

Brunton says that no harm will result. If frequently taken, however, by persons in average health and with fair digestion, this property may cause imperfect combustion of fats and their accumulation in the tissues; and excessive drinking may even cause fatty degeneration of various organs. The moderate use never causes this fatty degeneration. This property of alcohol of lessening oxidation enormously increases its usefulness in fevers and severe inflammatory diseases, such as pneumonia, when oxidation is going on too rapidly; it lessens oxidation of the tissues, checks waste, reduces fever, and serves as a readily combustible food requiring no digestion to meet the wants of the organism until the digestive organs are ready to resume their functions. Though it generally quickens the pulse in health, it is a remarkable fact that in fevers the quick pulse generally becomes slower and stronger under its influence, thus economizing the vital power of the heart, and preventing death from exhaustion. While speaking of the action of alcohol on the heart, I might refer to a very ridiculous objection to its use made by Dr. B. W. Richardson. He argues that because alcohol increases the number of beats of the heart, that organ must wear out sooner than if no alcohol were used. If he had extended the same reasoning to football and cricket, he would have seen how ridiculous it is.

Alcohol dilates the superficial capillaries of the body, thus causing a larger surface of blood to be exposed to the cooling influence of the air. It should, therefore, not be taken before prolonged exposure to cold; but after the exposure is past, by stimulating the heart, and dilating the contracted vessels it equalizes the circulation, and may prevent a bronchitis or a pleurisy.

You will, no doubt, in this discussion, hear great stress laid on the views of Dr. B. W. Richardson—not a very great authority, it is true, but one quoted *ad nauseam* by teetotalers. I do not wonder at this, for there are so extremely few scientific writers whose views can be twisted into a condemnation of moderate drinking that they must either quote him or remain silent. Dr. Carpenter, for whose opinions I have the highest respect, at one time largely supported the views of Dr. Richardson, but in his latter years, when ripe experience triumphed over prejudice, he very materially altered his views, and used alcoholic beverages for some years before his death. He recommended malt liquors very highly in cases where the stomach labours under permanent deficiency of digestive powers, and says that "an alcoholic stimulus affords the only means of procuring digestion of the amount of food the system really requires in such cases."

Sir Henry Thompson is also a good deal quoted, but be not deceived! He preached not against the moderate and proper use of wine, but against the sin of gluttony, whether in eating or drinking, and is responsible for the opinion that over eating does more harm than over drinking. It is he also and not Mr. Goldwin Smith, who has said that a meal of fat pork and strong green tea is as apt to make a man beat his wife as an excess of alcohol. Permit me now to read a few quotations from recognized authorities, not quotations tortured out of their connection to secure a catch verdict, but full and candid expressions of opinion from the most eminent authorities.

Dr. Garod, the author of the great work on "Therapeutics," says: "Alcohol when dilute helps digestion. The majority of adults can take a moderate quantity in some form or another, not only with impunity but often with advantage. To many it is a source of much enjoyment, and as discomfort often springs from its discontinuance, it is difficult to say why it should be discontinued under ordinary circumstances. Among the nations who do not use alcohol drinks, the use of opium and Indian hemp is extremely common. There are no statistics to prove that abstinence from the moderate use of alcohol is attended with unusual length of life or improvement of health. Many people are unable to abstain for any length of time on account of their health failing under the trial. They exhibit symptoms which indicate that the nutrition of the system is not fully kept up."

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