



Temperance
Alcohol
Physical
Effects

Alcohol, and Alcoholism.

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Rewritten and abridged.)

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FOR several years of late certain members of the Medical Profession have been earnestly, if not clamorously, agitating the subject of Alcohol, and Alcoholism — making assertions and promulgating notions that should not go unchallenged as being either accurate, scientific or wise.

It is claimed, indeed, by these would-be reformers of medical practice, and practitioners — having organized as a medical temperance society — that alcohol has no value whatever as food, or medicine, under any circumstances — being always and only poison, the effect of which when ingested by human beings is deceptive and pernicious. It is, also, according to their representations, the exciting or predisposing cause, if not both, of nearly all serious non-contagious or non-infectious diseases, and greatly increases the fatality of such as are attributable to other causes.

Such being the contention, I, for one, can not but regard the affirmation, considered in the light of facts and common-sense, as one of those sincere exaggerations of superficially-apparent truth characteristic of fanaticism, that is equivalent to falsehood.

It may be, is true, that alcohol is not—quantitatively considered — either wholly or largely a food-substance. Not many substances in nature upon which animals are compelled to subsist are. The most nutritious substances are not appropriated by living tissues without residuum. Beside, the food-value of any

substance depends somewhat upon the conditions and appetencies of organs to which they are offered. "What's one man's food is another man's poison."

Nutritious substances taken in excess of need sometimes cease to be nutritious and become offensively poisonous. Every organ of a living body, every molecule, in fact, as related to nutrition, has its own appetencies, and capabilities of choice, equivalent to intelligence and knowledge — knows its own business, and attends to it, when at liberty to do so. Physicians who have not learned, or do not comprehend, the significance of such facts — applicable under so many circumstances of doubt respecting medication or nutrition of the sick—are certainly disqualified to give instruction on the subject of either food or medicine.

In reply to, or criticism of, this anti-alcohol tirade, it may be confidently affirmed that Alcohol is—depending upon conditions of organs implicated, and quantities ingested at any given time—either nutritive, medicinal, or poisonous.

What is food? Medicine? Poison?

Any substance that is capable of appropriation by, and incorporation with, organized living tissue, becoming identical therewith, is Food.

Any substance that when in contact with living organisms without incorporation, is capable by its presence of influencing their movements — stimulating or depressing their activities — within the limits of organic integrity—is Medicine.

Any substance that when ingested—if not simply inert and superfluous—is incapable of assimilation by, and gives offense to, living, function-performing tissues, is Poison.

An intelligent opinion of the food-value, qualitatively or quantitatively considered, may be estimated in a general way by the extent of its use as such by mankind, under variable conditions, racial and regional. The value, for example, of milk, sugar, starch, oil, animal and vegetable albumen, etc., etc. Mankind, and all other animals, have fed upon these substances from "the beginning" until now; directed by that infallible "science that attaches to organization corresponding to its needs."

From similar evidence it is rational to infer that Alcohol is not without value as a food. It is a fact known to all well-

informed persons that Alcohol in some form—memorably that of its nascent or undistilled condition as existing in wines and beers — has ever constituted an important element in the dietary of mankind; that throughout historic, and unquestionably through numberless prehistoric, ages it was regarded with great favor as a source of strength, comfort, health, and enjoyment.

Our Teutonic ancestors had no other idea of heavenly bliss than that of unlimited indulgence of their appetites for Mead, hobnobbing with their gods Woden and Thor in the halls of the immortals.

Greek and other Pagan peoples poured out wine in generous libations as acceptable to divine Beings whom they worshiped. The stories of Noah, and Lot, as recorded in our "Sacred Scriptures," however obscene, indicate the fact that wine was used freely by Hebrew Patriarchs without disapprobation on the part of the Elohim, long before Moses interviewed Jehovah on Mount Sinai. All Christian peoples use wine sacramentally as representing, or thaumaturgically convertible into, the real blood of Jesus, in obedience to his instruction as The Christ, given at his last supper with his disciples; indicating not only his human, but his divine approbation of its use—not as a poison, nor as medicine, but as food.

A modern banquet without wine is practically intolerable to other than abnormally or eccentrically developed men, out of harmony with natural environments. "When I die," said the great General Sherman, at an annual banquet of a Commandery of the order of the Loyal Legion, at which wine had been omitted by request of a distinguished soldier and civilian, because of the recent death of General Hancock, who was to have been present—"When I die, boys, don't change the program!"

