A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO

Extracted from an early issue of *The Practitioner*

THE PLACE OF WINES IN THE DIET OF ORDINARY LIFE

FRANCIS E ANSTIE, EDITOR OF THE PRACTITIONER AND HIS STAFF

IN OUR SERIES OF PAPERS about the dietetic use of wines by healthy persons it was our objective to lay down principles which ought to govern the selection of wines for daily use, and especially to show how wine might be made the wholesome beverage of ordinary life rather than a dangerously seductive luxury, leading easily to mischievous excess. For the present we may be content with the following summary of the points we desire to insist upon:

1 Wines for daily use by healthy adults should not, on the average, contain more than 10 per cent absolute alcohol; 8 or 9 per cent is better.
2 If wine be used as the daily drink, it is best, as far as may be, to use only one kind at a time, and no other form of alcoholic liquid.
3 Sound natural wines are to be obtained at the best economic advantage from the Bordeaux district; the red wines are to be preferred.
4 Rhine wines (white) are equally excellent, but more expensive

Fortified wines in small quantities, especially sherry, are the appropriate stimuli of certain kinds of infantile and youthful debility, and of the enfeebled nervous system of old persons.

Alcohol for children

The worthy teetotallers have easily enlisted the sympathies of persons whose experience of the management of children was limited, when they have declaimed against the practice of "rearing drunkards from the cradle,"etc, etc; and it is, of course, quite possible to do even so dreadful a thing as this. But the judicious use of wine as a part of the diet even of quite young children (always under medical sanction) is entirely free from such dangers, and, on the other hand, may do positive good of a very visible kind.

"The worthy teetotallers have easily enlisted the sympathies of persons whose experience of the management of children was limited, when they have declaimed against the practice of 'rearing drunkards from the cradle'"

The cases in which it is useful are, those where a tendency to wasting is very marked, i.e. where children are very apt, without positively seeming ill, to run down suddenly in flesh, with or without simultaneous failure of appetite; and those where trifling catarrhal affections are very slowly shaken off.

We are firmly convinced that multitudes of such children have been allowed to slide into confirmed ill-health, and then into organic disease, who would have done perfectly well had such symptoms as the above been attended to by the administration of wine.

With children, it is best to give wine at separate hours, as if it were strictly a medicine; and the potent wines, disguised and made somewhat disagreeable by the addition of bitters, are much the best; for example, a teaspoonful of sherry or port made up to a tablespoon full with strong infusion of gentian, which might be given three times a day to a child of three or four years old; or even double this quantity may sometimes be advantageously given.

The improvement of appetite and nutrition, which is sometimes marvellous in young children who have been put on an allowance of wine, is never observed in so striking a degree as after the administration of wine containing a high proportion of volatile ethers. In prescribing wine as supplementary food for children whose parents are not wealthy we should recommend sherry rather than port.

Bottle per diem for 'hard-working students'

We add here a few words in correction of a statement which occurs in a former paper, and which, by ambiguity of phraseology, has led to misunderstanding and consequent cavil.

We did not intend, when recommending the "hard-working student" to allow himself a bottle per diem of weak Bordeaux wine, to give that recommendation to young lads.

"We did not intend, when recommending the 'hard-working student' to allow himself a bottle per diem of weak Bordeaux wine, to give that recommendation to young lads. We were thinking of 'hard-working students' of middle age"

We were thinking of "hard working students" of middle age; and we would state our very firm conviction, that for youths (say under 25) whose bodily frame is yet not fully consolidated, the proper rule is *either no alcohol or very little indeed*.

From the time of puberty onwards, there arises a much greater susceptibility to the injurious influences of alcohol upon the emotions and the character; and between the date of puberty and the age of 25, or even 30, it would be better, in ordinary cases, either to abstain altogether, or to limit the allowance to one-third or one-half the amount above named.

Still, there can be no question to many rapidly-growing lads an amount of alcohol (preferably as beer) strictly limited to these latter qualities is not only harmless but more actively useful.

