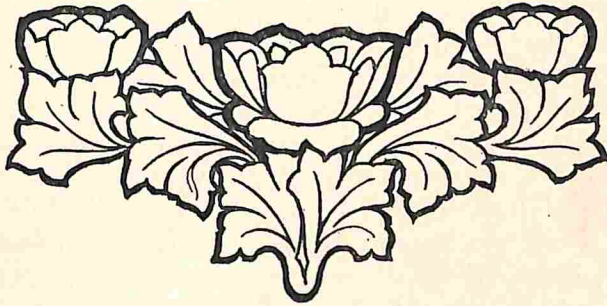


*Importance - Physical Effects
of Alcohol*

The University Man and the Alcohol Question

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This address by Dr. Emil Kraepelin, the well-known psychologist, formerly of Heidelberg, where most of his famous alcohol experiments were performed, and now of Munich, while addressed especially to German university men among whom there have been and are drinking customs peculiar to themselves, is translated and published in America for two reasons. First, it throws the light of personal experience and trained observation upon the serious, practical trend of those German student drinking customs whose lighter sides of gaiety and companionship have been often extolled in America. And, secondly, the general observations of Professor Kraepelin upon the responsibility of the university men toward the alcohol question apply with equal force in the United States.

The University Man and the Alcohol Question

A RECENT number of Die Fliegende Blatter contained a description of a visit to our planet by some inhabitants of Mars. The strangers, arriving at night, fell in with a student, whose first question was, "Well, gentlemen, what is the state of things with you as to beer?" Of course, it is not probable that such an interview would open in just this way—that is an exaggeration. But one may well suppose that a German student whose fate had banished him to Mars would very speedily look about there for what he significantly calls "the stuff." In the public mind, student life and beer have long been closely associated, for everybody sees what a tremendous part this beverage plays in student customs as a whole. Many a father who sends his son to the university to have a good time has in mind primarily that his son shall learn to be the equal of any man at drinking. A student who is an abstainer [in Germany] we still regard either as a contemptible weakling, or a peculiar fellow who has no right to be taken seriously.

Yet, for this reason, the momentous alcohol question, which affects the weal and woe of whole nations, knocks loud and long even at the gates of university life. Indeed, for the German student, this question, together with that of sexual hygiene, is perhaps the most important of all of the problems which concern him directly and which he must himself help to solve. True, it is the happy privilege of youth, untroubled by the heavy burdens of life, to enjoy to the full the free years of study and pleasure. But even the student, in his epicurean ease, can not shut his eyes forever to the frightful picture presented by the misery that alcohol brings upon the nation.

Drinking has often been classed with the use of tobacco, coffee or tea; whoever would do away with alcohol must banish also these others, which are likewise injurious. This comparison shows a complete misunderstanding of the actual conditions. The substances just mentioned occasion, even in the worst cases, only moderate injury to the health of the individual. But alcohol not only ruins the drinker himself, but through him menaces also his associates, his family, his progeny.

The Drinker as a Member of Society.

Hence the drinker is not only a useless, but also an extremely dangerous and expensive member of human society. How far-reaching is the influence

Alcohol an Impediment to Mental Work

Danger of Forming Permanent Drinking Habits

These are by no means always the men of least mental ability, as is evident from familiar examples. We know that there is a large number of men, in other respects very able and gifted, for whom the drinking habits of the average student portend the greatest danger, it may be because, under the influence of alcohol, these men become abnormally excited and do what is questionable, or it may be because led astray so often, they succumb permanently, and gradually become victims of alcoholism. Everyone who has been a student will be able to call up pathetic examples of the one sort or the other from his own circle of acquaintances.

Drink and Rowdyism

1. Der Alkoholismus (Alcoholism) 1878; Die Trunksucht und ihre Abwehr 1890.
2. Die Tatsachen ueber den Alkohol. Second edition, 1901.

It will be objected, of course, that in such offenses it is usually a question of harmless jokes, so-called student pranks, the putting out of lights, singing and noise on the streets, and the like. That is in general correct. Such actions are wont to be regarded, even, as quite inseparable from a good time. Just what is the special pleasure afforded by such actions, half puerile, half rowdyish, is not quite clear to the sober on-looker. As a matter of fact, the jolly mood is produced not by the yelling and uproar, but by taking alcohol, the characteristic accompaniments of which are excitement and loss of self-control.

