

## *Pervasive Influences of Beverage Alcohol in American Life*

BY MARTIN H. BICKHAM, Ph.D.,

Sociologist, Chairman of the Illinois Inter-racial Commission,  
Administrator of War Welfare Activities in two World Wars.

A MONOGRAPH Study of the "pervasive influences" and sources of strength of alcoholic drink in everyday economic life, developed under such heads as:

"Inner Urges—Plus Greed"

"Fear Plus Greed"

"An Analysis of Production Processes"

"The Distribution System"

"Analysis of Consumption"

"Aroused Opposition, a Counter Trend"

"Fundamental Conflicts"

It is a *fundamental discussion* of basic factors in the economic and pressure trends of alcohol as a sales commodity. It is positive—written from deep conviction and wide observation.

Published in late 1948 it had already wide distribution.

"Contains such basic philosophy about the whole alcohol problem that it is a 'must' in our reading list—WAYNE W. WOMER, Virginia Church Temperance Council, Richmond.

"A most important and effective publication.—LIVINGSTON STEBBINS, Unitarian Temperance Society, Boston, Mass.

"I am so glad that Dr. Bickham is optimistic that the American Social Conscience is awakening to the necessity of limiting the use of beverage alcohol."—Mrs. JANET S. M. DOBSON, *Montreal, Canada.*

"Dr. Bickham's analysis is of value to thoughtful citizens everywhere. . . a contribution toward understanding of a complex problem." WALTER O. CROMWELL, Department of Public Welfare, Madison, Wis.

Prices: 25 cents per copy  
1.50 per 10 copies  
\$9.50 per 100 copies

Scientific Temperance Federation  
12 N. Third St., Room 522  
Columbus 15, Ohio.

# SCIENTIFIC Temperance Journal

SPRING - 1949

## :- CONTENTS -:

Spread of Drink Among Women

Social Customs as Source  
of Drink and Alcoholism

Drunkenness, "a Sickness,"  
145 Years Ago

Newspaper Man Tells His Story

Public Health Approach  
in South America

# SCIENTIFIC TEMPERANCE JOURNAL

Edited by the Scientific Temperance Federation

Volume LVII

Number One

EDITORIAL OFFICES: 12 N. THIRD ST., COLUMBUS 15, OHIO

## GROUP MISCONCEPTION A SOURCE

THE MISCONCEPTION that a social party is dull without cocktails and that virility is documented by the ability to consume large amounts of alcoholic beverages contributes largely to such social customs as are practiced by many teen-agers.

It is necessary for us to understand that youth will always copy grown-ups. We cannot make youth believe in and follow our explanations and theoretical evaluations as long as we do not apply them to our own lives. Public opinion should censor all glamor of social drinking out of the moving pictures, stage plays, novels, magazines, and ads.—Dr. Joseph Thimann, Medical Director, Washington Hospital, Boston, Mass., quoted in the *Christian Science Monitor*.

As a matter of COLD FACTS there is enough scientific evidence to condemn alcohol as a beverage without the slightest necessity for becoming emotional about it.—Philip J. Broen, State Department of Education, Minnesota, at a 1948 Institute on Alcohol Education, Hallock, Minn.

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY—SPRING, SUMMER, AUTUMN, AND WINTER—BY THE TEMPERANCE EDUCATION FOUNDATION, AT WESTERVILLE, OHIO  
PRICE \$1.50 THE YEAR. CANADIAN POSTAGE 8 CENTS ADDITIONAL, AND FOREIGN POSTAGE 16 CENTS ADDITIONAL  
ENTERED AS SECOND-CLASS MATTER JUNE 6, 1915, AT THE POSTOFFICE AT WESTERVILLE, OHIO, UNDER THE ACT OF MARCH 3, 1879

## *The Spread of Drink Among College Women*

A Review

FOR FIFTEEN YEARS, rumors, news reports, ordinary observation and sensational writers have been agreeing that the use of alcoholic drinks is spreading—and widely—among women.

But just recently there has appeared, for the first time, an objective, scientifically inspired study<sup>1</sup>—a study of what is already known—but without much data—that tends to confirm, only too vividly and statistically, these impressions of the lay observer.

“The consensus is that social drinking is definitely increasing,” says the survey. “(1) This appears to be in contrast with the past, when drinking by women may have been accepted in the highest and in the lowest social levels, (2) but was definitely taboo for women of the middle class. The present trend is similar to that which has characterized smoking among women. The similarities of these two trends are interesting. In both cases, whatever may have been the underlying forces operating, the trends were strongly supported by extensive advertising campaigns and buttressed by motion picture models of behavior.”

### Tea Party Becomes Cocktail Party

The report makes it clear that there have been no systematic studies made that analyze the drinking habits of women at different social levels, or over a period of years. But it does say:

That “the transformation of the traditional tea party

<sup>1</sup>“The Drinking and Dating Habits of 336 College Women in a Coeducational Institution,” by Carol A. Hecht, Ruth J. Grine, A.B., and Sally E. Rothrock, A.B., a study made under the direction of Dr. Jessie Bernard, Department of Sociology, State College of Pennsylvania; published in the *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Sept. 1948, 252-258.

into the cocktail party; the presence of women in public bars, cocktail lounges, taverns, and other drinking places; the phenomenon of drinking parties made up exclusively of women, all attest to a widespread change in mores."

The study was undertaken to gain information that would "help to fill in a part of the gap" about the contemporary behaviour of women in respect to drinking." Various other studies have brought out facts as to youth— young people in general, or certain groups. This is the only one that relates definitely to young women.

With care not to generalize, the authors say: "It deals with only a narrowly limited segment of the feminine population, but one which represents a socially important group, namely college women. They come for the most part from middleclass homes and thus reflect middleclass standards. Since they are young, their behavior probably indicates a trend of the immediate future. They are, further, at the very beginning of their drinking careers and their behavior therefore illuminates a critical point in personality development insofar as drinking is concerned. They represent a relatively new drinking population."

