

is due less to excessive use of tea than to the omission from the regular dietary of the really nutritive and sustaining elements. A third class regard tea-drinking as an evil almost comparable to alcoholism.

Tea has won its way to favor among civilized nations mainly, it would seem, as an agreeable nervine stimulant. As Sir William Roberts points out, in his interesting lectures upon dietetics, a crane-stimulation is one of the most marked characteristics of advanced civilization, although savage man is by no means devoid of this universal human instinct. The stimulants in common use are tea, coffee, tobacco, and alcohol—not to mention such agents as opium or *haschish*, which are perhaps less stimulant than narcotic. Of this group, tea and coffee are the favorites, as they suit the taste of both sexes; and their beneficial effects undoubtedly far outweigh the evils which occasionally spring from their abuse.

Tea is an agreeable cerebral stimulant, quickening intellectual operations, removing headache and fatigue, and promoting cheerfulness and a sense of well-being. It is known to all English speaking people as the "cup that cheers but not inebriates;" and it has long been a favorite with students, literary men, and others engaged chiefly in brain work. Tea is also a mild sudorific, and is largely consumed in hot countries, especially our Australial colonies, where it is found to exercise a cooling influence, after the preliminary effect due to the imbibition of a hot fluid has passed off. The influence of tea upon the digestive tract has not been so definitely made out, but the most recent observations seem to show that, while it somewhat retards primary digestion, it aids the absorption and metabolism of the food-elements. From such physiological facts, it is clear that tea is chiefly of service during or after physical or intellectual effort, and at the time when absorption of the products of primary digestion is in process. It cannot too strongly be asserted that tea is not in any exact sense a true food, and that its nutritive value, in itself, is practically naught.

As might be conjectured from the nature of the physiological action of tea, the effects of its abuse fall chiefly on the nervous and digestive systems. Nervous irritability, palpitation, insomnia, and sense of brain-fatigue are among the most prominent of the neurotic symptoms; and, although it is unquestionable that the symptoms are often etiologically connected with other sources of nervous disturbance as well as tea-drinking, it is not less clear that they are greatly aggravated by the excessive use of tea. The digestive symptoms are impairment of the appetite, pain and flatulence during the process of digestion and defective intestinal action—the symptoms, in fact, of one of the varieties of atonic dyspepsia. How far these symptoms are due to the tannin contained in tea, and how far to its tannin, is a question. Sir William Roberts has shown that the most rapid

infusion does not prevent the dissolving out of a large proportion of the tannin, and we are disposed to conjecture that the digestive symptoms may to a large degree be safely attributed, not to any chemical action, but to the same cause which produces the neurotic disturbance, namely, the tannin.

The sufferers from excessive tea-drinking may be grouped into three classes.

First, there is the large class of pure brain-workers, who speedily discover that, while alcohol is pernicious to them, tea affords the stimulus which they desire. They indulge in it without fear of mischief, and often to an unlimited extent. Dr. Johnston's tea drinking was proverbial, and many distinguished writers could tell a similar tale. After a time, the neurotic symptoms enumerated above begin to make their appearance, and, in many cases, do much to impair temper, and to limit the capacity for sustained intellectual effort.

Secondly, there is the large class of women of the better classes who, beginning with afternoon tea, often end by using their favorite stimulant in the intervals between all the meals of the day, and as often as the humor takes them. The result is that appetite becomes impaired, and the prostration due to insufficient nourishment is combated with more potations of the ever welcome stimulant, until the vicious circle is well established.

Thirdly, in all our large manufacturing towns there are numbers of factory-operatives, especially women, finding it difficult to provide a cheap and appetising mid-day meal, fly to the teapot, and do large amount of severe physical labor on this miserable dietary. It is most important to impress upon this class, who are usually profoundly ignorant of everything concerning health and diet, that tea is not a food, and that the delusive sense of satisfaction which it bestows is a dangerous snare.

In addition to the above classes, there is a small group of persons to whom tea seems a positive poison. We know that idiosyncrasy accounts for the most extraordinary departures from the normal rule in matters of diet or the action of medicine; and the number of persons whose idiosyncrasy includes an intolerance of tea is considerable enough to make the subject worthy of professional attention.

Sufferers from the abuse of tea should abstain from its use, and substitute either coffee or cocoa. It will be found that many of those who are unfavorably affected by tea are equally susceptible to the action of coffee; but this is by no means universally true, and the substitution can often be made with decided advantage. Cocoa suits almost all cases, and, whatever may be its deficiencies on the score of palatability, it is a genuine food, and its modern preparations are becoming more and more elegant and pleasing to the taste.—*British Medical Journal*.