Alcohol and Duels

1. Das Verbrechen und seine Bekämpfung (Crime and Its Correction), p. 66.
2. Only a few days after these lines were written, in this the police made a touching appeal to the students' better nature to induce them to "give up noisy demonstrations at night," and allow the citizens of Munich who were not of the student class to enjoy their night's rest in peace. "There are serious complaints by these societies on the public streets and squares and in their drinking places or club houses made by these societies on the public streets and squares and in their early morning hours." This cry of distress over a brutalizing of our students that has become a curse to the land needs no comment. A striking proof, indeed, of the bold assertion recently made at a meeting of hotel-keepers that good beer is the best remedy for the liquor mania!

can lead to the most dangerous complications. The well-known drunken duels are at bottom nothing but a somewhat refined form of the notorious barroom brawls of the lower classes.

Immorality and Alcohol

The fact that the majority of students suffer no lasting injury from their intemperance is due to the resistance of the system in the young. Nevertheless, many a jolly student has to pay for the fleeting hour of intoxication by seriously endangering his whole life's happiness, even though he may succeed in freeing himself from slavery to alcohol. Alcohol increases sexual excitability. Hence, everywhere, we see alcoholic and sexual excesses going hand in hand, at the revelry of high livers and in low grogshops and brothels. . . . Indeed, it is hardly a secret any longer that not a few students end their evening of carousal with a visit to women and public houses.

The consequences of this habit are truly awful. Sexual diseases of every sort are extremely widespread among our students. We know, moreover, not only that these lead to the greatest perils to the victim himself, often lasting for decades, but that misery and sickness of this kind can be passed on to wife and children. What a cruel disappointment for a pure young girl who has confidently put her fate into the hands of one who has been a rollicking student, when she finds what a price he has paid for his good time! We may not hope to banish these evils entirely from our social life, but there is not the slightest doubt that the eradication of our drinking customs would also take from the scourge of sexual diseases a large part of its power.

Almost three-quarters of all first cases of infection among educated young people originate during intoxication. I have here been witness to the fact that a week-minded, loathsome individual, with his nose eaten away and fresh syphilitic ulcers in his mouth, has been the source of infection for several students. This, at least, would be impossible if alcohol had not previously destroyed every remnant of discretion, self-respect, and self-control.

In student circles it is the custom to judge such questions from the point of view of the superman. The excesses are regarded as justifiable and all objections are looked upon as petty, carping criticism, which would fashion the vigorous spirit of youth into unctious goody-goodyism. This conception is totally false. **Excesses are not the sign of power, but of weakness;** they destroy relentlessly the precious gift of youthful vigor, which an unimpaired body can preserve even into old age.

Licentiousness and liberty are very different things; indeed, licentiousness is nothing but slavery of the worst kind.

Finally, the student must remember, also, that he is not alone in the world, and not here just for himself. His parents, the community to which he belongs, the wife whom he brings home, the children whom he begets—all have a well-founded right to demand that he shall conserve his health and strength instead of squandering them wantonly, that he shall retain the sensibility, capacity for enthusiasm, and energy of youth for the solution of life's problems, and not as a worn-out, surfeited weakling lose the best that life can offer us—joy in our work and in the fulfillment of duty.

University Men as Future Leaders

But in another, quite different, sense the life of the student belongs to the community. We all look with pride and joyous hope upon the young people in our educational institutions. They are to furnish the leaders in the struggles of the nation toward spiritual, moral and political development; they are to bring to maturity that for which earlier generations longed and strove. No wonder, then, if echoes of student ways and doings are wont to influence the whole life of the learned profession. The form of the student banquet has become fixed for all great general festivities of university men. What lively recollections of the jolly student years can be aroused at such a time has been shown by the experiences of the International Medical Congress in Berlin, when in one evening 4,000 persons, the flower of the medical profession, consumed 15,382 bottles of wine, 2,200 liters of beer, and 300 of cognac. Certainly the occurrences on that occasion, of which I myself was witness, beggar all description. It was a striking example of the lasting influence of student drinking customs, but, alas! not an isolated one.

