

fected, and made a stable part of a well-balanced life. It gives to its possessor a poise and control of self and circumstance that in its full maturity becomes the most desirable of human charms.

It would seem to be a specious chain of reasoning that would lead one to attempt to enhance this great mental charm by taking into the body an agent the direct effect of which is to exert a deadening influence on all mental processes. Yet this curious and inexcusable error is still all too common. Although no denial is offered to the fact that the ingestion of a whole pint of alcohol will cause a total destruction of the intellect, if not of life itself, there still exists a rather general idea that a small quantity, if only it may safely be indulged in, will produce a sudden sharpening of all the faculties and act as a great intellectual spur.

A writer of some eminence, in an issue of so prominent a magazine as *The Nineteenth Century*, as recently as July, 1915, makes the mistake of likening the effect of alcohol upon the body to that of having credit in commerce, and thinks that a small draught quickens, cheers, and brings up one's reserves. The argument is that by lessening or removing the effects of depression, mental or physical, by a small dose of alcohol, man becomes more cheerful, talkative, a better companion, and thereby the whole company is rendered jovial. This is cited as an illustration of calling up man's reserves of mental energy.

This is so common an error and one that is so well established, being apparently favored by everyday observation, that I shall take some pains to explain the delusion. It is true that wine loosens the tongue; it is true that it quickens the laugh; but does it really sharpen the wit and brighten the intellect? Not at all. The effect of alcohol is not paralyzing under one condition and stimulating under another. It is consistently paralyzing. The tongue is loosened not because the mind is brighter but because discretion is paralyzed; the laugh is louder not because of a braver heart but because intellectual judgment is deadened. King Solomon, in his time, understood this so well that he wrote: "They have beaten me, and I felt it not. . . I will seek it yet again."

Even moderate doses of alcohol exert a deadening influence on all mental processes. Apprehension is slower, accuracy is lessened, memory is impaired and errors are increased.

This statement is frequently challenged by persons who bring forth the almost universal custom of using alcohol a few generations ago. "The great men of that day used alcohol as freely as the incompetents," they say. "Yet there are none in the present day to equal them in brilliancy of intellect and in accuracy of judgment."

This is not as telling an argument as may at first appear. Every student knows that history is blotted with accounts of great men's indiscretions and failures attributable to excess in alcohol; also that abstinence was no uncommon virtue even in those days and many of the greatest were abstainers. It is a poor cause, the champions of which must revert to conditions buried in the past, beyond possibility of investigation, rather than take their stand on facts of the present day.

And the facts to-day? Are there not drinking men in plenty who yet are prime movers in the affairs of the nation, consulted constantly on affairs of greatest moment, men whose intellect is of the highest order, and apparently unimpaired by the alcohol they consume?

Agreed; on condition that the word "apparently" is used to qualify the verb. Apparently unimpaired! But how soon will an impairment be apparent? How many years of their usefulness are these really great men cutting off by their moderate alcoholism? They make mistakes—every one does. How many of them would have been avoided had the intellect been absolutely free from the paralyzing effect of alcohol?

We can get the hidden part of the story at any time by visiting the insane hospital in any state. There is not one but has its example of the effect of alcohol upon the intellect; not one that does not lodge some man of great promise, perhaps even of great performance, who has been brought low by the paralyzing influence of alcohol, taken at first as the social glass but taken in dosage increasing in frequency and amount until the intellect has been hopelessly shattered.

There is no form of animal tissue so sensitive as the brain and central nervous system. The injurious effect of alcohol upon this delicate tissue has now been demonstrated by repeated experiments, using instruments of great precision. There is absolutely no exception made to the statement that the use of alcohol, no matter in how small amount, is definitely injurious to the intellect. All that you may know about brilliant men, statesmen, business men, artists, even ministers, who yet are moderate users of alcohol, can in no way change the absolutely authenticated fact that every partaker of alcoholic liquor suffers therefore a dimming of his intellectual powers: not only a future degeneration but a genuine, present impairment.

I do not care at this time to dwell upon the ultimate degeneration that is bound to follow the habitual and long-continued use of alcoholic drinks. There is no question that it is felt as keenly in the nervous system as in any part of the body, and neither is there any doubt that alcoholics transmit to their offspring weakened powers of intellect.