



ARMY MEDICAL LIBRARY

FOUNDED 1836



WASHINGTON, D.C.





Rush (B.)

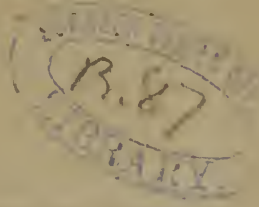
AN  
INQUIRY  
INTO THE  
EFFECTS  
OF  
SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS  
ON THE  
HUMAN BODY.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,  
A MORAL and PHYSICAL THERMOMETER.

---

BY BENJAMIN RUSH, M. D.  
Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine in the University of  
PHILADELPHIA.

---



---

PRINTED AT BOSTON,  
BY THOMAS AND ANDREWS.  
At FAUST'S STATUE, No. 45, NEWBURY STREET.

---

MDCCXC.



---

## An INQUIRY, &c.

---

**B**Y spirits I mean all those liquors which are obtained by distillation from fermented juices or substances of any kind. These liquors were formerly used only in medicine. They now constitute a principal part of the drinks of many countries.

Since the introduction of spirituous liquors into such general use, physicians have remarked that a number of new diseases have appeared among us, and have described many new symptoms as common to old diseases. Spirits in their first operation are stimulating upon the system. They quicken the circulation of the blood, and produce some heat in the body. Soon afterwards, they become what is called sedative; that is, they diminish the action of the vital powers, and thereby produce languor and weakness.

The effects of spirituous liquors upon the human body, in producing diseases, are sometimes gradual. A strong constitution, especially if it be assisted with constant and hard labour, will counteract the destructive effects of spirits for many years, but in general they produce the following diseases:

1. A sickness at the stomach, and vomiting in the morning. This disorder is generally accompanied with a want of appetite for breakfast. It is known by tremors in the hands, inasmuch that persons who labour under it, are hardly able to lift a tea cup to their heads, until they have taken a dose of some cordial liquor. In this disorder, a peculiar paleness, with small red streaks, appear in the cheeks. The flesh of the face, at the same time, has a peculiar fulness and flabbiness, which are very different from sound and healthy fat.

2. An universal dropsy. This disorder begins first in the lower limbs, and gradually extends itself throughout the whole body. I have been told that the merchants in Charleston, South Carolina, never trust the planters when spirits have produced the first symptom of this disorder upon them. It is very natural to suppose that industry and virtue have become extinct in that man, whose legs and feet are swelled, from the use of spirituous liquors.

3. Obstruction of the liver. This disorder produces other diseases, such as an inflammation, which sometimes proves suddenly fatal; the jaundice, and a dropsy of the belly.

4. Madness

4. Madnefs. It is unnecessary to describe this difeafe with all its terrors and confequences. It is well known in every townfhip, where fpirituouf liquors are ufed.

5. The Palfy. 6. The Apoplexy ; and 7. The Epilepfy, complete the group of difeafes produced by fpirituouf liquors. I do not affert that thefe diforders are never produced by any other caufes, but I maintain that fpirituouf liquors are the moft frequent caufes of them, and that when a predifpofition to them is produced by other caufes, they are rendered more certain and more dangerous by the intemperate ufe of fpirits.

I have only named a few of the principal diforders produced by fpirituouf liquors. It would take up a volume to describe how much other diforders natural to the human body, are increafed and complicated by them. Every fpecies of inflammatory and putrid fever, is rendered more frequent and more obftinate by the ufe of fpirituouf liquors.

The danger to life from the difeafes which have been mentioned is well known. I do not think it extravagant therefore to repeat here, what has been often faid, that *fpirituouf liquors deftroy more lives than the fword*. War has its intervals of deftruction ; but fpirits operate at all times and feafons, upon human life. The ravages of war are confined to but one part of the human fpecies, viz. to men, but fpirits act too often upon perfons who are exempted from the dangers of war by age or fex ; and laftly, war deftroys only thofe perfons who allow the ufe of arms to be lawful, whereas fpirits infinuate their fatal effects among people, whofe principles are oppofed to the effufion of human blood.