Explaining further the purposes of the study, the authors say:

"Since it was not possible to explore all the ramifications of drinking among college women, the following three

#### FIRST DRINK STARTS ANESTHETIZING

**A**LCOHOL is a dangerous substance to deal with, for it lends itself to abuse so easily.

The first drink of liquor starts anesthetizing your brain, so you begin to lack your former good sense. It is therefore easier to take the second drink, which in turn further decreases your active intelligence at the moment.

Soon, you find yourself reduced to the level of a child, where you do and say things you would never be guilty of if your full intelligence were active.—George W. Crane, Ph.D., M.D.

items were selected: (1) What is the incidence of drinking among college women? (2) How do those who do not drink differ from those who do drink? (3) How are drinking habits related to dating patterns and to chances for becoming attached (engaged, pinned, or "going steady")?

Since this review can give only representative features of the survey, it will include, herewith, the first of the six tables that bring out in statistics the findings of the study. This one—relating to frequency of drinking—probably is of most general interest:

#### Frequency of Drinking Among 336 College Women

	Number	Per Cent
Non-drinkers . . . . .	45	13.4
Infrequent drinkers . . . . .	83	24.7
Occasional drinkers . . . . .	68	20.2
Near-regular drinkers . . . . .	50	14.9
Regular drinkers . . . . .	90	26.8
Total . . . . .	336	100.0

Other suggestive facts include the following:

That "the non-drinkers and the infrequent drinkers attended church more often than did the frequent drinkers." This point, however, was marked as "inconclusive," and the implication made "that in spite of the attitude of the churches toward drinking, the **impact of changing social mores** was great enough to turn the behavior patterns of these young women in the direction of drinking in a large number of cases."

Further, "that most of the young women who drank did not do so surreptitiously but did so with their families. . . . This reveals, perhaps more than anything else, the tremendous change in mores in the past generation. . . . There appears to be little serious or at least effective objection by the parents of these young women to their drinking."

Quoting: "Two findings seem to be outstanding in this phase of the analysis, namely: (1) frequency of drinking and frequency of dating were closely associated, as would

naturally be expected; and (2) the chances of being attached were also associated with frequency of drinking, but inversely—that is, a larger proportion of nondrinkers were attached than were drinkers.”

To make it clear, the writers say: “This last finding may be stated in these terms: the proportion of attached young women who were nondrinkers was greater than the proportion of non-attached young women who were drinkers.”

Again: “It seems certain that frequency of drinking was closely related to frequency of dating. Drinking, in other words, was part of the dating pattern in a large number of cases.”

And in conclusion, “It appears that while the young women in the nondrinking group have fewer dates than those in the regular-drinking group, they become attached more frequently than the regular-drinking group.”

#### DAMAGES CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM

THE EFFECTS of alcohol are *almost entirely*, if not wholly, to be explained by its toxic damage to the central nervous system, the brain and spinal cord. It is upon those tissues that the action of alcohol shows most strikingly. The other effects are so minor as to have little, if any part. It depreciates the divinity of men. The only thing that distinguishes man from the brute is his power of self-direction, self-control, judgment, discretion. Those things are the first qualities of man that are destroyed by alcohol, long before there is any obvious interference with the muscles and motor functions of the body. It is the influence of alcohol on the brain and spinal cord that is most damaging. Dr. Haven Emerson, Professor of Public Health Administration, Columbia University.

Alcoholism is not only a problem of the individual, but is unequivocally a consequence of the social structure and attitude of society toward drinking.—Dr. Andrew C. Ivy, Vice President of the University of Illinois, in charge of the professional schools in Chicago.

## Social Customs as Source Of Drink and Alcoholism

By Harry S. Warner

THE MORE RECENT studies of the problem of beverage alcohol that include the motives that men have for using it, and the effects it has on growing personality and mental health, turn attention forcibly to a basic source of alcoholism that is too often minimized or overlooked. That is, the attitudes of everyday life that help to make the “alcoholic sick man” what he is—that aid, or retard the cult of intoxication in both the nervously disordered and the emotionally sound and healthful youth, young man and woman, adult.

Outstanding among the social forces that lead many to depend on alcohol for whatever it gives, are the family and group traditions, the customs and fashions, into which as children they were born and under which they grew to maturity. It must, then, be asked: What have social customs to do with the initiating of drink desires? Their continuation until dependence develops? The deterioration of heavy and frequent drinking personalities? With the community dangers that accompany intoxication—and drunkenness?

#### Age-old Tradition

For ages since primitive days, alcohol has been used in a large, perhaps major, part of human society to express friendliness and gain feelings of emotional and social freedom. It was early discovered that the anesthetic “kick” that it gives, lets the emotions run more freely and removes restraints. Sensations of mild and increasing sedation, then intoxication—and then drunkenness—have been shared in groups throughout the ages at social, recreational, religious and other occasions where people come to enjoy the presence of each other. The emotions created or released by alcohol, such as self-importance and freedom from inhibitions, demand the presence of others if satisfaction is to



be complete. Others must share in similar experiences at the same time. For alcoholic sociability is a toxic, out-of-the-usual state of feeling.

A welter of social customs, grown into tradition, that depend on this particular drug as an aid—or crutch—to social expression has come down from the past into a large part of current practice. Drinking to the health of a guest, an honored name, or a personified sentiment was practiced by the Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans in their day. The Saxons exalted the pledge cup, or wassail bowl. The literature and song of the ages since are filled with storys of drink customs, pleasures and excesses. Even at Oxford “for six hundred years the life of the University was intertwined with drinking occasions. . . . In these rich old rooms, venerable with culture, there are still in use the surviving contrivances of a day when gentlemen counted it no disgrace to drink themselves under the table.” And the student of today, “since traditional habits of conviviality spell drinking, falls in with the ‘hearties,’ believing this to be the essential quality of college life.”