Are such facts as these of no value? Do they prove nothing, suggest nothing? Are they not, rather, exceedingly suggestive? It may be true, and is, that in matters of intellectual speculation about things that do not pertain to human knowledge; that if other than purely imaginary are beyond human capability of knowing; such, for example, as are all intellectual speculations about things supernatural—the more ancient the testimony the less confidence should be placed in it. The farther back, however, a continuous line of facts corroborative of existing verities

can be traced, the more trustworthy the testimony of such facts becomes.

The testimony of continuous human experience, from which all knowledge and wisdom is derived—the “mother liquor” from which all laws by which human conduct is condemned or justified are crystallized—is, therefore, of unquestionable value in support of the affirmation that Alcohol has not always been, and is not now, the unspeakable monster represented. That it is not always, under all circumstances, exclusively poisonous in its operations, nor without use in the economy of nature respecting the human race.

What if it be true that numberless individuals have fallen by the way to rot in drunkards’ graves all along the lines of human advancement—they were but few as compared to the multitude progressing!

What though our prisons and pauperages are filled by individuals sifted like refuse from the finer materials of society, for whose crimes and infirmities the pitying plea of “Alcoholic Intoxication” might be reasonably entered—they constitute but a fraction of our general population.

What if all of the lower stratum of mankind were precipitated like dregs and sunk into the slime, or “slums,” of human depravity by the intoxicating effects of Alcohol upon already defective organizations!—still in estimating the qualities and uses of Alcohol—while listening to the formidable indictment, and pathetic pleading of such admitted facts, professional men at least—students of science—recognize the further fact that all these things, however discordant in appearance to the ordinary observer, are yet in perfect keeping with the harmony and order of the universe, and are a part of its “everlasting verities”—not to be evaded by human kicking.

The movements of mankind—individually, socially, racially—are as inevitably, and necessarily, in opposite directions, thus effecting equilibriums essential to stability of forms and perpetuity of existence—as are the familiar ultimations of such movements in evolution and dissolution obviously diverse, and apparently antagonistic.

Man may be emotional and sentimental respecting what he sees, but does not comprehend, taking place around him; and in

his ignorance may ascribe death—seeming to be so unnecessary, and disastrous as a consequence—to the arbitrary will of a personal ruler of the Universe inflicted as a punishment for some unforgivable indiscretion on the part of an experimentally created individual progenitor of mankind—incidentally extended to all other living beings—but the better informed now recognize the fact that whether the Universe be governed by a personal ruler with magnified human attributes, or otherwise, its governmental conditions admit of neither emotion, sentiment, nor alternatives; its uniform processions toward uniform ends being irreversible by human or other interference. That Death as affecting not only the individual existence of mankind, but of all other living beings, is as inevitable, and as orderly, as birth; and however shocking and cruel in appearance when considered in relation to individuals, is not the less essential to the perpetuity and welfare of the races subject thereto. So, too, with all the degenerative, downward movements of individual men, no matter by what apparent means effected, attended by suffering, and ending in premature death; they are but compensatory movements balancing upward growths otherwise impracticable! The inference, therefore, that Alcohol, even, may have contributed somewhat to the upward movements of the many using it in moderation, while degrading and destroying the few whose naturally defective and unstable organizations have been overwhelmed by it, is neither unreasonable nor far-fetched.

That laboratory experimentation has failed either to prove or disprove the contention that Alcohol is not in any degree, or under any circumstances, to be recognized as food, should not be surprising to the learned and thoughtful. There are certain arcanæ in the realm of organization that science has not, as yet, fully penetrated. We know a good deal about digestion, and something about assimilation, as processes essential to the maintenance of function-performing organs; but we do not know everything—indeed, but little—about the secret influences brought to bear upon such processes by the constructive forces incidental to already organized and living tissues by which food materials are transformed and appropriated as a part of themselves.

