

**TEMPERANCE COLUMN.**

**DOMESTIC USE OF MINERAL WATER.**

By **TITUS MUNSON COAN, M. D.**

Pure earth, air, light, and water—these are the physical elements which, all would agree, are essential to the perfect home. Those of us who live in cities have but little earth to dwell upon, especially if we chance to live on the tenth story of a towering apartment-house. Air can be had in abundance and of good quality at that elevation, and also light; but pure water—that is not so easy to get. What shall we do for water that is free from impurities, that is agreeable to the taste, and that may be tonic or medicinal, as well as pleasant?

Any housekeeper knows that the ordinary source of supply are not always safe or uniform. What dangers lurk in impure wells and tainted cisterns, in streams that have been accidentally fouled! One would think that a deep well would be safe; but no well that receives its supply by percolation from the surface is safe, however deep. On the other hand, an artesian well, though it may not be so deep, is safe. What is an artesian well? It is one that receives its supply from subterranean streams that flow great distances under stony strata; and it is not, therefore, immediately affected by the rains or freshets above. Such wells cannot receive any surface impurities; while all surface wells are more or less in danger of fouling. So, often, indeed, is contagion carried by streams and wells, that one must exercise much care in choosing their waters.

I am not by any means going to write an alarmist paper upon the subject of drinking-water; and yet, when we bear in mind the contagious diseases like cholera, dysentery, and others that have been disseminated, both in city and in country, by the medium of impure drinking-water, I am ready to say that water has slain more people than whiskey. The assertion is literally true; but that does not by any means make it necessary to have recourse to stimulants as an alternative, for nature gives us beverages of the most delicious kind in the various carbonated mineral waters.

What are mineral waters? In the strict sense, nearly all waters are mineralized, since even the purest are not quite devoid of some saline, alkaline, or acid constituents. But we mean in general by mineral waters those which have a sufficient proportion of such constituents to have a tonic effect upon the drinker, and we may extend the definition to include those carbonated waters that are especially agreeable to the taste. A water to be agreeable to the taste must have more or less minerals in solution. A chemically pure water—one that contains nothing but oxygen and hydrogen—is hardly palatable. Either

nature or art must add to it before it is really good to drink. How tasteless is rain-water! The distilled water that some manufacturers have upon the market is insipid until it is carbonated or charged with some of the salt that are natural to the human blood. Add to absolutely pure water a small proportion of salts or bases—throw in a little potash, a little sulphate of lime or magnesia, a little iron, a little common salt—and we have at once a drink that meets the need of the body for solid, as well as fluid, food. Nature supplies in nearly all countries an abundance of these admirable waters, the appointed drink of man. In Auvergne, in France, is a spring that has almost the exact composition of the serum of the blood. Of course it is an invaluable tonic.

And aside from these mineral constituents, there is a gaseous constituent of equal value. It is carbonic acid gas—the same that is so dangerous to inhale into the lungs. Taken into the stomach it is, on the contrary, a most useful and perfectly harmless stimulant to the digestion. It gives a fillip to the nerves of the stomach, and it gently stimulates the appetite. To the sparkling wines it gives the greater part of their charm, notably to champagne; and it may be added that it not only imparts a good taste, but it tends to conceal any deficiency in the taste of wine with which it may be mixed. Champagne wine is not by any means the best of wines in itself; but in popular estimation it is the best, because of its sparkle, which is nothing but carbonic acid gas that is produced in it by the saccharine fermentation. But as I have said, we may find a gentle stimulus to digestion in mineral waters as well as in wine.—*The Home Maker.*

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