
Intoxicating Temperance Drinks

Source: *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1781 (Feb. 16, 1895), p. 379

Published by: BMJ

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20231579>

Accessed: 29-05-2016 01:24 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



BMJ is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The British Medical Journal*

have been more harmonious, and a little consideration might have shown those who anticipated a storm, as it appears to have satisfied some of the gentlemen who might have been expected to create one, that scientific men of the standing and experience of Dr. Ramsay and Lord Rayleigh would be hardly likely to come before such a gathering without having very weighty, if not practically irrefutable, evidence at their command to support their case. That evidence, as presented to the meeting, appears to prove conclusively that atmospheric air contains a substance which has hitherto remained unrecognised, and whose most striking peculiarity is an altogether exceptional chemical inertness. It is a remarkable and very interesting fact that Cavendish must have isolated argon in his well-known experiments to determine the composition of the air. But although he obtained a small, irreducible, gaseous residue, and duly recorded the fact, neither he nor down to the present time those who came after him, investigated the matter further.

This, however, was not the starting point of Lord Rayleigh and Dr. Ramsay. The nitrogen obtained by well-known processes from chemical compounds containing it had been found to differ from nitrogen obtained from air in that the former was always lighter than the latter by a constant quantity—about $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. By a process of elimination it has been made perfectly clear that this difference is not due to contamination by any known impurity, and the conclusion was ultimately arrived at that it was to be accounted for only by the presence in atmospheric nitrogen of a substance of higher density than pure nitrogen.

Without entering into an account of the elaborate experiments rendered necessary to deal adequately with the problem, it is not possible to do justice to the admirable manner in which the investigation was conducted by the authors of the paper, but the statement of the main facts must have been amply sufficient to satisfy the student of chemistry, and, indeed, to satisfy anyone accustomed to weigh scientific evidence, that the case is proved in so far as the existence of the new body and the recognition of some of its main properties are concerned apart from what views may be held by various authorities in regard to its atomic or to its molecular constitution (should it possess the latter), or as to whether, in the strict sense of the term, it is a chemical "element."

By passing over red-hot magnesium in suitable apparatus, by a repetition of Cavendish's experiment of "electric sparking" through the atmospheric nitrogen in presence of excess of oxygen and an alkali, and by resorting to Graham's method of diffusion through long lengths of clay piping, not only has conclusive evidence been obtained of the presence in atmospheric nitrogen of a gas heavier than oxygen or "chemical" nitrogen, but the body itself has been isolated. Its density, arrived at up to the present by indirect means only, is stated at 19.9 or 20; its solubility in water at two and a-half times that of nitrogen; while its spectroscopic characters, investigated by Mr. Crookes, are quite distinct from those of nitrogen.

All attempts to induce chemical combination of argon with other bodies have hitherto failed, thus placing a most serious difficulty in the way of the elucidation of its true chemical nature. It would appear that argon, in its inertness, stands in a most curiously isolated position, but it

would be a great mistake to assume that because of this apparent inertness it may not play important and very energetic parts under conditions as yet undetermined. Whatever differences there may be upon points of detail, the whole scientific world will join in congratulating Dr. Ramsay and Lord Rayleigh upon their brilliant work and their remarkable and probably most fruitful discovery.

We understand that the *Medical Register* for 1895, as well as the *Dentists' Register* and the *Medical Students' Register*, will very shortly be issued, and that, as soon as the final revision is complete, the volumes will be obtainable through the Council's publishers, Messrs. Spottiswoode and Co., either direct or through the booksellers.

SIR JOHN ERICHSEN, Bart., F.R.S., Sir J. Russell Reynolds, Bart., F.R.S., and Sir John Williams, Bart., M.D., will be entertained by their colleagues, friends, and pupils at a dinner to be given at the Criterion Restaurant on Wednesday, March 13th. The Chair will be taken by Lord Reay, G.C.S.I., Vice-President of University College. Further particulars can be obtained from Dr. Poore, 30, Wimpole Street, W., or Mr. W. A. Meredith, F.R.C.S., 21, Manchester Square, W.

UNITED OPHTHALMIC HOSPITALS IN DUBLIN.

THE Governors of St. Mark's Ophthalmic Hospital and of the National Eye and Ear Infirmary in Dublin have agreed to carry out an amalgamation of these institutions. A joint committee has been appointed and steps are being taken to raise a minimum sum of £10,000. No building operations are to be undertaken until that sum has been received. Should it not be realised within three years then the agreement becomes void and the subscriptions are to be returned, but the period may be extended for two years by mutual agreement.

THE PAY WARDS OF THE GREAT NORTHERN CENTRAL HOSPITAL.

At the annual meeting of the Great Northern Central Hospital on Friday, February 22nd, Dr. Glover has given notice that he will move the following resolution: "That this meeting of Governors of the Great Northern Central Hospital regrets the recent changes in the administration of the hospital by which pay patients have been admitted to its wards to be attended gratuitously by the honorary staff, and is of opinion that such a system is not likely to conduce to the welfare of the hospital or the advantage of the poor, for whom such institutions exist, and should, without further delay, be abandoned."

INTOXICATING TEMPERANCE DRINKS.

MR. A. W. STOKES, analyst for Paddington, reports an analysis of 8 temperance beverages. Hop ale, non-alcoholic stout, lemonade, ginger beer, and ginger stout were found to be unintoxicating, only mere traces of alcohol—ranging from 2 to nine-tenths of 1 per cent. of proof spirit—being present; but a sample of ginger wine contained 10 per cent., or about twice the alcoholic strength of beer sold in public houses. The excise authorities would do well to exercise the closest supervision over beverages of this class in the interests of the revenue and of the public health.

DEATHS FROM SYPHILIS.

It is not altogether without interest, in regard to recent events, to note the ages of those who die of syphilis. According to the last report of the Registrar-General, just issued, 1,190 males died of syphilis in England in 1893. Of these, 928, or 77.9 per cent., were under 5 years of age. During the same period 964 females died of the same dis-