Digestion, or the preliminary process of breaking up organic compounds, releasing elementary bodies from certain combina-

tions, that they may enter more readily into other relations, may to some extent be imitated by expert Chemists. But pre-digestion of materials—all that art can accomplish outside of living bodies—is of but doubtful value, and very simple, when considered in its relation to the more complex and occult processes of metamorphosis and metabolism that lie beyond;—the “literature” of all the pre-digested and otherwise hocus-pocused food-preparations now being crowded upon the profession by enterprising Chemists, with an assumption of learning on their part, and presumption of ignorance on the part of Physicians generally, to the contrary notwithstanding. There is an old and homely proverb that might be considered profitably for its significance in this connection if properly applied that says: “You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink!”

Medicine, according to our definition, being any substance capable of modifying organic activities within the limits of organic integrity, there can be no question of the fact that Alcohol, properly administered, is medicinal. There is no other drug, in fact, known to the profession, or the world, that has been so long in use, and so extensively administered without loss or diminution of reputation as has Alcohol. As an emergency remedy for conditions of shock attending injuries—for acute suddenly developed pain—for all manner of vague symptoms of undefined diseases it has not now nor never had a rival. Intelligent travelers, including physicians, in all countries and climates carry a supply of it for medicinal use exclusively. Army Surgeons in the field, neither inebriates nor temperance cranks themselves, make great use of it. Admitting the contention that it is a “nerve-fooler,” I have myself found it worth while to fool the nerves of wounded soldiers while being transported over frozen ground in ambulances a day-and-a-night’s journey from a battle field to a railroad station, thus enabling them to reach General Hospitals with less suffering and better prospects of recovery than would have been otherwise practicable. Bishops distinguished for intelligence do not hesitate to act upon Paul’s advice to Timothy respecting the use of wine as medicine, and minor clergymen of all religious

“persuasions” are given to recommendation of all manner of “patent medicine”—an active, if not the most active, ingredient of which is Alcohol. It is a constituent of all tinctures prescribed by Physicians as medicine and of all “tonic bitters,” however denied by proprietary interests. It is, and has ever been, a “favorite prescription” of numberless Practitioners—regular and irregular—for its own sake in the treatment of a great variety of diseases. That other Physicians of equal reputation profess to, and do, treat the same varieties of disease successfully without the use of Alcohol, should not discredit its reputation and possible usefulness as medicine. I do not myself know of any diseased condition amenable to medical treatment of any kind that may not be treated successfully without Alcohol. This fact, however, would not prevent me from prescribing Alcohol in any case that might, in my judgment, be comforted thereby without postponing, or jeopardizing, if not enhancing recovery. The same criticism is applicable to the use of every other medicine. We have a wide range of materials called medicine from which to make selection in our treatment of disease, not one of which may be said to be indispensable. By far the larger number of persons who recover from disease under medical treatment would so recover, other things being equal, with only a pretense of medication, or without such pretense in most instances. This is said deliberately after fifty years practical observation and study of diseases and their treatment. Not that I am—if I know myself—a crank, or would pose as a “Nihilist” in relation to medicine. I believe, as I think, rationally, that the well qualified, conscientious Physician is entitled to rank highest in the grand army of public benefactors for both knowledge and usefulness, yet am constrained to say for myself that while I may have extended “aid and comfort” to multitudes of sufferers, and had the reputation of “curing (nearly) all manner of diseases”—by mitigating pain, assuaging fever, dispelling fear, reviving hope, and somewhat shortening, in some instances, the natural run of disease by medication and other means—I cannot say confidently that many such patients would have died but for medicines administered. Physicians of experience and courage are too often baffled in their “bouts” with that “lean and hungry fellow Death” to boast of frequent victories! The sick may be “helped,” but there is to me no surer indication

of quackery or imposture on the part of a Physician than an egoistic assumption of ability to "cure," and boasting of having "cured" disease of any kind or degree of severity.

But it is as a Poison, and consequently a potent and prolific cause of disease and death, that a thoughtful consideration of Alcohol becomes most important, if not most interesting.

Broadly asserted, any substance capable of inflicting injury by its presence upon living structures otherwise than by mechanical violence may be regarded as poisonous. There are a great number and variety of such substances in nature, some of which are toxic, even deadly, in small quantities; others being inoffensive, apparently, within certain limitations depending upon various contingencies.

Of this latter class are all medicines capable of producing what are called "physiological effects," which are nothing more nor less than manifestations of resentment on the part of offended organs, attended by efforts to expel them as invading enemies.

