

CHAPTER VIII

THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL ON LONGEVITY

Introduction—The Influence of Excessive Indulgence in Alcohol—Alcoholism in Various Social Classes—The Evidence from Life Insurance Offices—Does Moderate Drinking Affect Longevity?—The Racial Effect of Alcohol—The Influence of Alcohol on Industrial Efficiency.

INTRODUCTION.

THE influence of alcohol on longevity is a matter of interest to everyone, as it has a direct and practical bearing on the duration of a man's own life. The question has been discussed at length on many occasions for many years past, and large masses of statistics relating to it have been gradually accumulated, more especially by Life Insurance Societies. The interpretation of this evidence is found to be by no means easy, even at the hands of statistical experts, and at times the statisticians flatly contradict one another. However, it is necessary to examine the evidence at some length, and determine, if we can, what portions of it can be accepted as thoroughly reliable. We shall find eventually that we can definitely accept only two conclusions, one of which is obvious to everyone, apart from all statistics. This certain conclusion is to the effect that excessive indulgence in alcoholic liquors shortens the duration of life. The second conclusion is a most unsatisfactory one. It concerns the question to which all of us desire a definite answer, namely,