Let us next turn our eyes from the effects of fpirits upon health and life, to their effects upon *property* ; and here frefh fcenes of mifery open to our view. Among the inhabitants of cities they produce debts, difgrace and bankruptcy. Among farmers, they produce idlenefs, with its ufual confequences, fuch as houfes without windows, barns without roofs, gardens without enclofures, fields without fences, hogs without yokes, fheep without wool, meagre cattle, feeble horfes, and half clad, dirty children, without principles, morals, or manners. This picture is not exaggerated. I appeal to the obfervations of every man whether fuch fcenes of wretchednefs do not follow the tracks of fpirituouf liquors.

If we advance one ftep further, and examine the effects of fpirituouf liquors upon the *moral faculty*, the profpect will be  
 ftill



still more distressing and terrible. The first effects of spirits upon the mind shew themselves in the *temper*. I have constantly observed men who are intoxicated in any degree with spirits, to be peevish and quarrelsome; after a while they lose by degrees the moral sense. They violate promises and engagements without shame or remorse. From these deficiencies in veracity and integrity, they pass on to crimes of a more heinous nature. It would be to dishonour human nature only to name them.

Thus have I, in a few words, pointed out the effects of spirituous liquors upon the lives, estates, and souls of my fellow creatures. Their mischiefs may be summed up in a few words. They fill our church yards with premature graves, they fill the Sheriff's docket with executions, they crowd our jails, and lastly, they people the regions of —; but it belongs to another profession to shew their terrible consequences in the future world.

I shall now proceed to combat some prejudices in favour of the use of spirituous liquors.

There are three occasions in which spirits have been thought necessary and useful.

1. In very cold weather.
2. In very warm weather. And
3. In times of hard labour.

1. There cannot be a greater error than to suppose that spirituous liquors lessen the effects of cold upon the body. On the contrary I maintain that they always render the body more liable to be affected and injured by cold. The temporary warmth they produce, is always succeeded by chillness. If any thing besides warm clothing and exercise is necessary to warm the body in cold weather, a plentiful meal of wholesome food is at all times sufficient for that purpose. This, by giving a tone to the stomach, invigorates the whole system, while the gentle fever created by digestion adds considerably to the natural and ordinary heat of the body, and thus renders it less sensible of the cold. A piece of meat well peppered, and a draught of cyder or water, well-gingered, will enable a person to travel in the coldest day or night, without receiving any injury from the weather.

2. It is equally absurd to suppose that spirituous liquors lessen the effects of heat upon the body. So far from it, they rather encrease them. They add an internal heat to the external

ternal heat of the sun ; they dispose to fevers and inflammations of the most dangerous kinds ; they produce preternatural sweats which weaken, instead of an uniform and gentle perspiration which exhilarates the body. Half the diseases which are said to be produced by warm weather, I am persuaded are produced by the spirits which are swallowed to lessen its effects upon the system.

3. I maintain with equal confidence, that spirituous liquors do not lessen the effects of hard labour upon the body. Look at the horse, with every muscle of his body swelled from morning until night in the plough, or the team, does he make signs for spirits to enable him to cleave the earth, or to climb a hill ? No. He requires nothing but cool water and substantial food. There is neither strength nor nourishment in spirituous liquors. If they produce vigour in labour, it is of a transient nature and is always succeeded with a sense of weakness and fatigue. These facts are founded in observation ; for I have repeatedly seen those men perform the greatest exploits in work both as to their degrees and duration, who never tasted spirituous liquors.

But are there no conditions of the human body in which spirituous liquors are required ? Yes, there are, 1st. In those cases where the body has been exhausted by any causes, and faintness, or a stoppage in the circulation of the blood has been produced, the sudden stimulus of spirits may be necessary. In this case we comply strictly with the advice of Solomon, who confines the use of "strong drink" only to him "that is ready to perish !" And 2dly. When the body has been long exposed to wet weather, and more especially if cold be joined with it, a moderate quantity of spirits is not only proper, but highly useful to obviate debility, and thus to prevent a fever. I take these to be the only two cases that can occur, in which spirituous liquors are innocent or necessary.

But if we reject spirits from being part of our drinks, what liquors shall we substitute in the room of them ? For custom, the experience of all ages and countries, and even nature herself, all seem to demand drinks more grateful and more cordial than simple water.

