

Its next action is to produce thirst, so that the first glass having been taken thirst soon follows; more liquid of some kind is demanded, and the choice is always certain to fall on the favourite liquor, unless when none is at hand. A second glass increases the thirst, and so, unless water is resorted to, to satisfy its cravings, the drinker soon drinks himself into a state of beastly intoxication. This thirst-producing quality of alcohol is to be accounted for in this way. The affinity of alcohol for water is so great that it attracts greedily the moisture from the tissues with which it comes in contact, hence the great dryness of the throat and mouth which follows spirit-drinking.

Its next action is upon the stomach which, in the habitual drinker, is kept in a constant state of irritation and congestion. The gastric juice is so modified in character as to be rendered unfit for the work of digestion. Indigestion and its attendant evils follow, and the individual suffers in consequence from sickness and debility; prominent among the symptoms of which is anorexia, or complete loss of appetite. But the spirits taken in the stomach are readily absorbed into the veins; are carried first through the portal circulation to the liver which organ suffers from alternate excitement and depression; this soon leads to permanent congestions, or some worse form of disease. The alcohol is next carried to the right side of the heart, the lining membrane of which it irritates and corrodes, setting up chronic disorder, of which Dr. Latham thus speaks:—"In a multitude of cases where the lining membrane of the heart has been found, after death, beset with cartilaginous or atheromatous deposits, or ossification, the patients have been habitual spirit drinkers for years." Alcohol circulating in the blood is known to produce irregular excitement and contractile action in the walls of the heart and blood vessels, which of itself predisposes their tissues to disease. But from its irritating properties, blood charged with it, kept constantly in contact with their lining membrane, has been frequently productive of acute inflammation of these vessels, which it is established to the entire satisfaction of scientific men that those chronic disorders of the walls of the heart and blood vessels which occasion softening, fatty degeneration, atheromatous and earthy deposits, aneurism, ossification, and other structural changes in the heart itself, all of which predispose to hemorrhage, apoplexy, and sudden death, are absolutely produced by the habitual presence of alcohol in the circulating current.

Contenting myself by merely stating that its injurious action in producing fatal diseases of the lungs and kidneys,—the two great organs of elimination or excretion,—I wish to direct attention to its evil influences upon the brain and nervous system. But while I single out a few more important organs I mean these as examples simply of what is continually going on throughout the system of the habitual drinker. For, as asserted by Dr. King Chambers, Physician to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, "it (alcohol) is simply an acid, irritating poison, corroding every part of the body until it is expelled from the system." Its action upon the nervous system. As before stated alcohol is readily absorbed from the stomach, especially when that viscus is empty. If the dose be small or moderate the effect upon the nervous system is simply that of a stimulant, but if it has been large an opposite effect is produced, namely relaxation of the blood-vessels, with abnormal quickening of the pulse, at the same time symptoms of a paralytic nature are observed. The primary action is upon the central hemispheres, or the seat of intellect, which is manifested by an excited imagination, and a confusion of thought, which gradually becomes more confused until it is succeeded by profound insensibility. That portion of the brain which presides over the special senses is next affected; strange sounds are heard; the eyes are also affected; strange visions pass before them; at first brilliant, then dull, they gradually grow bleared and watery, or becoming dimmed, sink into profound slumber, or become fixed forever in the dull dreamy glare of death.

The nerves of the tongue next become affected, as evidenced in the stammering tongue and difficult speech. The fifth cranial or trifacial nerve now