That Alcohol, however agreeable in its effects, and probably wholesome, within certain limitations as to quantity, and constitutional peculiarities of persons affected thereby, is poisonous when taken in excess of eliminating capabilities, no intelligent Physician will deny. That single draughts have proved lethal in rare instances is known to every intelligent medical observer. That nature, instructed by necessity and use, has provided against serious injury from the multifarious and mixed materials upon which animals of the higher order—especially men—are enabled and often compelled to feed, by numerous and capacious eliminating organs, is also evident to physiologists, giving assurance confirmed by experience that substances may be taken as, or with, food with impunity or profit, within the pale of such defenses; substances that beyond may become injurious and destructive. Systematic protection against injury by Alcohol in the human economy seems to correspond to anticipated or experimentally recognized necessities. Poisonous superfluities are readily and rapidly disposed of if not received in successively overwhelming quantities.

That repeated or continuous intoxication by Alcohol paralyzing functional capabilities, with consequent impairment of import-

ant organs, may be the cause of disease is a rational inference from facts admitted. That Alcohol as used by multitudes of the strongest, longest-lived, most intelligent peoples—from time immemorial as well as now—is not so common a cause of disease as represented by some of our evidently conscientious and philanthropic but blind-bridled brethren, is as rational a conclusion.

To the credulous novitiate in Medicine, impressed by the glamour of a great name or two attached to the "information" upon which Alcohol is now arraigned, the number and variety of diseases of which it is accused must be indeed appalling. Acute and chronic diseases of the Liver, Kidneys, Lungs, Heart and Arteries, Brain and Nerves, Stomach and Intestines, and Insanity, are conspicuously paraded as common sequences of alcoholic intoxication, without reference to other causes.

That any of the eliminating or more servile organs may be "overworked" and injured, in defense of more complex and important organs, there can be no doubt. That protracted and profound alcoholic intoxication effects such injuries in many instances need not be questioned. It is the exaggeration of truth and not truth itself that lovers of truth presume to criticise in this contention. That Alcohol is the sole or chief cause of every case, or even of a greater number of cases of such diseases, may be confidently questioned, if not disproved, by a large amount of testimony. By the facts, for example, that many persons suffer and die of various forms of the diseases mentioned who were never subjects of alcoholic intoxication to any extent. The fact that there is no other ingestible substance that becomes poisonous in excess of which the human system is so tolerant, or of which so much may be eliminated without serious impairment of the eliminating organs. The fact that the most conspicuous disease peculiarly alcoholic—Inebriety—is not common to consumers of Alcohol, affecting only exceptional persons rendered liable thereto by unstable or otherwise defective organization—persons already on the down-grade of physical progression—accidentally or otherwise. The fact that serious organic diseases frequently associated with inebriety are not necessarily of alcoholic origin, but attributable as well to other agencies. "Are there any other vices than this of intoxication that you have indulged?" I said to a degenerate member of a distinguished family who came to me for treat-

ment as an alcoholic Inebriate. After momentary reflection the witty "Colonel" replied: "If there is any, Doctor, I must have forgotten what it is." Syphilis is to Alcohol what David was to Saul, as a "Killer!" It is true that inebriety may predispose one to other vices; or expose one to other causes of disease. Other vices and diseases may also predispose one to, or instigate, inebriety. Let any Physician of experience now recall to memory every case of disease he may have treated of unmistakable alcoholic genesis, and be surprised by the smallness of the number of such cases as related to the whole number of cases of disease treated. To convict Alcohol of being other than a "general conspirator" in the causation of diseases, should not the clinical history of individual cases embrace commemorative circumstances of the use of Alcohol as a matter of fact, and to what extent the person implicated suffered alcoholic intoxication? If it be true that sclerosis—under which title nearly all important diseases charged to Alcohol as a cause may be classified—implying chronic inflammation of interstitial tissues, sequential to antecedent irritation of parenchymous structures performing special functions, is developable, in nearly every phase, in persons free from suspicion even of alcoholism, is it fair to accuse Alcohol, indiscriminately, of all such departure from normal physiological conditions? Pulmonary sclerosis, for example—chargeable to alcoholic influences, according to the assertions of Extremists—claimed to be necessarily antecedent to conditions of tuberculosis, is not peculiar to persons given to indulgence in alcoholic drinks. Children and Youths, and multitudes of Women, who never tasted Alcohol otherwise than as medicine prescribed, have died, and are daily dying of tuberculosis. Forty years ago Whisky was the "favorite prescription" of the Medical Profession for tuberculosis, as popular and as successful in the treatment of that dread disease as is the present Kreosote treatment. Impairment of heart and arteries incident to wear and tear of life is inevitable in the case of every living being whose life is sufficiently protracted, being nature's method of effecting the necessary dissolution of all individual organizations, thus cutting off supplies upon which existence as living beings depends. Alcohol may anticipate—or postpone—this inevitable eventuation, according to circumstances, but is not—and should not be mistaken for—the responsible cause of it.

