

## ALCOHOLISM.

Upon the addition of yeast to grape sugar, at a given temperature (Fah. 60 deg. to 70 deg.), alcohol and carbon dioxide are formed—this is a typical fermented liquor; further, by distilling this fluid, the products are altered to practically alcohol and water, the best known examples of fermented liquors are beer and wine, and of distilled "spirits," brandy, whiskey, rum and gin. The immediate effect of alcohol on the tissues is manifested by a flushing of the face and a feeling of warmth in all parts of the body; an excess of warmth is not really caused, as heat is actually lost, instead of gained, through the dilatation of the blood vessels on the skin. What actually happens is this: alcohol is passed directly through the mucous membrane of the stomach into the blood stream, it stimulates all the organs for the time being, but produces paralysis of the nerves of the skin—hence flushing and loss of heat occur. It will be seen from this that alcohol has certain uses in combating shock, but these uses can be fulfilled by other drugs in the hands of the medical profession. Further than these symptoms are the mental ones—these will rightly come under the heading of Acute or Chronic Alcoholism.

## ACUTE ALCOHOLISM.

Ordinary intoxication comes under this heading. When we speak of any one being intoxicated we mean that alcohol, or fermented liquor, has been imbibed to such an extent as to produce a temporary affection of the brain, with lack of self-control and judgment, also muscular control, due to partial paralysis of the nerves.

This condition is produced in various people with varying amount of fluid taken, and is governed by age, sex, temperament and habit; it is sometimes thought that people who lead outdoor lives can imbibe more than those following sedentary occupations. This is probably so, as elimination of the poison is increased by the action of the excretory organs; but, be that as it may, when intoxication is reached the condition is such that helplessness occurs.

If sufficient of this poison is taken before the toxic effects have worn off, a fatal condition is produced by paralysis of the cardiac-vascular and respiratory centres, which are situated in the medulla oblongata; coma results, from which the patient does not recover. It is well, therefore, to be careful to distinguish between temporary and fatal coma, always keeping the mind open to the fact that the condition thus described results from varying quantities taken.

## CHRONIC ALCOHOLISM.

Here we have the habit formed, and the consequent degeneration, which affects the patient soul and body.

The physical changes gradually become marked, the digestion is disordered, and lack of assimilation of nourishment, flatulence, constipation, and obesity and general flabbiness of the tissues are produced. Muscular exertion becomes an effort, and is gradually discontinued.

In the nervous system the changes are even more noticeable. Restlessness and irritability are probably the first two symptoms, then excitement, often over trifles, trembling, and more or less violence. This is a terrible curse, terrifying little children, breaking down every tie of respect and affection, and reducing many poor women to the borders of despair. Later, some organ becomes permanently affected, generally the liver or kidneys.

Habitual intemperance lowers the resistance of the individual to climatic changes and also to specific infection, and the prognosis in any disease is seriously affected when the patient has given way to chronic intemperance. Before dealing with the moral side, it may be well to mention a condition which is met with chiefly after accident or allied with another disease, but is the effect of chronic alcoholism, viz., delirium tremens; it is characterised by a low muttering delirium, muscular slackness, a rising temperature (which is serious when a great elevation is reached), and hallucinations, all symptoms become more acute at nightfall; this need not be dwelt upon, save to say that alcohol is forbidden, and tonics are indicated during recovery, which begins soon after or on the third day.

## MORAL DEGENERATION.

This condition always accompanies chronic intemperance. Often the care of the person as regards dress and cleanliness are the first things to slide, gradually an indifference to the thoughts and wishes of others, then a disregard of the outside world, then a flabbiness of will power, and enslavement to the one craving, with paroxysms of violence, accompanied by untruthfulness and all manner of small deceptions. The old business habits, honesty and integrity are destroyed; home ties, even those of wife or child, or worse still, of husband and family, are disregarded and trampled under foot until the features are stamped with the moral sin, and without alcohol, mental dullness settles down upon the melancholy individual until the lowered frame succumbs to some secondary disease.

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