

called the historic spirit. If we to-day are convinced that alcohol is very far from being a necessity of life, we are only returning to the normal common-sense view of enlightened people in most times and places. Two thousand years ago Julius Cæsar, finding in the conquest of Gaul no tougher or more formidable opponents than the tribe of the Nervii, noted with characteristic appreciation the fact that they were water drinkers, who, on account of its injurious effects on their sinews and courage, forbade wine to be brought among them.

Most of us can remember in our student days having puzzled our heads over elaborate and strangely-contradictory statements as to the number of grammes of proteid, amyloid, and fatty material per diem necessary to maintain a normal human adult in health and activity. Personally I confess to having regarded these tables with a good deal of suspicion, partly because of their obvious mutual inconsistency, and partly on account of the crudity of the methods of investigation upon which they were based. One well-known table was drawn up by a celebrated German physiologist, who found that it represented the quantity and proportions of food upon which *he* felt well. It was copied from text-book to text-book, and became a sort of classic—an authoritative statement of the needs of the human organism. That it was entirely erroneous I need scarcely say, inasmuch as Prof. Chittenden, by a series of careful experiments, has recently demonstrated that many people can fully maintain the nutrition and functional activity of the body on a quantity of food which would, before these experiments had proved the contrary, have been considered miserably inadequate. An instructive instance of the danger of passing off as matter of expert knowledge what is in truth mere matter of unverified opinion.

It behoves us in these days to be the more careful as to the scientific validity of our official statements because of the freedom with which irresponsible persons, and in particular that modern idol the literary man, delivers himself of cocksure conclusions upon things as to which he has no real knowledge at all. Take the flagrant case of that notorious publicist, Mr. George Bernard Shaw. Mr. Shaw calls himself a Socialist, and the creed of the Socialist presumably includes a due respect for conscientious work of all necessary kinds. That the work of the general practitioner is necessary perhaps even Mr. Shaw would not venture to deny. That it is laborious and exacting we all know pretty well. In what way is a man who merely writes plays qualified thereby to act as a censor of men who attend to the sick and suffering? This oracle has the impertinence to sneer at the "inculcated erroneousness of the general practitioner." The world could more easily dispense with Mr.