

IS ALCOHOL FOOD?

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AN extraordinary popular delusion prevails among many otherwise sensible people, that wine, spirits, and especially malt liquors, are exceedingly nourishing to the system, and are, therefore, healthful and beneficial as articles of diet. In corroboration of this idea, its advocates point to the rosy and rubicund appearance and Falstaffian proportions of many wine, beer, or porter drinkers, and refer to the frequently meagre solid diet of those who use ardent spirits. These persons appear to assume that the true ideal of manly health and vigour is not the finely moulded, lithe and graceful Apollo, but the obese and drunken Silenus.

Like many popular fallacies, this theory of the nutritive character of alcoholic liquors will not bear the test of scientific investigation. The deposition of fat, which its advocates regard as a proof of nutrition and health, is actually a condition of physical degeneration and disease. "A general corpulence of the body," says Dr. Carpenter, of London University, "can be by no means admitted as an indication of healthy nutrition; indeed it must be regarded as very much the reverse." The abstemiousness from food of many spirit drinkers is at the expense of their bodily tissues, as their maciated appearance, their "lean and hungry look," fully testifies.

The fact is, pure alcohol contains not one particle of nutritive material for the human body, and even in malt liquor the amount is practically inappreciable, almost infinitesimal. "There is more food," says that eminent analytical chemist, Baron Von Liebig, in one bushel of barley than in twelve thousand gallons of malt, liquor." Or, to put it otherwise, according to the same authority