

In any discussion of this question it is necessary to bear in mind that the contained alcohol is the chief ingredient in all alcoholic stimulants. The balance is the menstruum, and is made up of water, and other substances, all of which are of no value except to make the alcohol pleasing to the palate and acceptable to the stomach. That imponderable, invisible something, conjured in our imaginations as pervading the product of the still, aside from the alcohol, chemistry proves to be a myth. It is said that delusions die hard, and here is one of them.

This leads to the remark that accuracy of dose is impossible in the absence of legal standards. The manufacturers and dealers are subject to no law. The distiller pays his revenue tax on his alcohol, not on his whisky. The whisky is another affair entirely. So in regard to all other liquors. But this is only a part of the trouble. Were liquors made in the old fashioned way, we would look for greater uniformity of strength, whether the article was better or not in other respects. But as a matter of fact they are not; that is, the spirituous liquors are no longer the product of distillation, save as regards the alcohol. Wishing to obtain more information regarding a business whose secrets are kept with wonderful fidelity, I wrote a short paper sometime ago, which I had published in an American journal having a large circulation. That communication contained the substance of what is to follow. I challenged criticism. Although several replies appeared, none disputed the main points.

One word more before entering on the main question. Pure spirit, the technical name for alcohol, is the same in quality whether obtained from grain, roots, or fruit. This fact should not be lost sight of in comparing fabricated liquors with those made in the old fashioned way. I shall now proceed to describe the modern processes of distillation and liquor making in general as practiced at present.

It is not generally known that the process of making whisky has been entirely revolutionized. This change is due chiefly to the introduction of what is called the column still. The product of the mashes is now all run off into strong alcohol, that is, pure spirit. This is all distillation has to do with the production of old

rye, malt, Bourbon, Scotch and Irish whisky. The remainder of the process belongs rather to the practical chemist than the distiller. The latter, however, takes it upon himself to make two brands, rye and malt. His method is very simple and above reproach. To make old rye all the proper quantity of alcohol is run into a tub. The water is added to bring it down to twenty-five under proof, that is seventy-five (75) parts alcohol to one hundred and twenty-five (125) parts water. Next the coloring and flavoring ingredients are added. These vary somewhat with different distillers for the purpose of distinguishing the brands, more than any other purpose, and hence are not made known. There is reason however, for believing that such additions are of a harmless nature. Carmel is the principal, if not the exclusive coloring matter. To make malt a trace of creasote or similar substance is required. For this reason, so called malt whisky had better not be used, although the amount of flavoring is probably too infinitesimal to do harm. This done, the work is accomplished. It is evident that "age" can add nothing essential to modern whisky. If allowed to remain long in its oaken cask it will extract some additional color and flavor from the wood, but nothing more.

Whisky made in this way is incomparably superior to old-fashioned whisky. This statement, I am quite aware, runs counter to common belief, but it is true, nevertheless. One constantly hears the remark, whisky now-a-days is not as good as the whisky we used to have. "The old whisky would not fly to one's head like what we now get." This is purely imaginary. Old-fashioned distillation gave whisky full of impurities. In it the fusel-oil, an extremely poisonous substance, was retained. So were also ethers and extractive matter. The column still disposes of all these. Their retention made whisky more intoxicating and harder on the "head." The true explanation is found in the fact that the people who thus speak are Old Country born. On coming to this country they could drink whisky, and more of it, than they can now. It is notorious that the people of northern Europe have a great tolerance for alcohol. They can live and thrive on an amount that will kill in America. The climate here tends to develop