To this I shall reply, by recommending in the room of spirits, in the first place.

1. CYDER. This excellent liquor contains a small quantity of spirit, but so diluted and blunted, by being combined

blended with an acid and a large quantity of saccharine matter and water, as to be perfectly inoffensive and wholesome. It disagrees only with persons subject to the rheumatism, but it may be rendered inoffensive to such people by extinguishing a red hot iron in it, or by diluting it with water. It is to be lamented that the late frosts in the spring often deprive us of the fruit which affords this liquor. But the effects of these frosts have been in some measure obviated by giving an orchard a north west exposure, so as to check too early vegetation, and by kindling two or three large fires of brush and straw to windward of the orchard, the evening before we expect a night of frost. This last expedient has in many instances within the compass of my knowledge, preserved the fruit of an orchard, to the great joy and emolument of the ingenious husbandman.

2. BEER is a wholesome liquor compared with spirits. The grain from which it is obtained is not liable, like the apple, to be affected with frost, and therefore it can always be procured at a moderate expense. It abounds with nourishment; hence we find many of the common people in Great Britain endure hard labour with no other food than a quart or three pints of this liquor, with a few pounds of bread in a day. I have heard with great pleasure of breweries being set up in several of the principal county towns of Pennsylvania, and I esteem it a sign of the progress of our State in wealth and happiness, that a single brewer in Chester county sold above 1000 barrels of beer last year. While I wish to see a law imposing the heaviest taxes on whisky distilleries, I should be glad to see breweries (at least for some years) wholly exempted from taxation.\*

3. WINE is likewise a wholesome liquor, compared with spirits. The low wines of France I believe could be drunk at a less expense than spirits in this country. The peasants in France, who drink these liquors in large quantities, are a healthy and sober body of people. Wines of all kinds, yield, by chymical analysis, the same principles as cyder, but in different proportions; hence they are both cordial and nourishing. It is remarked that few men ever become *habitual* drunkards upon wine. It derives its relish principally from company, and is seldom like spirituous liquors, drunk in a chimney

\* A gentleman now living remembers when there were 10 or 12 brew houses in Boston, and but 1000 distil houses. How sadly is the case now reversed?

ney corner or in a closet. The effects of wine upon the *temper* are likewise in most cases directly opposite to those that were mentioned of spirituous liquors. It must be a bad heart, indeed, that is not rendered more cheerful and more generous, by a few glasses of wine.

4. VINEGAR and WATER sweetened with sugar or molasses, is the best drink that can be contrived in warm weather. I beg leave to recommend this wholesome mixture to reapers in a particular manner. It is pleasant and cooling. It promotes perspiration, and resists putrefaction. Vinegar and water constituted the only drink of the soldiers of the Roman republick; and it is well known that they marched, and fought in a warm climate, and beneath a load of arms that weighed 60lbs. Boaz, a wealthy farmer in Palestine, we find treated his reapers with nothing but bread dipped in vinegar. Say not, that Spirits have become necessary in harvest, from habit and the custom of the country. The custom of swallowing this liquid fire, is a bad one, and the habit of it may be broken. Let half a dozen farmers in a neighbourhood, combine to allow higher wages to their reapers than are common, and a sufficient quantity of *any* of the liquors I have recommended, and they may soon abolish the practice of giving them spirits. They will in a little while be delighted with the good effects of their association. Their grain will be sooner and more carefully gathered into their barns, and an hundred disagreeable scenes of sickness and contention will be avoided, which always follow in a greater or less degree the use of spirituous liquors. Under this head, I should not neglect to recommend butter milk and water, or sour milk (commonly called *bonneclabber*) and water. It will be rendered more grateful by the addition of a little sugar. PUNCH is likewise calculated to lessen the effects of heat and hard labour upon the body. The spirit in this liquor is blunted by its union with the vegetable acid. Hence it possesses not only the constituent parts, but most of the qualities of cyder and wine. To render this liquor perfectly innocent and wholesome, it must be drank *weak*, in *moderate* quantities, and *only* in warm weather.