There are other poisons—as we now believe them to be—more potent and more active in the production of disease than is Alcohol. Such, for instance, as syphilitic virus, far-reaching and terrible. Such as the auto-genetic poisons responsible for the group of painful diseases denominated "rheumatic," by which so many persons of all ages and conditions in life are afflicted. Nor is nature limited to poisons as a means of preserving a balance of organic energy. More hearts and arteries are prematurely impaired by "overwork" incidental to excessive sexual indulgence than are injured by all other causes. Reproduction practically ends the existence of many low orders of plants and animals. There is a suggestion—a reminiscence as it were—of lower forms of being in the experiences of every higher form, however unrecognized the relationship by descent of the highest to the lowest.

As a cause of insanity—nearly all insanity of whatever form being attributed to Alcohol by the medical philosophers above referred to—I have given the subject much attention during thirty years service in the specialty of caring for and treating the Insane, many thousands of whom have come under personal observation—and have no hesitation in saying that Alcohol is not the only cause of insanity—nor is it the most conspicuous of many causes. So many and so complicated in their relations one to another, are the causes of insanity, it is impossible, in many instances, to estimate any one at its real value. The statistics of Hospitals for the Insane are not trustworthy as guides to accurate knowledge respecting the causes of insanity because of insufficiency and inaccuracy of information on the subject obtained or obtainable in given cases—the "alleged cause" of record representing the opinions of incompetent lay observers, the immediate friends and relatives of persons committed, disposed, more frequently than otherwise, to conceal rather than reveal correct, or comprehensive reports of antecedent conditions. These reports, however, taken for what they are worth, represent Alcoholism as a cause of insanity in less than ten per cent of the whole number of insane persons committed to public hospitals in the United States. Undoubtedly there are many persons more or less mentally impaired by alcoholic intoxication, and other causes, who

die of intercurrent diseases incurred by eliminating organs, overworked and exposed to injury, in defense of the supreme organ of the body charged with the responsibility of the Godlike function of thinking, before the brain is so far impaired as to manifest such symptoms of insanity as are recognized by our law officers as sufficient to justify commitment to hospitals supported at public expense. It is true, also, that the mental phenomena of alcoholic intoxication so closely resemble idiopathic insanities as to require differentiation by commemorative circumstances. But there are other facts that tend to discredit the affirmation that nearly all insanity is directly attributable to the imbibition of Alcohol. The fact, for example, that the number of women who become insane in this country does not differ considerably from that of men—yet there are but few women, as compared with the great number of men, who are addicted to alcoholic “Drink”—moderately or immoderately. Some other cause than Alcohol, equally potent, or nearly so, must be recognized to account for this phenomenon. What shall it be? Shall we adopt the theory of some of our gynecologic friends who seem to think that all depravities of feeling, thought and expression on the part of women is determined by the conditions of their Ovaries, and other *removable* pelvic organs; overlooking the fact that men have corresponding organs of reproduction by the functions of which their feelings and thoughts are not less influenced, but not quite so complaisantly removable? Or shall we not seek for a still more common, though as yet undetermined cause of insanity, to be sought for along the lines of modern scientific discovery? A cause—or antecedent condition essential to psychopathic phenomena—common, not in the sense of being familiar, but of being alike predicable as explanatory of all like manifestations? Is it not time that professional men widened the fields of observation so as to embrace a larger number of facts respecting this, as well as many other subjects? To draw conclusions from single facts is the privilege of ignorance. To deduct principles explanatory of phenomena from a multitude of facts correlatable and harmonized is the province, and the prerogative of science.

