

THE USE OF ALCOHOLIC STIMULANTS.

(Concluded.)

The reasoning of Dr. Bucke, in the pamphlet referred to, involves the same fallacy as that employed by Dr. Richardson, and mentioned in the *Times* editorial. Another extract from the same paper in regard to the medicinal use of stimulants will not be out of place here:—

"The point is precisely one on which the inadequate science and the practical ignorance of the physician who does not prescribe any form of alcohol, or who prescribes only pure alcohol, will lead him into grave errors, of a kind from which the physician who uses all forms when necessary will be preserved by his empirical knowledge."

Dr. Richardson, although he is considered as far advanced as any of the total-abstinence theorists, is not by any means in accord with the physicians of Great Britain. The British Medical Temperance Association, of which in its fourth year (1879) he became President, consisted then of only 94 members, (45 of whom identified themselves with the movement only when Dr. Richardson accepted the Presidency, and, it may be said, mainly because he did accept it) out of, in round numbers, 18,000 medical practitioners at that time in Great Britain.

To return to my subject, brandy is employed by physicians internally as an excitant for restoring patients from suspended animation, to relieve fainting symptoms during surgical operations, to check vomiting, as a stimulant and restorative in the last stages of fever, and as a general stomachic stimulant.

To repeat what has been said of wines would require more space than is at all necessary, as the facts are so generally admitted that a mere reference will be sufficient. Their principal ingredients are water, alcohol; sugar, gum, tartaric, malic, and other acids, various salts, an extractive flavoring matter from the grape, &c. Most of their essential dietetic and therapeutic properties depend upon the alcohol, sugar, and free acids contained in them. Port contains about 20 per cent. of alcohol; sherry, 15 to 24; madeira, about 19; champagne, about 14; Rhine wines, from 9 to 13; claret, about 10. Of the effect of alcohol enough has been said above and I need not refer to it again here. Port, madeira and champagne contain the most sugar—a substance which contributes materially to sustain the animal heat and is consequently valuable as an article of diet. Some of the salts contained in wine are found in bone, are constantly eliminated from the system in the course of nature, and to sustain the vigor of our system unimpaired, must be replaced by our food.

It is admitted by almost everyone who has had the least experience that as age increases and circulation becomes languid, wines are an essential, or at least a valuable article of food. Dr. Druitt, who experimented largely with the various wines and more especially with those that are within the reach of almost everyone's purse, says, "in prescribing wine, physicians do not do it for the sake of the alcohol alone, but rather for a compound liquid containing more salts than many mineral waters; the extractive matter of grape-juice and the powerful oils and ethers which give wines their peculiarly exhilarating qualities." He recommended and prescribed them throughout his practice to literary persons in place of tea or coffee as a breakfast drink, diluting them with about twice as much water. He found them admirably adapted for children with bad or capricious appetites, and for all whose occupations are carried on chiefly indoors, and which tax the brain rather than the muscle. In England they are used medicinally in so many cases that it is impossible to do more here than mention the most important. For example, in cases of extreme debility, nervous exhaustion, fevers, vomiting, want of appetite, &c. they could hardly be replaced by a more generally valued or effectual remedy.

And now let us speak briefly of ale, or beer, that, among English-speaking people, ever-popular drink. Its constituents are water, alcohol, sugar, gum, gluten, and the bitter extractive and flavoring matters of the hop. Without again referring to these substances apart from each other, I may simply say that malt, from which beer is made, is recognised and admitted to be a great aid to digestion; that it contains valuable food properties; and that the hop, which is now a principal ingredient of ale, is a good appetizer and tonic. I may also note the largely increasing use of preparations of malt, in both Great Britain and the United States, by dyspeptics and others with weak digestion, and the number of hop compounds which are daily creeping into greater favour as tonics and appetizers. "Considered dietetically," says Pereira, "beer possesses a three-fold property: it quenches thirst; it stimulates, cheers, and if taken in sufficient quantity, intoxicates; and lastly, it nourishes or strengthens." And, further on, "from these combined qualities, beer proves a refreshing and salubrious drink (if taken in moderation), and an agreeable and valuable stimulus and support to those who have to undergo much bodily fatigue." Now a few more expressions of opinion and I have done:—

COMMITTEE REPORT ON INTEMPERANCE, HOUSE OF LORDS.