#### In American Culture

Drink customs were common among all the nationalities that made up the present people of the United States, from colonists to latest immigrants. Almost everybody in the colonial period, not excluding the Puritans, “took a little something,” or more than a little, when meeting friends at the tavern or in the home. College commencements, weddings, funerals, church conventions, business deals, friendly evenings were incomplete without one or many varieties of alcoholic drink.

Until very recent times alcoholic beverages have been looked upon as necessary in society. Into this tradition children have been born. They have grown up under its assumptions, its environment, and, most recently, its trade promotion and advertising. This has been the normal course of one generation after another. They were psychologically conditioned in their earliest years with the as-

sumptions of liquor culture. Drink desirability has been taken for granted. Non-drinking society among the nations of the white race has been a growth, chiefly, of the past century.

The force of tradition in its modern form on the unfolding life of youth is expressed by Jack London: “John Barleycorn is with me, because in all the unwitting days of my youth John Barleycorn was accessible, calling to me and inviting me on every corner, and on every street between the corners. . . . The system of life was so organized that I and millions like me—was lured and drawn and driven to the poison shops.”<sup>1</sup>

#### The First Experience

The alcoholic custom is accepted, ordinarily, in older youth, at the invitation of companions. The first contact usually is made at home or among close friends; frequently, however, in the company of new friends beyond the home influence. Its beginning is essentially social and is connected with the enlarging experience of growing young people. It comes at a time in life when strong new emotions are asserting themselves; when the spirit of adventure is keenest and the desire to “try anything once” is most natural. Consequently, youth at this stage is ready to explore the experiences of intoxication, mild or heavier, without regard to later life habits or consequences.

The crucial age in the starting of drink customs and habits is between 18 and 21. Formed at this period, they become regular in the next few years.<sup>2</sup> Studenski's survey, which covered 2,379 young people, college students, workers in offices and others, brought out the information that 83 per cent drank occasionally or regularly either hard liquor, beer or wine. Only 17 per cent reported themselves as abstainers. The percentage of drinkers among young women was approximately the same as among young men, though the proportion of heavy drinkers was greater among the men. Of the young men 18 to 21 years of age, 85 per cent were drinkers, and of those between 21 and 25,

90 per cent. Of the young women 18 to 21, 75 per cent were drinkers, and of those 21 to 25, 83 per cent. Clearly a much greater number began experimenting with alcoholic experiences at the ages of 18 to 21, or had started before reaching this age, than began after reaching 21 and by 25 years of age.

### Codes and Patterns

A definite seeking of new styles, customs and codes for liquor drinking is an outstanding development today on the social and economic sides of the liquor problem in America. To give liquor a high place of respect, any suggestion of the "old saloon" is strictly avoided. One may easily observe the present tendency to eliminate any tinge of moral discredit, and to re-establish social and family drinking in the position it occupied a hundred years ago, or as it is in Europe.

In the years before prohibition, the man drinking in the saloon usually tried to avoid being seen. That attitude has disappeared. "Bars must enjoy high visibility as a public spectacle. Swing doors are expressly forbidden . . . the discreet 'family entrance' which used to lead from the street into the back room may not be closed with anything opaque . . . the door stands wide. The same mahogany bar is lined with men with one foot resting on the identical rail. . . . Instead of the back-room mechanical piano, the radio is sending out—if you please—a grand opera selection. The party is not a stag party."<sup>3</sup>

Chief of the new patterns is the merging of liquor with everyday recreational and social activities. Says a trade promoter: "The leisure moments of the average American should be inextricably intertwined with beer. Beer during golf, beer during the vacation trip, beer while taking a long business or pleasure ride, beer when reading a magazine, beer when sitting at home listening to the radio. . . . The wives of the nation should be impressed with the domestic qualities of beer."<sup>4</sup>

### Commercial Promotion of Customs

The beer spokesman says further that the young men and women are gadding about the country, "spending good beer money in automobile travel," contrary to the spirit of beer. Constant action is out of harmony with a beverage which is conducive to relaxation. "Coffee, tea, soft drinks, ice cream, milk—take beer money."

Another development in social custom is the increasing use of alcoholic drinks in the home. During the first thirty years of the present century, drinking in the homes of the vast majority of American people had been reduced to small proportions. Much remained in fashionable circles, the homes of wealth, among recent immigrants in city "colonies," and in industrial communities, but not in the great middle class. Since the resurgence of liquor popularity, the trend of a century is reversed. Liquor has gained increased usage in family life.

Promotion to open the formerly closed home market has been incessant. Brewers take the lead, on the theory that their drink is more suitable than the stronger intoxicants. "The time is at hand to begin a concentrated campaign to sell beer to the housewife," said the Secretary of the American Brewers' Association . . . why not place beer in its rightful place alongside the bread and other foodstuffs in the pantry? . . . it is the housewife who holds the family purse strings."<sup>5</sup>

Off-sale liquor stores that provide no drinking place tend to extend the use of liquor into the home for parties, meals, and solitary drinking. With bottle sales abundant, the automobile, home, roadside and club supplement the old saloon, and become drinking places for the state liquor stores. These new forms of distribution have turned a vast amount of liquor into the refrigerators of the average home. Thus it is more readily accessible than ever in the days of elderberry wines, cider barrels, whisky jugs—and saloons.

In the past the influence of women was a restraining force against heavy drinking by men. Now women drink

at taverns, restaurants, roadhouses and parties. A college editor writes, "instead of holding the man back, the co-eds are saying, 'Let's have another.'" Liquor for women is much more accessible with a cocktail bar or beer cafe just around the corner than in the speakeasy or the saloon of the past.