There are certain classes of people to whom I beg leave to suggest a caution or two upon the use of spirituous liquors.

1. Valetudinarians, especially those who labour under disorders of the stomach and bowels, are very apt to fly to spirits

spirits for relief. Let such people be cautious how they repeat this dangerous remedy. I have known many men and women, of excellent characters and principles, who have been betrayed by occasional doses of gin or brandy to ease the cholick, into a love of spirituous liquors, insomuch that they have afterwards fallen sacrifices to their fatal effects. The different preparations of opium are a thousand times more safe and innocent than spirituous liquors, in all spasmodick affections of the stomach and bowels. So apprehensive am I of the danger of contracting a love for spirituous liquors, by accustoming the stomach to their stimulus, that I think the fewer medicines we exhibit in spirituous vehicles the better.

2. Some people from living in countries subject to the intermitting fever, endeavour to fortify themselves against it by two or three glasses of bitters made with spirits every day. There is great danger of men becoming sots from this practice. Besides, this mode of preventing intermittents is by no means a certain one. A much better security against them is to be found in the Jesuits bark. A tea spoon full of this excellent medicine taken every morning during the sickly season, has in many instances preserved whole families in the neighbourhood of rivers and mill ponds from fevers of all kinds. Those who live in a sickly part of the country, and who cannot procure the bark, or who object to taking it, I would advise to avoid the morning and evening air in the sickly months, to kindle fires in their houses on damp days, and in cool evenings, throughout the whole summer, and to put on woolen clothing about the first week in September. The last part of this direction applies only to the inhabitants of the middle States. These cautions I am persuaded will be more effectual in preventing autumnal fevers than the best preparations that can be made from bitters in spirits.

3. Men who follow professions that require a constant exercise of the mind or body, or perhaps of both, are very apt to seek relief from fatigue in spirituous liquors. To such persons I would beg leave to recommend the use of TEA instead of spirits. Fatigue is occasioned by the obstruction of perspiration. Tea, by restoring perspiration, removes fatigue, and thus invigorates the system. I am no advocate for the general or excessive use of tea. When drank too strong, it is hurtful, especially to the female constitution; but when drank of a moderate degree of strength, and in

moderate quantities, with sugar and cream or milk, I believe it is in general innocent, and at all times to be preferred to spirituous liquors. One of the most industrious school masters I ever knew, told me that he had been preserved from the love of spirituous liquors by contracting a love for tea in early life. Three or four dishes drank in an afternoon, carried off the fatigue of a whole day's labour in his school. This gentleman lived to be 71 years of age, and afterwards died of an acute disease, in the full exercise of all the faculties of his mind.

To every class of my readers, I beg leave to suggest a caution against the use of TODDY or GROG. I acknowledge that I have known some men, who, by limiting its strength, constantly measuring the spirit and water, and who by drinking it *only* with their *meals*, have drank toddy or grog for many years without suffering in any degree from it; but I have known many more who have been insensibly led from drinking toddy for their constant drink, to take drams in the morning, and have afterwards paid their lives as the price of their folly. I shall select one case from among many that have come within the compass of my knowledge, to shew the ordinary progress of intemperance in the use of spirituous liquors. A gentleman, once of a fair and sober character, in the city of Philadelphia, for many years drank toddy as his constant drink. From this he proceeded to drink grog. After a while nothing would satisfy him but slings made of equal parts of rum and water, with a little sugar. From slings he advanced to raw rum, and from common rum to Jamaica spirits. Here he rested for a few months; but at last he found even Jamaica spirits were not strong enough to warm his stomach, and he made it a constant practice to throw a table spoon full of ground pepper into each glass of his spirits, in order, (to use his own expression) "to take off their coldness." It is hardly necessary to add, that he soon afterwards died a martyr to his intemperance.

I shall conclude what has been said of the effects of spirituous liquors, with two observations. 1. A people corrupted with strong drink cannot long be a *free* people. The rulers of such a community will soon partake of the vices of that mass from which they are secreted, and all our laws and governments will sooner or later bear the same marks of the effects of spirituous liquors which were described formerly upon individuals

individuals. I submit it therefore to the consideration of our Legislatures, whether more laws should not be made to increase the expense and lessen the consumption of spirituous liquors, and whether some mark of publick infamy should not be inflicted by law upon every man, convicted before a common magistrate, of drunkenness.

