

8th. The natural span of human life—three score years and ten—is shortened in those who begin drinking habits at an early age to an average of about 30 years.

It is evident from all this, that the use of alcoholic beverages, by persons in health, is indefensible under any circumstances, and most pernicious; since it lowers vitality, vitiates the secretions, depraves the vital fluid, injures the tissues, favours disease of the vital organs, cultivates a taste for strong drink and a desire for stimulation, which usually eventuates in placing the man under bondage to a tyrannical and depraved appetite, which is more remorseless in its demands, and more degrading in its influence, than the most servile human bondage that human beings have ever been subjected to.

Does alcohol possess any medicinal value or health restoring properties? I maintain it does not; and it is peculiarly gratifying to me to know that the tide of medical opinion which has set in against its use as a medicinal agent, is of a very decided character, and beginning as it has done with some of the most eminent members of our profession in the mother country, it has diffused and is diffusing itself far and wide; and growing with its extension these adverse opinions are now happily—thanks to a healthy public sentiment—being much more generally adopted than at any former period. The profession is being rapidly awakened to the importance of wiping away from its hands the stain which has arisen out of a careless and reckless prescribing of stimulants, attaching to them the double character of alipments and medicines. They are, I am glad to say, becoming rapidly converted, so to speak, on the important question of the alcoholic or non-alcoholic treatment of disease. Prominent among those who have recognised the deleterious effects of alcohol, and the evil effects growing out of its indiscriminate administration as a medicine, and who have pronounced against it, may be mentioned Drs. W. B. Carpenter and F. R. Lees, the eminent physiologists, Dr. Ed. Smith, Dr. W. B. Richardson, Dr. Mussey, Sir A. Carlisle, Sir B. Brodie, Dr. Brinton, Dr. Lankester, the eminent London coroner. Dr. King Chambers, physician to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales Dr. Wilks, Guy's Hospital, Dr. Laycock Kings College Hospital, Dr. Barclay, Drs. Gardner and Russel, Glasgow, Dr. Munroe of Hull, Dr. Balfour, Edin., and, more recently, several eminent gentlemen whose names may not be quite so familiar to many, but who equally deserve an honorable mention. Among these are the names of Drs. Wheelhouse, Leeds infirmary, Dr. McMurtry, Belfast, Dr. Roberts, Manchester Infirmary, Dr. Dixon, Coroner South Oxfordshire, Dr. Richie, Leek, Dr. Edmunds, London, Dr. Baley, and several others who might be mentioned, each and all of whom have expressed themselves with no uncertain sound, not only against its indiscriminate use in medicine, but are also strong in their denunciations of it as a dangerous and pernicious agent, which, when introduced into the system, can only irritate, vitiate, corrode, and destroy.

The fact, however, must not be overlooked that vast numbers of the profession, and among these some very prominent and eminent, are still wedded to this idol, and do not hesitate to wield a pen of mighty influence in its favour. The most prominent among these is Dr. Lionel S. Beale the now eminent microscopist and physiologist.

Alcoholic beverages were formerly lauded for their imaginary tonic or strengthening properties; but, in the face of invincible contradictory argument, this quality is no longer claimed for it by the more intelligent of our opponents. It is still, however, regarded by them as a valuable and indispensable stimulant, and Dr. Ainstie, in his work on stimulants and narcotics, (a book full of fallacies, by the way) claims for alcohol anæsthetic properties.

Few will now be found bold enough to support the fallacious claim set up for alcohol as a food. It is known also not to supply animal heat, and it has long since been condemned and reduced to the ranks of the corroding irritant poisons, by the coroners and medical jurists of our own, the neighboring, and the mother country.

That alcohol is a stimulant, and might be used in medicine where a stimulant