### Group Pressures

A modern younger woman of attractive and forceful personality relates her experience among government workers in Washington, where sub-executives meet frequently at cocktails. The leader of the group, challenging the one who declined, said, "The height of my ambition is to get you to drink." The pressure within this typical Washington group is *strong and continuous toward effacing the individual who stands out against prevailing customs.*

In questionnaires as to why young people drink, the answer standing highest is "social pressure," "drinking by friends," "hating to say 'No.'" Professor Studenski's questionnaire in New York brought out that most young people do not care much for liquor as a beverage; the taste, the questionnaire indicates, is disagreeable to more than one-half. But they start and continue because (a) it makes them gayer and more entertaining, enabling them to win attention and the plaudits of "the crowd," and (b) because "other people drink."<sup>6</sup> The desire to be like, and *especially not to be unlike*, those with whom they associate is dominant. "The drinking of liquor is a social practice," wrote William Howard Taft, after highest possible experience in governmental and university society. He makes clear the working of group pressure when he adds that "drinking is increased or minimized in a very large degree by the opportunity and proximity of access for many who would never drink at all unless it was set under their noses."<sup>7</sup>

"Anyone who knows the force of social customs knows that the individual is free only to a limited extent," writes the psychologist, Adolf Meyer, with reference to group drinking. Illustrating from experience as a student in Eu-

rope where traditions are of long standing, he says: "The beer habits of the German student make it impossible to escape more drinking than most individuals would naturally indulge in."<sup>8</sup>

Groups of youth include provision for alcohol in the plans for the party because it is "the thing to do." Suggestion, imitation and the desire to be courteous encourage all attending to share in the entertainment provided. Ridicule is used on those inclined to be independent. "Everybody is doing it," "why be a wet blanket?" are phrases with a thousand synonyms. The influence of the hostess at dinners and parties is especially strong because it makes her most difficult to decline.

### Trend of the Pressure

Sharing thus in a party, banquet, or other social group, one does not notice that intoxication, in its mildest form, begins with the first sensation of glow and good feeling; that after this come gradually the more hilarious sensations, and then later, obvious drunkenness. The social pressure of the group is supplemented and strengthened by the increasing attractions of alcoholic sensations. The tendency is to continue, to take "one more." The desire to be restrained grows less as the ability to judge and control is weakened; conduct slips gradually to a lower level. The social pressure in a drinking group moves increasingly toward artificial satisfaction, the substitution of illusion for reality, toward inferiority in conduct and expression—always inferiority. The changes taking place are on a descending scale until drunkenness, a definite stage of inferiority, has been reached.

The sensations of alcoholic sociability range from the first mild elation of a youthful drinker to the imperative passing of his "alki" bottle by a worn-out bum to his mates in the Bowery; but they differ only in that they are extreme variations in a chain of dependence on narcotic feelings for sociability and release.

### Fashionable Intoxication

Fashion and fashionable society create and popularize alcoholic desires and customs. "The social season is at flood tide. . . . With a swish and a swirl and a click of the heels, Washington is up to its elbows in caviar canapes and champagne cocktails," wrote a society reporter at the national capital just after the opening of Congress.<sup>9</sup> Cocktail parties to honor diplomats, political guests, government officials, department heads, and fellow employees radiate out over the country wherever federal prestige and political influence are respected. The prominent and outstanding social groups and leaders are alcoholic in the sense that alcoholic beverages are regarded as essential in properly conducted entertainment. Social usage calls for them at receptions and parties, official, semi-official and private. The "kick" of alcohol, frequently repeated, has a prominent place in fashionable society. Liquors of rare quality and of many varieties are a mark of prestige in "high society" in the social season. From these centers of influence the all-powerful force of fashion carries the cult, by suggestion and example, through many groups into all local communities.

The effectiveness of fashion in spreading drink customs is recognized and freely exploited by the liquor trade in its quest for profits. The drinks and the styles in drinking, approved by fashion, are publicized and promoted in newspaper, magazine, radio and billboard advertising. Society reporters, special writers, recipe compilers, and story writers reiterate the attitudes that suggest approval. Measuring the results of a general advertising campaign in Great Britain, a brewing trade promoter, frankly acknowledging his effort to guide fashion, said, "We judge the work of the past year has been eminently, and in some respects, astonishingly successful. . . . The consumption of beer has increased. It is very largely a question of fashion. It has been hoped by advertisers to sway the fashion."

Seeking to make pro-liquor thinking, customs and habits

uniform in the United States, liquor advertisers have used the appeal of fashion as one of the most sweeping means to that end. The theme of one national convention was "Make America Wine and Liquor Conscious." The dealers made it a part of their program to "teach American women how to drink" and advised their members to "invite and welcome them to your taverns and taprooms . . . make it smart to drink." An "open letter to the women of America on whisky" was designed to popularize drinking among women as a "socially accepted custom."

### Pressure by Suggestion

The pressure of fashion by suggestion is automatic. The practices and attitudes of those whose names appear in the society column, popular articles, and news, are accepted readily by certain types of mind, and are influential even with those who think for themselves. Unconsciously the impression grows that if people are to find favor with associates, be courteous to a hostess, make their parties a success, or gain attention from business associates, they must cultivate "the art of drinking" and the art of serving. The fashions of a drinking group tend to be intolerant of those who do not drink.

The desire to be "in the fashion," to keep up with others, is especially strong among the upper middle groups who feel that they must imitate those who have the prominence, power, and wealth that they crave.

Fashions in drinks and the mixing of drinks, fashions in serving, fashions in the furniture and lighting of the drinking place, fashions in the clothes to be worn, and fashions in the occasions when each particular liquor is proper have persistent influence in spreading indulgence and making it more frequent.

A Chicago writer says: "Looking her best in an exciting cocktail suit of lamé, the deb sallies forth . . . faithfully observing the cocktail hour. Some perch on tall stools; some, with slippered feet on the brass rail, plant elbows at the bar. Other debs, or perhaps the same debs at other hours,



order cocktails in restaurants at luncheon time. A particularly famous restaurant swarms with girls."<sup>10</sup> The cocktail hour of mid-afternoon seems to have been devised to catch the attention of the girls of the younger generation, who never had opportunity to observe the old-time saloon, its side entrance and gutter drunkard. They are less fortified to resist trade propaganda than were the adolescents of earlier generations.

