

this potent spirit. A mental perversion dependent entirely on this physical cause ensues. It may be called Vinomania, an inordinate and irrepressible addiction to the bottle on the part of those who would be the first to allow that the present is a very poor and weak counterblast to the practice which they know is killing them, while the descent of this Avernus, however easy, is by no means pleasant even to themselves. Like all tastes, except for the purely natural beverages, milk and water, the taste for alcohol is acquired. The lower animals are not beyond its reach, and as the following anecdote will show, can resort to cunning for its gratification. A pony which had served its time and was dismissed from harness, was observed one day rolling, evidently in pain, on the lawn before his master's house. A pint of warm beer was prescribed for this attack of colic, and it effected a speedy cure. A day or so afterwards, Dobbin was again seized with an attack of colic on the lawn as before, in full view of the dining-room windows, and the same comforting dose was repeated with the same satisfactory result. But when the attacks became very frequent, and at last, of almost daily occurrence, the master's suspicions were aroused, and no more beer was administered. Strange to say, the attacks ceased from that time, and Dobbin lived on in the uninterrupted enjoyment of health to a good old age.

Another invariable effect of alcohol taken in considerable quantities is to impoverish the blood. This it does by absorbing the oxygen of the blood, which would, if allowed, have enabled it to oxidate, and so convert into usable material, the waste matter of the system. This waste, failing such re-adaptation for useful service, accumulates and turns to fat, which is very apt to collect where it is least wanted, around the internal organs, and especially the heart, inducing forthwith feebleness in the vital action, followed speedily, if the cause is allowed to operate unchecked, by total break-down and stoppage of the whole mechanism. Observe too, the action of spirit on dead tissues: it hardens them. Bottles of spirits containing preserved anatomical preparations or specimens of natural history are familiar to us in every museum. It seems highly probable that the tissues of living organisms, subjected to a similar soaking process, become hardened in the same way, and, consequently, in a greater or less degree insensible to the effects of alcohol: and hence the common expression, a *hard drinker* or *hard headed man*, conveys very nearly a literal truth. But enough on this aspect of the question.

II.

Let us console ourselves by the reflection that almost all poisons, alcohol included, are very useful drugs; bad, intolerable masters, but most

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