

HUMANITY AND STIMULANTS

THE fact that in all times, in all stages of our civilisation, and in all parts of the universe, the various peoples constituting the human race should—often quite independently of one another—have resorted to the preparation and consumption of stimulants (among which alcoholic beverages have taken the first place), would suggest that there is a legitimate demand and use for those stimulants, in spite of all that teetotal extremists may now say to the contrary. Much discussion has taken place of late as to the “food value” of alcoholic beverages, and considerable diversity of opinion still prevails thereon. Rightly or wrongly, successive generations have regarded beer as “liquor bread,” basing their conclusion on their own experience. But literally for thousands of years before the present controversy on “food value” arose, stimulants had been taken—as they still generally are—for other reasons, than because of the amount of actual nutriment they might or might not contain. They were accepted as a palatable drink; they gave a feeling of warmth and helped to ward off chills; they modified the pangs of hunger; they produced a sense of enjoyment, gratification, and comfort; they gave greater zest to social intercourse; they lessened pain; relaxed nerves wearied by physical or mental labour; relieved the pressure of daily cares; deadened care, trouble, and anxiety; improved the outlook on life;