As to the effectiveness and consequences of this appeal to fashion, this writer continues, "I do not recall that the young womanhood of any other country every went in wholesale and with evident innocence for mixed drinks in this fashion; it is certainly a new development. In the tough old days before prohibition there were girls who did, but they were tough girls, grossly unrepresentative of their sex. Though decent girls drank cocktails during the dry era, they were generally makeshift cocktails lacking alcoholic warmth, and drinking was not thought innocent; it was mischievous. . . . Now, 'perfectly all right,' alcohol is rated harmless and drinking has become too general to be adventurous. . . . The 'cocktail hour,' deliberately instituted for the purpose, implies not only that at a certain time one may drink, but that at a certain time one should."<sup>11</sup>

#### Cult of Sophistication

A fashion trait in the circles of "the younger set" in easy financial groups is to take a superior attitude toward the problems that perplex ordinary people as to the consequences of free indulgence in alcohol. To be indifferent to any concern for results is a cultivated attitude of the cocktail room, the super-modern bar, and other "pink elephants." The prestige and wealth of these groups give them influence far beyond their importance. This attitude appears prominently in liquor advertising and trade propaganda.

"The young and charming girl, in a shining jacket, sat having a cocktail in the ornate cocktail bar, at the cocktail hour," writes Zona Gale. "Everything pleased her . . . the

party was to her liking, this bar was one of the busiest in town; she felt herself at some apex of sophistication, or power to enchant, to assess her little world, to be at home among its standards. . . . They had been saying something about Paris—and every nook and corner that was mentioned she knew . . . London—shops, hotels, gossip—she had them all. . . . Hollywood, the Miami race tracks. . . . They knew everything, there at the cocktail bar, save what they were doing . . . ask any of them the simple facts related to this that they were so busy about and the answer would be a tolerant: 'I wouldn't know.' Bad taste to know . . . that any amount puts some of the brain to sleep."<sup>12</sup>

#### Prestige, Strength of Cult

A continuous occasion of alcoholic indulgence and its greatest perpetuating influence is social tradition, the customs and attitudes of one generation transmitted by unthinking imitation to the next; from one social stratum to another, or from a "superior" group to an "inferior." The association of choice wines and liquors with "high society," the pleasures of the rich and successful, the banquets of the "élite," the formalities of official receptions, give to intoxication pleasure, in the view of the masses, a halo of dignity, an importance not to be found in what actually happens in these functions.

Conspicuous social drinking has dominant influence throughout a nation, community, or people because of the elevation at which it occurs and the wealth and power it exhibits. A cocktail party at the capital to a visiting delegation from the home town; the stream of cocktail parties in the social season in "polite" Washington; the dignified serving of expensive wines at the banquets of the "upper strata," set the fashions of the capital or metropolis and in turn of a small city, town and any social-climbing group.

"Certain kinds of convivial drinking," as Catlin shows, "may be indulged in for the sake, not only of hospitality, but of an impressive hospitality. The possession of wines of good vintage and a well-filled cellar may rather be due

to what economists call 'the desire for conspicuous consumption,' than to . . . appreciation of the very choice wine for its own sake."<sup>13</sup>

"It was the fashionable wealthy who inherited the tradition that a gentleman always serves wine at his table, who set the most influential example of law violation during the prohibition period," wrote the historian, Slosson. "This class and their sons made disobedience respectable in their set."<sup>14</sup>

At a 1937 New Year's party in "society Washington" at which the wealth on display required a guard of seventeen private detectives, the 325 guests "consumed 480 quarts of champagne, 268 fifths of Scotch, 48 quarts of cocktails, 36 bottles of miscellaneous liquors, and 40 gallons of beer."<sup>15</sup>

Such gestures of swank and self-maximation are not infrequent expressions of liquor culture in the expensive strata of society in any country. The news reports of social drinking in the upper bracket income group, and the local "highlights" of smaller cities, illustrate the prestige displayed in and for social drinking, in imitation of the "higher ups."

Liquor customs long established may become so dominant as to require heavy resistance if freedom of choice is to be preserved to non-drinkers. Previous to the coronation of George VI of Great Britain a special decree was issued to permit the use of water instead of wine in toasts. Only thus could a custom of centuries be liberalized to fit the situation of today.

The cult is made strong by the example of families and groups in positions of leadership in the community and nation. It is kept active and vigorous, in spite of daily tendencies to excess, modern scientific knowledge, and the economic burdens it creates, by style and customs under their leadership. "If they do, why should not we?" is the democratic demand of many on the edge of poverty, who have greater need for the release that liquor seems to offer, but who secure it only at a cost in health, ability to face hard conditions, and money that is too great to be borne.

The final results of conspicuous liquor customs among the influential reach far out through the middle classes who want to "keep up with the Joneses," to the masses who can least afford such indulgence.

### Alcoholic Sociability

The most popular pleasure gained from alcohol, doubtless, is a sense of increased freedom in social contact. But the setting free of the emotions by this means includes both the inhibitions that suppress and those that guide discriminating action. Because of the latter *it is continually subject to serious questioning.*

In ordinary social life, composed as it is today, alcoholic sociability is *release of the lower at the expense of the higher; of the primitive at the expense of the cultured; of the emotional at the expense of the intellectual.* The pleasures gained are those of the child rather than those of the adult, of the immature rather than the mature, of the animal rather than the intellectual and spiritual elements in human character.

A vivid picture of alcoholic sociability is given by Dr. Strecker: "Observe any party that is fairly 'moist.' The individual personalities of the members of the group soon become submerged in the flowing bowl, and there can be traced a common pattern of behavior which has regressed to a level far lower and far less responsible than the customary behavior level of the members of the group."<sup>16</sup>

### Seeking an Effective Basis Toward Solution

Of the three *main sources* of the Alcohol Problem, personal, social and economic, that of social influence is least understood and frequently overlooked. Yet it is basic to all others. For it is the traditional use of alcohol and the pressure of prestige and fashion that, together, constitute the source that initiates drinking in each new generation and causes it to continue until heavy drinking, alcoholism and the blighting consequences of the cult have time to develop.

