

Selected Article.

THE EFFECT OF SMALL DOSES OF ALCOHOL ON THE BRAIN.*

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SELECTIVE ACTION OF ALCOHOL.

Mr. Horsley said that it was his duty to present to them, from the scientific standpoint, a plain statement of the present state of knowledge as to the effect produced on the brain by small doses of alcohol. It probably was not generally known that all drugs had a selective action on the organs and tissues of the body, that is to say, they affected by reason of their chemical affinity some organs or parts of organs and spared others, and this was particularly true of alcohol. As Professor Ehrlich had pointed out, it was merely a question of chemical affinity. They must, therefore, first familiarize themselves with the various elements of the nervous system, which investigation had shown to be the commonest point of attack. The speaker proceeded to give a rapid survey of the central nervous system, illustrating the subject by means of lantern slides. In considering the effect of small quantities of alcohol on the central nervous system it was necessary to discuss its effect on ideation, that is, the intellectual thinking apparatus, next on the voluntary action apparatus, and then on the cerebellar apparatus for the regulation of movement and equilibration. The activity of the highest psychical centres of the brain was estimated in various ways. The activity of the brain in executing the decision of a thought arising from the stimulation of a special sense centre could be estimated either by measuring the time the brain took to do some small task allotted to it, first in the natural state and secondly when under the influence of alcohol, or by estimating the amount of work done in a given time.

INCREASED REACTION TIMES.

The time occupied by the nervous system in observing and recording the simplest thing was called "the reaction time," and was so appreciable that in all minute and accurate records astronomers had to measure their reaction period, and to account for it. The lecturer then demonstrated by an experi-

* Reprinted from the *British Medical Journal*.