Eiffel Tower to the universal military service? Without any necessity whatsoever a society is formed, capital is collected, plans are formed; millions of work-days, of pounds of iron, are wasted on the construction of a tower; and millions of people consider it their duty to climb on this tower, to stay on it, and to come down again; and the construction of this tower and the visit to it do not evoke in men any other judgment than the desire and intention of building elsewhere higher towers still. Could sober people do this? Or another thing: all the European nations have for decades been busy inventing the best means for killing people and instructing all young men who have reached

smoke? And why do drinkers and smokers frequently manifest the highest mental and spiritual qualities?

The answer to this is, in the first place, that we do not know the height which the drinkers and smokers would have reached if they had not drunk or smoked. But from this, that spiritually strong men, subjecting themselves to the debasing influence of intoxicating substances, have none the less produced great things, we can only conclude that they would have produced even greater things if they had not been subject to intoxications. It is very likely, as an acquaintance of mine told me, that Kant's books would not have been written in so strange and bad a language if he had not smoked so much. In the second place, we must not forget that the lower a man stands mentally and morally, the less does he feel the discord between consciousness and life, and so the less he experiences the necessity for intoxication, and that therefore it happens so frequently that the most sensitive natures, those who morbidly feel the discord between life and conscience, are addicted to the use of narcotics, from which they perish. –Author's Note.

maturity to commit murder. All know that there can be no incursions of barbarians, that the preparations for murder are directed against each other by civilized Christian nations; all know that this is

hard, painful, inconvenient, destructive, immoral, godless, and senseless,— and all prepare themselves for mutual murder: some, by inventing political combinations as to who shall be in alliance with whom and who is to be killed, others, by commanding those who are being prepared to commit murder, and others again, by submitting, against their will, against their conscience, against reason, to these preparations for murder. Could sober men have done this ? Only drunkards, men who have never sobered down, could have committed these deeds and could live in this terrible contradiction of life and conscience in which the men of our world live, not only in this respect, but in many other respects as well.

Never, it seems to me, have men lived in such evident contradiction between the demands of their conscience and their acts.

The humanity of our time seems to have caught in something. It is as though there were some external cause which kept it from taking up a position which is proper for it according to its consciousness. And this cause — if not the only one, it is the most important — is that physical condition of stupefaction, which the great majority of the men of our world induce in themselves by means of wine and tobacco.

The liberation from this terrible evil will be an epoch in the life of humanity, and this epoch, it seems, is at hand. The evil has been recognized. The change in the consciousness in relation to the use of intoxicating substances has already taken place, people have come to understand their terrible harm and begin to point it out, and this imperceptible change in the consciousness will inevitably bring with it the liberation of men from the use of intoxicating substances. But the liberation of men from the use of intoxicating substances will open their eyes to the demands of their conscience, and they will begin to pass their lives in accord with their conscience.

And it seems to me that this is already beginning. And, as always, it begins in the higher classes, when all the lower classes are already infected.