The *inner disorders* of the individual that lead to alcoholism, a basic source, and the rehabilitation of the victim, are

now being faced frankly and effectively by psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, health and welfare experts, counselling ministers, and especially the A.A.'s and Salvation Army.

The *economic and related* forces have been the major object of attack for a century or more. They were very severely weakened—de-legalized and largely outlawed—over a substantial period of years in the United States, and on the decline in other countries, as well.

But *those that are social* in character, tradition, the prestige of the influential classes and the folkways of certain nationalities and large groups, have remained largely intact during the years.

This basic source—the taproot of the drinking cult—can not be rightly ignored. It should be examined in the light of scientific understanding of what it is, and of individual and social responsibility for social consequences. It should be replaced by the normal, healthful social life that the cult of alcohol has displaced. And it must be removed as a source of alcoholism.

A realistic program of advance may well include approach on all three sources at the same time.

#### REFERENCES

1. London, Jack, *John Barleycorn*, p. 66.
2. Studenski, Paul, *Liquor Consumption Among the American Youth*, p. 22.
3. Brock, H. I., "A New Drinking Code," *New York Times Magazine* July 15, 1934.
4. Patterson, Schuyler, *Brewers' Review*.
5. *Brewers' Journal*, June 15, 1937.
6. *Op. cit.*
7. Taft, Wm. Howard, *Is Prohibition a Blow at Personal Liberty?*
8. Meyer, Adolf, in *Alcohol and Man*, edited by Haven Emerson.
9. *Washington Post*, Dec. 23, 1937.
10. Munns, M. C., "Dressing for the Cocktail Lounge," *Christian Century*.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Gale, Zona, "Sophisticate," *Christian Century*, March 3, 1937.
13. Catlin, George G., *Liquor Control*, 88.
14. Slosson, Preston W., *The Great Crusade and After*, 123.
15. *Washington Star*, Jan. 1, 1937.
16. Strecker, Edward A., "Psychology Cures Alcoholism," *Forum*, Aug., '38.

## Drunkenness Recognized as "A Sickness"

145 Years Ago

A Review

THE UNDERSTANDING that alcoholism is an "odious disease," the inebriate a "sick man," is anything but new in the century and a half of earnest effort to control and solve the alcohol problem of American life.

This conception, developed by medical men 145 years ago, and given highest scientific support and aggressive publicity at the very beginning of the temperance movement, although often overshadowed by emotional, economic, political and other aspects of the problem, has been in the background continuously through all the years. The attention given it in the past decade by such scientific men as White, Kolb, Strecker, Jellinek, Bacon, Seliger and others, is a development and extension of the same basic health idea and an outgrowth of later and very recent research and discovery.

For the very great significance of alcoholic inebriety as a problem of public health, and of alcoholism as an illness requiring medical care, was first brought out effectively, by Dr. Benjamin Rush, writing a century and a half ago. Dr. Rush regarded "ardent spirits" as a basic curse to humanity, and to physical, mental, and social health. He did not include, in this scientific anathema, fermented liquors, then little used. It had not then been proved scientifically that it is alcohol, from whatever beverage source, that, in sufficient quantities in the blood stream, causes intoxica-

*The Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush*, edited by Dagobert D. Rune, pages 334-341; published, 1947, by The Philosophical Library, Inc., 15 East 40th St., New York 16, N.Y., price \$5.00.

In the editor's preface it is shown that Dr. Benjamin Rush was not only a leading medical man of his day, founder and professor of medical schools, organizer of health activities, opponent of slavery, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and fighting patriot; he was also a writer whose "pamphlets, articles, letters and speeches mount into the thousands."

tion and, if continuously used, may lead to alcoholism. But the discussion of alcoholism and of the symptoms of the sickness as they appear in the inebriate and the alcoholic, as given by Dr. Rush, is remarkably similar to that of recent scientists who include adaptation to scientific information gained since his day.

It is, therefore, a real contribution to the modern health approach to the problem that has been made by the book, *The Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush*, edited by Dagobert D. Runes and published in 1947. For in this republication of the writings of this noted scientific leader, the editor includes, with other medical and patriotic writings of the early days of the Republic, the noted pamphlet, "The Effects of Ardent Spirits upon Man," written in 1804.

Says Dr. Rush: "This odious disease (for by that name it should be called) appears with more or less of the following symptoms, and most commonly in the order in which I shall enumerate them.

1. Unusual garrulity.
2. Unusual silence.
3. Captiousness, and a disposition to quarrel.
4. Uncommon good humor, and an insipid simpering or laugh.
5. Profane swearing or cursing.
6. A disclosure of their own or other people's secrets.
7. A rude disposition to tell those persons in company, whom they know, their faults.
8. Certain immodest actions. I am sorry to say this sign of the first stage of drunkenness sometimes appears in women, who, when sober are uniformly remarkable for chaste and decent manners.
9. A clipping of words.
10. Fighting; a black eye, or a swelled nose, often mark this grade of drunkenness.
11. Certain extravagant acts which indicate a temporary fit of madness. These are singing, hallooing, roaring, imitating the noises of brute animals . . . he looks around him with a vacant countenance, and mutters inarticulate

sounds to himself—he attempts to rise and walk: in this attempt he falls upon his side, from which he gradually turns upon his back; he now closes his eyes and falls into a profound sleep. . . . In this condition he often lies from ten, twelve and twenty-four hours, to two, three, four and five days, an object of pity and disgust to his family and friends . . . now and then he emits a deep-fetched sigh, or groan, from a transient twinge of conscience; but he more frequently scolds, and curses everything around him. In this state of languor and stupidity he remains for two or three days before he is able to resume his former habits of business and conversation."

