THE EVENING NEWS.

Wednesday, - - Jan. 20, 1875.

KILLED BY WHISKY.

POST-MORTEM EXAMINATION OF THE BRAIN OF A DRAM DRINKER AND A FEW FACTS ELICITED FROM AN EXPERT ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF DRINK.

Everybody knows how a living man appears and acts under the influence of liquor; that is, there is a general understanding of the condition of a man who staggers along the streets, hugs lamp-posts, insists upon fighting somebody, or making himself agreeable in spite of the disgustingly apparent fact that he is a nuisance; but it is very few who know how a man looks after death occasioned by whisky. He may show, while living, a bloated red face, a pimply nose, watery red eyes and tremulous limbs; but it is only the eye of science that can read the hidden ravages of drink upon the organs and tissues of the body, and interpret the mysterious signs of the accumulated record, for the outward and visible sign, repulsive and pitaible as it may be to the untutored, hardly compares with the horrid revelations of the *post mortem* examination. The effect of drink upon the living man varies according to the temperament, disposition, habits, &c., of the individual, but it is obvious, says a recognized authority on the subject, that the brain is especially acted on by the stimulus, "for we observe all the manifestations of an excited action in them, such as talkativeness, rapidity and variety of thought, exhilaration of the spirits, animation of the features and gestures, flushed countenance and suffusion of the eyes. During slight intoxication the prevailing dispositions and pursuits are often made manifest, and hence the saying, *'In vino veritas.'* The irritable and ill-tempered become quarelsome, the weak and silly are boisterous with laughter and mirth and profuse in offers of service, and the sad and hypochondrical readily burst into tears and dwell on mournful topics.

It has been demonstrated by experiments on animals and observations of the human being that alcohol passes immediately into the circulation, and, therefore, acts almost immediately upon the brain. No wonder, then, that a man fired up by whisky is ready to shoot, stab or bludgeon his fellow to death, or to do anything the most reckless and desperate. Most of the homicides and murders which have occurred in this city are directly traceable to the malign influence of strong drink, and it is strange to observe how ready many people are to excuse, or at least palliate, capital crime when perpetrated under the spur of the moment.

A great many errors with regard to the influence and effects of whisky and other alcoholic stimulants obtain among people. For instance it is believed that a "slug" of whisky is a good thing to keep out the cold of a bitter night, whereas, in point of fact, a cup of coffee with bread and butter is far more enduring and efficacious. It would require a better knowledge of chemistry than the general reader possesses to demonstrate this, but it has been satisfactorily established by carefully collated data, and is vouched for by the highest medical authorities. It is also well known that physical labor is not materially aided by alcoholic stimulation, the effect of which is merely to force the wheels of the human machine, so to speak, into a more rapid action or motion for the time being, but leaving the system correspondingly prostrated, the mental powers weakened and the spirits depressed. No one knows this better than the dram drinker, who feels that he must have recourse again and again to the bottle for a renewal of what he erroneously supposes to be strength.

"Now here is the brain of a person who died of whisky."

This announcement was startling, doubly so as the word was suited to the action and the action to the word, for accompanying it was a human brain, bloody in appearance, fresh and—stinking, nicely spread out on a platter. It had been taken out of a glass basin filled with alcohol, as a preparative to dissection.

Q. How did you obtain this?

A. In the usual way.

Q. How?

A. Well, that is my business, but it is here.

Q. Allow me to ask, then, how you took it out of the whisky head, and what there is peculiar about it?

A. With pleasure. You see the brain consists of two great parts, the cerebrum and the cerebellum—

Q. My dear sir, be kind enough to speak in plain, unscientific terms. You see I am not a scholar, and least of all up in science of any kind, besides—

A. I understand. Well now, what do you want to know? Here is a peculiar treatise that will probably give you all the information you desire.

Q. Will it tell me all about this brain?

A. No, not about that particular brain, but of brains in general—all you want to know.

Q. Now we understand each other. Tell me, then, all about this particular brain, how you came to take it out of the head, and what it reveals to you—this, if you please, in a plain, conversational style that everybody will understand?