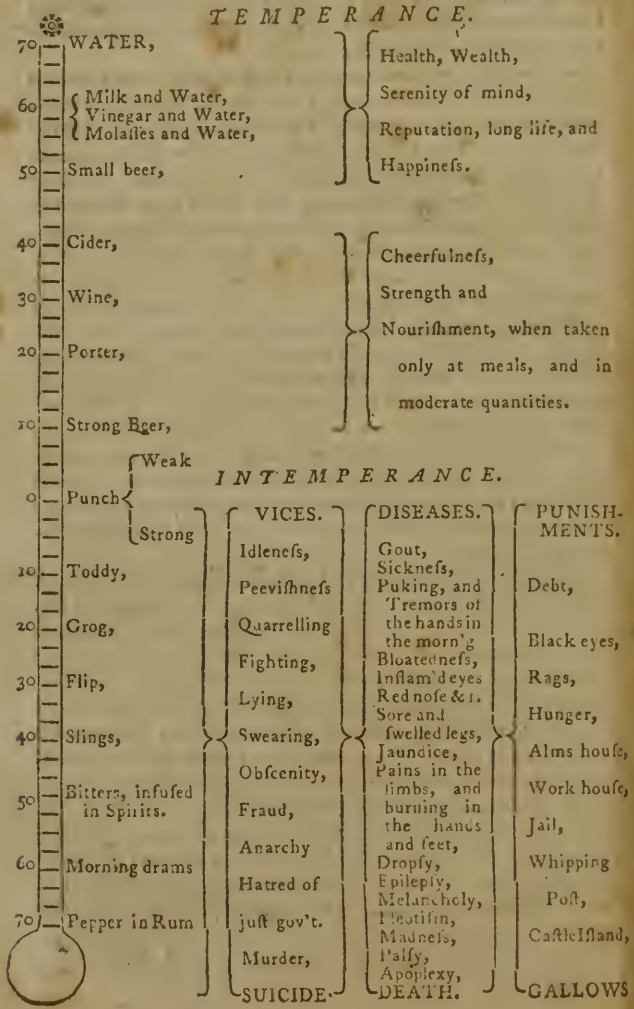
The second and last observation I shall offer, is of a serious nature. It has been remarked that the Indians have diminished every where in America since their connections with the Europeans. This has been justly ascribed to the Europeans having introduced spirituous liquors among them. Let those men who are every day turning their backs upon all the benefits of cultivated society, to seek habitations in the neighbourhood of Indians, consider how far this wandering mode of life is produced by the same cause which has scattered and annihilated so many Indian tribes. Long life, and the secure possession of property, in the land of their ancestors, was looked upon as a blessing among the ancient Jews. For a son to mingle his dust with the dust of his father, was to act worthy of his inheritance; and the prospect of this honour often afforded a consolation even in death. However exalted, my countrymen, your ideas of liberty may be, while you expose yourselves by the use of spirituous liquors to this consequence of them, you are nothing more than the pioneers, or in more slavish terms, the "hewers of wood" of your more industrious neighbours.

If the facts that have been stated, should produce in any of my readers who have suffered from the use of spirituous liquors, a resolution to abstain from them hereafter, I must beg leave to inform them that they must leave them off *suddenly* and *entirely*. No man was ever *gradually* reformed from drinking spirits. He must not only avoid tasting, but even smelling them, until long habits of abstinence have subdued his affection for them. To prevent his feeling any inconveniences from the sudden loss of their stimulus upon his stomach, he should drink plentifully of camomile or of any other bitter tea, or a few glasses of sound old wine every day. I have great pleasure in adding, that I have seen a number of people who have been *effectually* restored to health, to character, and to usefulness to their families and to society, by following this advice,

A MORAL

# A MORAL and PHYSICAL THERMOMETER :

Or, a Scale of the Progress of TEMPERANCE and INTemperance. LIQUORS; with their EFFECTS, in their usual Order.





Med. Hist.

WZ

270

R952i

1790

c.1