#### Forecasts Childhood Conditioning

The social pre-conditioning of children, born and raised in the home and community atmosphere of frequent drinking, and the spread of this illness by social imitation, are recognized by Dr. Rush as factors that need to be taken into account, in these words:

"It is further remarkable, that drunkenness resembles certain hereditary, family and contagious diseases. I have seen three, and once four brothers, who were born of sober ancestors, affected by it; and I have heard of its spreading through a whole family composed of members not originally related to each other. These facts are important, and should not be overlooked by parents, in deciding upon the matrimonial connections of their children."

#### Recognizes Mental Impairment

This dissertation of a century and a half ago, outlines the physiological effects of alcohol as then understood, all of which have been restudied and restated in later years by scientific research; even then some of them were regarded as symptoms of serious illness. It then recognizes and gives point to the influence of alcohol on the mind, now regarded as the most significant and damaging consequence of the alcohol habit and custom. He says:

"Not less destructive are the effects of ardent spirits upon the human mind. They impair the memory, debilitate



the understanding, and pervert the moral faculties. . . . But the demoralizing effects of distilled spirits do not stop here. They produce not only falsehood, but fraud, theft, uncleanness, and murder. Like the demoniac in the New Testament their name is 'Legion,' for they convey into the soul a host of vices and crimes." Thus he brings to attention the serious changes in personality and character that mark the inebriate and the alcoholic, all of which have been almost sweepingly reiterated and confirmed in modern mental health study and psychiatric and A.A. practice.

And sociologically, although the science of Sociology did not come into the universities until many years later, he says regarding ardent spirits:

"Let us not pass by their effects upon the estates of the persons who are addicted to them. Are they inhabitants of cities? Behold their homes stripped gradually of their furniture and pawned, or sold by a constable, to pay tavern debts. See their names upon record in the dockets of every court, and whole pages of newspapers filled with advertisements of their estates for public sale. Are they inhabitants of country places? Behold their homes with shattered windows—their barns with leaky roofs—their gardens overrun with weeds—their fields with broken fences . . . their cattle and horses without fat—and their children filthy and half clad."

#### CIVIL AIR REGULATION

PART No. 43; Sec. 43.406. Use of liquor, narcotics, and drugs. No person shall pilot an aircraft or serve as a member of the crew while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or use any drug which affects his faculties in any manner contrary to safety. A pilot shall not permit any person to be carried in an aircraft who is obviously under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs, except a medical patient under proper care or in case of emergency.—General Operation Rules, Civil Aeronautics Administration.

## *A Newspaper Man Tells His Story*

### A Review

"A YEAR OR TWO BACK friends persuaded me to see a film called 'Lost Week-End.' It told of the tribulations of a young man in the grip of alcohol over the space of three mornings. . . . I laughed . . . the idea of making a song about a mere week-end.

"I have had my lost three months now, and lost months have pitted the progress of my last ten or twelve years. By 'lost' I do not mean that I was drunk enough to be oblivious to the world. . . . But I was so full of alcohol that, even when I was not just slightly drunk, whenever it might be that I awoke from my stupor, I was incapable of any real interest in anything except where and when I might get enough liquor to 'start ticking' again."

Thus a highly effective and experienced writer of London's newspaper center, Fleet Street, who calls himself "A Newspaper Drunk" in the subtitle to *I Am an Alcoholic*, begins a most realistic story of his drinking years.

With less of the bizarre and romantic, and more objective description than is found in the recent American books of heavy-drinking experience, such as *The Lost Week End* and smaller books that are following that publication, this British writer describes the life of the heavy drinker from the viewpoint of a newspaper reporter. As a description of the inner experience, emotions and reactions of the alcoholic and the near-alcoholic, it is one of the best that has appeared. For it tells in the everyday language of an experienced writer what alcohol drinking is and means to him who feels he must have it, frequently and in quantity.

*I Am an Alcoholic*; A Newspaper Drunk Tells His Story; published 1948, by Wren Books, Limited, 84 St. Paul's Courtyard, London, E.C. 4, England. Sale price in England 3/6 shillings.

Telling of the periodic urge to drink that came to him, he says:

"These spells happened when I had holidays, or for some other reason—usually a windfall in the shape of payments for work done. I was not forced to turn up daily at an office as a newspaper staff man. Had it been otherwise, I should not now be in Fleet Street, where I still make a living. I should be at best in the casual ward, at worst sponging on my relatives.

"There were other and more frequent periods when I might be drunk or near it every night for weeks, but still do a day's work with all my wits about me. These periods I do not number among the 'lost.'

"What has saved me from collapse, professionally and in health, has been a capacity to stop and keep 'on the water-wagon' for many weeks. Sometimes this is due to the sheer necessity for an act of will power, but more often through a sudden revulsion against alcohol which I have never been able to explain to myself.

"Whether it is physical, mental, or spiritual, I do not know. It just comes. The mood may last a month, perhaps three months, or longer. During that time I drink nothing stronger than tea, nor cross the doorstep of any place more reprehensible than a picture house. Then one day off I go again, with no more control over my action than when I halted. . . .

"The real alcoholic has no regrets for the money he has frittered; the mess he may have made of other people's lives; the damage to his own mind and body; the hours, the days, the years he has chucked down the pub sink.

"If you hear any of the ilk say otherwise, you may be sure they are in a state of mere ginful remorse, or are humbugs. Lots of them may be sorry for themselves, but not for their thirst. . . .

"My business is that of a reporter with special knowledge of the 'technique' of alcoholism, its effects on the minds, habits, pockets of the addicts. That will be, I think, news to the majority of people, who have no real idea of

what are the inner experiences of the drinker.

"They think, for instance, that a hangover is a slight malaise, a subject for jest rather than for serious concern. That may be so in the case of young people who have had a few unaccustomed cocktails at a party and perhaps mixed them later with some ill-advised beer. But when you read about one of my two-month hangovers, with its accompanying nausea, palpitation, trembling hands, taut nerves, abysmal, suicidal despond, you will pity the victim, not laugh at him.

"Drinkers live in a world of illusions—when they are drinking. They imagine they are being brilliant when they are just dull or even dithering. Have you ever visited a house where there happens to be a party, and everybody except yourself is well lit up? You have plumbed the depths of boredom. The shrieking women and braying males all feel themselves positively scintillating with wit and brilliant conversation, when they are merely fatuous and idiotic.

