

do contain a certain small amount of nutritious matter, much smaller than would be found in a similar bulk of almost any recognized article of food; and this plus the alcohol, which does, in fact, counteract the effect of such nutriment. For if, as we believe has been proved by experiment, alcohol refuses to act along with the gastric juice, it is neither a food nor a solvent of food. Few will deny that the natural solvent of any substance received into the stomach is water, although opinions may differ as to the amount of nutriment, that is of food, which water contains. It may fairly be doubted whether more water ought to be taken into the system than is sufficient to act with the gastric juice in enabling the stomach to assimilate the food committed to it; and hence we see the absurdity of assuming that water is a cure for every imaginable disease. The healthy subject requires so much and no more, the limit being probably indicated by natural thirst, which, as no two persons are constituted exactly alike, will vary in different cases. An unhealthy subject may, and no doubt often does, require more water than a healthy one, in the same way as a choked drain requires, from time to time, to be cleared by the flushing of a heavy shower. And here we appear to have the key to what is valuable in the so-called water-cure. The potations, packing and douching which go on at Malvern, Ilkley Wells, and other well-known places of resort by health seekers, do for them, analogously, just the same service performed for street gutters by a shower of rain. But enough of this; for it is no part of our intention to disparage, even at the distance of a couple of thousand miles or so, the attractions of those charming watering places. But if water is a solvent and no more, alcohol is not even that—far less is it food. The statement is open to easy refutation if incorrect, that alcoholic drinks, beer alone in a slight degree excepted, do not contain chemically discoverable nutritious elements. But to this it is sometimes replied that, allowing the absence of nutriment, they do nevertheless contain force or the materials for producing force. Now if by *force* is meant *strength*, the objector is begging the whole question; for strength can only be the product of nourishment, and this of nutritious elements in the substances received into the stomach. All that can be truly said is, that an alcoholic stimulus produces a temporary effect, resembling that which would result from an increase of strength. Most of us have, no doubt, had ere now the felicity of riding in a hired conveyance called a cab, or may be a fiacre, and noticed with what desperate efforts cabbies succeeded in lashing his poor jaded beast into a trot, or possibly, to save our train, into a canter. Now the whip in that poor beast's case was the alcoholic stimulus; it certainly put no strength into him, although it enabled his master to

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