"The committee called for the evidence of the most distinguished medical men of the day, including Sir William Gull, Dr. Burdon Sanderson, Sir Henry Thompson, and Dr. Richardson; but the result is neutral. Although much valuable and interesting information has been provided by these gentlemen, 'it does not appear from their evidence,' in the opinion of the committee, 'that there is any theory as to the physiological properties or as to the dietetic or medicinal value of alcohol, which is as yet so generally accepted by the medical profession as would warrant its being adopted as a basis for legislation.' The committee concluded that, generally speaking, the evidence taken by them indicated that the

increase of intemperance was mainly due to the rapid rise of wages and the increased amount of leisure enjoyed by the manufacturing and mining classes. The committee say it appears from the evidence that drunkenness is less common than formerly among the more respectable portion of the working classes. In other words, the same process is at work which banished drunkenness from the upper and middle classes. As education increases the vice is felt more and more to be stupid and discreditable, and is put down by the force of class opinion."—*Times*, March 21, 1879.

The conclusion of the committee that there is as yet no fit basis for legislation, is quite refreshing during the present "Scott Act" agitation. Now read what the Lord Chancellor of England said in his opening address when presiding at one of J. B. Gough's lectures:—

"I myself have but little hope of making men sober or temperate by Act of Parliament, I look rather to the effect of other causes and influences. I look to the power and force of persuasion, of conviction, of example," &c.

While speaking of Parliamentary acts in this connection, we should not overlook the general results of past legislation. It has been found that enactments to prevent the consumption of liquors have caused respectable dealers to withdraw from the trade which becomes unprofitable through the high taxes; their places are supplied by the profligate and criminal classes who have no objection to breaking the law. It has been found that smuggling flourishes; that the officers of the law are assaulted and violently prevented from discharging their duty; that informers are hunted down as enemies to the community. A premium is thus placed on breaking the law, and the result might be, if such action was continued and general, a demoralization of the people and an antagonism between them and the law, which would very likely extend to other and less offensive matters of legislation. The histories of England, Ireland and Scotland all show the same effect of prohibitive taxation or rather the attempt to enforce such.

Of the use of alcohol as an article of diet, the *Times* says "the opinions of the medical profession are unmistakable. They have been expressed within the last few months in a series of articles in the *Contemporary Review*, written by some of the most eminent physicians and surgeons in London, and among which those of Sir James Paget and of Dr. Moxon were especially noteworthy. * * * The general effect of what they have written may be fairly stated somewhat in the following manner:—

They hold that the regular moderate use of alcoholic drinks as articles of diet, is certainly harmless, and probably as beneficial as it is agreeable to the great majority of the human race in temperate climates and in civilized countries; that such use is a matter of necessity to some, especially to brain workers of small appetite and weak digestion; and that total-abstinence is a mode of life which is conducive to the welfare of the few rather than of the many."

There is one thing more I would like to speak about. From the manner in which Dr. Bucke introduces into his pamphlet the result of his experiment in the London Asylum, it would appear as if it were an original scheme of his own to withhold stimulants from those who have regularly and continuously used them. This is not the case; as Dr. Peddie shows, in his work on the treatment of *delirium tremens*, they can be abruptly withdrawn without any bad effects; and it has been frequently observed in the large prison establishments of England and the Continent that none were noticeable in the sudden change from unlimited indulgence to plain prison fare occurring in the cases of fully three-fourths of the criminals.

Dr. Bucke says in another place that the inmates of a Lunatic Asylum "appear to need stimulants the most." This seems to me an absurd idea. I imagine that they are the last people in the world who should be allowed them. Their exhaustion is not physical, generally it is not exhaustion at all but rather an abnormal development of some portion of the brain. They have but very little physical exertion to undergo and never have any severe continued labour; so why do they need stimulants? Those people engaged in continuous mental work who use stimulants do so, not with the idea of increasing their mental activity or stimulating the brain, but to aid their digestive organs in assimilating the nutritive matter from their food and to encourage for such food a greater appetite, which through their want of physical exertion or healthy exercise has depreciated.

I may be altogether wrong in my conception of those systems that require stimulative food and drink, as I have no medical knowledge to aid me in the study: it is for this reason that I have not met Dr. Bucke's assertions point by point as I should have liked to have done: but until some one with accurate medical knowledge convinces me that I am wrong I shall continue to believe that lunatics and idiots are of all people the last who need stimulants.

I excerpt the following remarks from the recently published work on the "Voice," by Dr. Holmes, which is a fitting piece to close my paper, adding as it does a decided denial to Dr. Bucke's assertions:—

"Taken in moderation by a healthy person, spirituous liquors may be considered as a kind of agreeable stimulus of the nature of a luxury, which, if seldom beneficial, is still not absolutely harmful. It is difficult, however, to determine the precise amount that may be consumed habitually without injury, especially as it doubtless varies according to the fundamental constitutional strength of each individual. From some careful scientific observations Parkes (Dr.: author of "Manual of Practical Hygiene") has concluded that the average