A. All right, I heard of the death of this person, and knowing the cause of the death, I went to the subject and had permission to take out the brain for examination. In the first place, I made an incision under the hair line from the ears backward and stripped the scalp from the skull, drawing the former forward and over the face, which left the skull bone exposed. I then sawed the top of the skull, taking care not to let the saw injure the brain, which was then removed or scooped out and put in that basin of alcohol.

Q. Well, go on, please. What next?

A. I examined it, keeping constantly in mind the difference in the appearance from the normal or healthy brain.

Q. And therein lies the interest?

A. Certainly. Well, I observed that this brain was hardened. I should have said, however, that when I removed the skull a strong alcoholic fume or smell escaped, for the body was yet warm, or retained some animal heat when I obtained access to it. When I say hardened I mean that it is harder than is natural. The vessels were enlarged and congested. In other words, they looked as though gorged with blood that had remained in them when the patient died—for you know that as a general thing the blood vessels empty themselves in death, or, properly speaking, the blood is withdrawn from the circulation. The brain is largely composed of albumen, and constant drink has about the same effect on it that alcohol has upon the white of an egg. It coagulates and hardens it, and that means mental wreck and death.

Q. How does drink kill?

A. By injuring the brain in the manner indicated—at least that is one way. Of course there are other fatal effects of excessive drink, such as liver, kidney and bowel disease, but the first injury is inflicted on the brain. Just look at these little clots and dark spots in this brain [pointing them out with the handle of the scalpel]. Now, in a normal brain these would not appear at all. The brain would be of a uniform pinkish white color—not mottled like this. Death ensues from excessive drink slowly but surely. Sometimes the victim drops as if shot. Then it is called apoplexy. Sometimes a stupor sets in that ends with paralysis and death. You see these vessels [tracing them with the scalpel] are enlarged, and they no doubt pressed upon the brain substance, producing a sense of suffocation and choking perhaps, a fullness of the head that must have been dreadful at times to bear. This feeling has been described to me as a lump of lead or a lump of ice on the brain. I have had whisky patients tell me that they sometimes felt as though their head was screwed up in a vise.

But to return to this brain: I have to observe that it is shrunk from the natural size—one of the most noticeable effects of alcohol on the animal tissues.

Q. How long do you suppose did it take to produce this effect upon the brain?

A. The owner of this brain was an ordinary whisky drinker and might have been a constant drinker for five, six, ten or more years. On this I am not informed, but I should say that one year's hard drinking would produce the effect you here witness.

Q. But does drink produce this effect in every case?

A. It certainly does, more or less, according to the quantity and frequency of the bibulations. A moderate drinker can indulge for a greater length of time than an excessive drinker, but his day of reckoning will come just as surely as it did to the miserable devil whose brain we are looking at.

Q. Is there anything else of interest in this connection that you think of to mention?

A. Oh, I could tell you a great deal more about the effect of drink upon the brain, but I think you have enough. At another time, perhaps, I can show you a "hobnail" liver, a "fatty" heart, or an enlarged kidney—the result of drink, and I will be glad to do so; but no name, you understand.

Certainly not.—*Cleveland Plain Dealer.*

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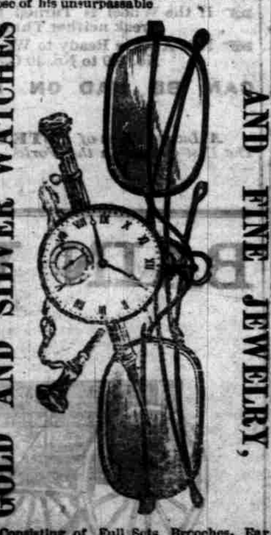

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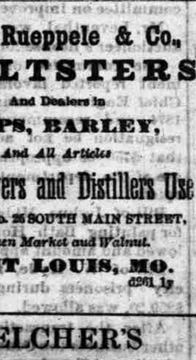

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WILLIAM WARBURTON.
Post Hotel, Salt Lake City,
November 30, 1874 d9

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Deseret News.

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