

which are not without danger in themselves, and are sometimes followed by the most lamentable consequences.

Of my late series of cases, 17 were men and but 15 women. Fourteen were cases of simple, chronically inflamed hæmorrhoids, nine ulcerating and itchy, and nine bleeding. Four of the female cases were of the bleeding variety. Of the ulcerating type, in six of them there was a well-marked tubercular cachexia.—Thomas H. Manley, M.D., in *Boston Med. and Surg. Jour.*

### THE ALCOHOL QUESTION FROM THE PHYSICIAN'S STANDPOINT.

Dr. Adolf Strümpel, *Berliner Klinische Wochenschrift*, speaks about alcoholism with the earnestness of one who thoroughly knows his subject. Touching but lightly upon the legal and national economy phases, he recalls the manifold and close connection between alcoholism and crime, clearly shown in the observations of every-day life and endorsed in plain figures of statistics. As a physician he well knows that the relation between alcoholism and crime is often viewed in a false light, as, when both abnormalities occur, alcoholism is often the cause of crime, while in reality very often both are only the necessary co-ordinated consequences of an hereditary mental tendency, of a psychopathic degeneration.

As to the importance of beer as a source of nourishment, it cannot be denied that the body receives a considerable quantity of nourishment when beer is freely used. But how do the food value and the price of beer compare? In Bavaria a workman receives about four quarts of beer for one mark (twenty-five cents). The four quarts contain, liberally rated, two hundred and forty grammes of carbohydrates and scarcely thirty-two grammes of albumin. But for the same money he receives, if he buys bread, two thousand grammes of carbohydrates and two hundred and fifty grammes of albumin. Therefore, the cheapest beer, considered as a means of nourishment, is about eight times as dear as bread. The showing is worse still if beer is compared with potatoes and beans. Strümpel has known of workmen who spent one-sixth of their small income upon beer for their personal consumption.

The albumin-sparing action of alcohol, formerly much quoted, has been shown by more exact investigation to be by no means constant. It appears rather that, under like circumstances, there is even a slight increase in the destruction of albumin.

Neither accident nor special scientific inclination led Dr. Strümpel to devote special attention to the alcohol question, but the force of the urgent

facts daily apparent to the busy practicing physician.

The present epoch of medicine has rightly been named the etiological. In the diagnosis of the causes of disease physicians now see one of the highest aims of their investigation, because they know that thus alone can the road not only to cure, but to prevention of disease, which is far more important, be prepared.

Those organic changes which Strümpel puts first in considering the baleful effect of alcoholic drinks upon the health are, disease of the heart-muscle and its nervous apparatus, disease of the arteries and of the kidneys. He thinks the frequent occurrence of chronic heart and kidney trouble from continuous use of alcohol is not sufficiently recognized by physicians. Yet these forms of alcoholism are specially important, apart from their frequency, because they are caused not only by the concentrated alcoholic drinks, but especially by continued intemperate use of beer; hence these are seen in much larger classes of population, not only in the poor and mentally feeble classes, but in well-to-do, cultivated classes. Nothing is more false than the idea that alcoholism is lessened when beer crowds out other alcoholic drinks. Under the very mask of an apparently light, palatable, and yet nourishing drink, alcohol has made its baleful entrance into circles which had otherwise remained closed to it.

In the use of beer it is not only the alcohol which is harmful, but the great amount of fluid introduced into the system. Muscular weakness of the heart is specially found among heavy beer drinkers. The great amount of fluid which these men daily impose on their circulation is almost incredible. Even a daily amount of three to four quarts—i. e., eight pounds of fluid above the usual quantity—cannot remain constant without an influence on the heart. But Strümpel knows that, at least in Bavaria, there are persons whose calling exposes them to special temptation to drink, who consume for years almost daily eight to ten quarts—i. e., sixteen to twenty pounds of fluid added to their bodies. It is not difficult to understand that such an added burden to the circulation leads first to hypertrophy and then to a palsy of the heart-muscle. Of course, the great addition of carbohydrates, overloading the blood and tissues with food products, is also harmful.

Kidney diseases are also especially frequent among heavy beer drinkers. Degeneration of the kidney epithelium and contraction of the kidneys are well-known, but acute alcoholic nephritis is less known. It is acute in the sense that here the sum of long-continued chronic poisonous action leads to a severe functional disturbance of the kidney epithelium. The chronic alcoholic nephritis is usually not of a hæmorrhagic nature. It is often accompanied by severe œdema, may lean rapidly