

explain the interest with which the public regard the subject when treated in a way they can partly comprehend. Dr. Alfred Carpenter showed a decided aversion from those easy assumptions which have been so current with teetotalers. He withheld his assent from the view that there is no utilisation of alcohol in its passage through the body. He would not consent to abolish it as a mere luxury, nor would he assume that because a large dose of alcohol is injurious, a small one would likewise be so. He reviewed the facts ascertained as to its action on the blood, reducing the power of the corpuscles to absorb oxygen, abstracting water from the blood-discs and making them adhere, increasing the coagulability of the fibrinous or plastic part of the blood, and its tendency to be deposited in vessels or organs—effects surely forthcoming when the proportion of alcohol to water in the blood exceeds one part in five hundred, and leading to those morbid appearances with which pathologists are familiar. He maintained that the alcoholic drinks commonly used, and taken, as they commonly are, undiluted, and very often unmixed with food, "must be hurtful." Surprise is expressed that such discoveries have not been made before. This feeling is natural, and we only mean here to say one or two words in reply to it.

The first is this, that physicians are now concerned much about the origin of refined processes of degeneration, the postponement of which is one of the great ends of medicine, and one of the great secrets of longevity. Not content with curing actual and gross disease, they aim at averting any departure from the proper structure of tissues and organs, or the enjoyment of perfect functional health. They want all men to live longer. In order to do this, the aim must be to prevent disease as well as to cure it. In this way they have come to consider the action of alcohol, and, without going into controversial details, certainly find it to be a most potent factor in producing degenerative changes in tissues.

Our second remark is this: that while the case is made out against any but the slightest use of alcohol, and this with meals, there is a great deal yet to be done by physicians in

elucidating the physiological and pathological action of the temperate use. Some recent statistics show, or seem to show, that, according to the experience of the Temperance and General Provident Society, the abstainers are more liable to death by lung disease, by heart disease, by zymotic disease, and by casualties; while moderate drinkers are more liable to death by nervous disease, by liver and kidney disease, and by dropsy. We can well believe, as the same statistics show, that, out of a thousand insured of the two classes respectively, abstainers and carefully sifted moderate drinkers, four of the later died to three of the abstainers. We consider that, if anything is made out, it is that any considerable quantity of alcohol, in ordinary constitutions, leads infallibly to mischief. But we want this subject treated carefully, in a truly scientific spirit, as if there were no moral or commercial interests attached to it, feeling assured that the more dispassionate the medical discussion of it the more will it help the cause of health and morals.

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BRAIN-FEEDING.—The press of work and the strain of worry are so great in these days of hot haste and breathless enterprise, that, except under conditions rarely established and maintained, the power of self-nourishment and repair in the mind-organ is not sufficiently strong to keep it in health. It follows that it must be fed and nourished by special design. An adequate supply of oxygen is the preliminary requirement. Then comes the question of food: and, whatever else may feed the brain, workers with this organ should be assured that alcohol will not sustain it. Alcoholisation and oxygenation are directly antagonistic processes; and even if alcohol be food for the brain, the organ cannot feed when the nutrient fluid circulating in its vessels is disabled from the task of conveying oxygen, which happens whenever spirit is present in more than very moderate proportions in the blood. The relief afforded by alcohol from the sense of depression produced by a lack of oxygen, is, therefore, illusory. It is procured by over-stimulating an organ which is both exhausted and impaired.

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