". . . The other evening I strolled into one of the Fleet Street houses, and found three friends in a fairly advanced stage. They were not exactly drunk; they were just feeling fine and at the top of their conversationalist form, they thought. As O. Henry once described a gay party: 'Persiflage and badinage were hurtling through the air.'

"I tried to escape, but it was too late. A bleary-bright eye had spotted me, and into the company I must come. It was agony for half an hour, until I had a chance to slip away. When sober these three people are as intelligent and cultured talkers as you will meet anywhere in Fleet Street, which is saying a good deal. That night they were at the conversational level of a schoolgirls' picnic."

These quotations from the first chapter illustrate the effectiveness of the book. In succeeding chapters he helps us understand the realism of being "In the Grip," of "The Price," the extra pressure that comes to newswriters, "The Hangover," "The Breakaway," the "Mud, Blood, and

Booze" of army years, "The Lower Depths," "Self-Help," the "Blackout," and "the Growing Thirst."

Regarding the influence of the film world on writers, he says:

"There are so many producers and distributors, so many new pictures to be shown, and such a procession of visiting Hollywood stars, that film critics and correspondents could easily drink themselves to death for nothing if they felt so inclined, and were not on the whole the rather austere body of men and women that I know them to be. It is usual after a Press show to adjourn to the bar for a snack. . . . You can get a better story in a free and easy atmosphere. . . . There are six to eight shows a week, mornings and afternoons, important enough to justify a snack bar. In addition there are cocktail parties."

As to present trends, the writer says, near his conclusion, that "it is beyond dispute that drinking not only increased enormously during the late war, but that the habit is being maintained in the peace by at least 30 per cent more people than in the ten years up to 1939.

"I base my view not on the higher excise figures for intoxicants generally, but on my observation of the types who now frequent public houses whom one did not see before the war. Women are the most noticeable, and they possibly account for the bulk of the increase in drinking which the statistics reveal. It is disturbing to note the large number of women, some of them not yet twenty, to whom the pub has become a regular place of call."

According to all recent developments of scientific opinion it is not improbable that a belief in the stimulating and supporting qualities of alcohol will eventually become as obsolete as a belief in witchcraft.—*The Times*, London, England, quoted in *National Temperance Quarterly and Medical Review*, Jan., 1949.

## *Public Health Approach to Alcohol*

### *Dominant in South America*

AN INTERNATIONAL Conference of leading representatives from South American countries recently, in Montevideo, Uruguay, was characterized by two outstanding emphases, or results, as shown by the discussion and action taken:

(1) The prominence given to the problem as one of public health;

(2) The comprehensive program approved toward reaching all or most of the basic sources of the problem as found in everyday living.

The Conference, held the last week of October, 1948, and sponsored locally by The Uruguay Temperance League, adopted by detailed resolutions an international program of breadth and realistic approach, that may be summarized as follows:

Alcoholism is a medical, moral and social problem and should be treated as a disease.

The influence of alcoholism on children and young people deserves special consideration. Women must be instructed on the danger of alcohol both to themselves and to their succeeding generations.

Alcoholism is an important problem in mental hygiene which must be given careful attention.

On no account should alcohol be regarded as a food.

The fight against alcoholism is an important factor in the fight against tuberculosis.

The study of alcoholism comes within the scope of medicine, neuro-psychiatry, and social welfare.

All sufferers from alcoholism who are not incurable should be treated by dispensaries or in homes for inebriates.

The Congress approves organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

The governments of South America are invited to develop scientific research on alcoholism.

Recognizes the utility of an International Bureau with central headquarters.

Recommends the revision of legislative provisions relating to alcoholism. It considers that in the countries which have the monopoly system, the fight against alcoholism is facilitated.

Warns that the danger resulting from drinking by motor drivers must be closely followed.

Recommends that the problem should have a place in examinations for the medical degree.

The increased use of fruit juices and milk were highly recommended. These drinks should be exempt from taxation.

The State should concern itself with the problem of rational alimentation in the interest of the fight against alcoholism.

The Congress passed several resolutions on educational problems which are of supreme importance in the fight against alcoholism.

Proposed that all propaganda in favor of alcoholic beverages should be prohibited.

That sports should be encouraged, for they contribute to lower alcohol consumption, and

That the cinema and the radio should be utilized for temperance education.

---

My experience in the probation field has convinced me that the ones who are in trouble and may come close to ruining their own lives as well as those of their friends started drinking in their teens.—Porter W. Van Zandt, Chief Probation Officer, City Court, Rochester, N. Y.

### SOME BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

1. Alcohol affects the central nervous system and is a progressive nerve depressant, acting as a sedative in small amounts and as an anesthetic in larger quantities.

2. Moderate amounts of alcohol have a marked effect not only on judgment but also upon speed of reactions, discrimination of sensory perceptions, and degree of muscular control.

3. The feeling of stimulation from alcohol occurs because of the release of inhibitions and the submersion of anxieties. It does not "cure" the feeling of inferiority, but through impairment of judgment gives a temporary illusion of superiority.

4. People drink primarily:—

- a. To escape responsibility, frustration and conventional behavior.
- b. To relieve tensions.
- c. To compensate for emotional immaturity.
- d. To obtain social approval.

### THOSE WHO DRINK

**T**HE EXTENT of drinking, and alcoholism, in the United States has been variously estimated, but year by year, the figures of scientific students do not vary greatly. Dr. E. M. Jellinek of Yale University, has recently estimated (1948) that:

60,000,000 of the population of the United States over 15, drink.

4,000,000 are excessive drinkers, of whom,

- (1) 1,000,000 are on the borderline of becoming addicts. Some may still, of their own volition, get into a different category, and
- (2) 3,000,000 are addicts. Of these 25 per cent, or 750,000, are addicts with complications, mental or physical, or both; practically hopeless.