Of much more serious consequence than the fact that educated men retain their habits of beer-drinking and carousing over the flowing bowl is the incalculable influence that the customs of the student exert upon large portions of our people. I never have a clinical demonstration upon drinkers that patients do not assert that the students drink more than they do and that people ought, therefore, to begin reformation with the students. This inevitable remark usually causes much merriment among the hearers, but it has also an extremely serious side. However obstinately the workingman resists the domination of the educated classes, he still looks with a mixture of envy and admiration at the example they set him. All external and internal changes in the life of a nation make their way slowly but surely, with resistless power, from the circles of those who stand on a higher intellectual plane to the lower levels of the people. Consequently, there falls upon them tremendous responsibility of being, willy-nilly, **educators of the masses.**

This is undoubtedly the most important point in the alcohol question so far as students are concerned. Even if we admit that they have the right to injure their own bodies and minds as they choose, yet they will and must themselves shrink back appalled at the immeasurable evil that their careless example brings upon their fellow countrymen.

It is not the quiet work, the attendance upon lectures, and the difficulties of examinations that characterize the picture of the student in the eyes of the multitude; it is the club life, the drinking, . . . the drunkenness, and the excesses committed during intoxication. Of course this picture is distorted, but it is none the less effective on that account. The young fellow who sees the more aristocratic of his own age taking a morning dram, who observes how they go about with caps awry and staring look, or how they yell and make a row on the streets at night, who comes to know their drinking-rules and drinking-songs, necessarily concludes that these doings are also aristocratic and worthy of imitation. It becomes his ambition to equal or, if possible, to surpass his models. And, though with the tongues of angels we depict to him the havoc that alcohol makes in our national life and the dangers that threaten him, he will scornfully rebuff what he regards as an attempt to curtail his personal en-

joyments, so long as he sees that the practice of his natural models is in glaring contradiction to our good instruction.

Practical Future Questions for the Student

You will all later enter practical life. What perhaps still seems to you to be well-meant exaggeration, you yourselves will see with alarming clearness, in the future, when you look about you without prejudice whatever profession you may adopt: **the alcohol curse of our nation.**

The clergyman sees the drinking habit undermine morality and the capacity for inspiration, conduce to idleness and love of pleasure. . . . He sees the relentless degeneration of the families of drinkers, as the head of the house goes to ruin and sinks into moral depravity; he sees the wife and child abused, marriage vows broken, children growing up into vagabonds and rowdies. Over against such conditions, running their course uninterruptedly in thousands of instances, he stands powerless. All his warnings fall on deaf ears so long as the educated classes set the example that always strengthens the drinker anew in his esteem for alcohol; so long as companions, liquor-sellers and producers put before him the tremendous temptation that ever overpowers anew the will weakened by alcohol.

To the future judge it will be clear . . . that alcohol is the determining factor in the majority of all offenses, but especially in cases of personal violence. Not a court session will pass in which the close connection of moral offenses, violent assault and murder, with intoxication will not appear in unmistakable colors. What an insight into our national life comes to him when he learns that by far the greater number of all cases of bloodshed occur on the day of rest on Sunday, because a large part of our people know no other way of finding its recreation than by going to the barroom and getting drunk!

The (future) government official and political economist will reckon up the enormous sums that are spent . . . every year for pleasure of alcoholic excitation, four or five times as much as for the army and navy together. To this must be added the expenses for police and the administration of justice, so far as these are concerned with drinkers and drunkards, the support of many tens of thousands who are impoverished directly or indirectly through the drink habit, and finally the room taken up by drinkers and their offspring in hospitals and insane asylums.

The Undermining of National Health

Much more serious even than this incalculable economic tribute that we pay every year to alcohol, must be, in the eyes of the true patriot, the fact that the drink habit is gradually undermining the general health of the nation. As we can trace back, in large part at least, the increase of lawlessness, and especially the growing participation of the young therein, to the increasing prosperity of the liquor traffic, so we find the same cause working physical injury also to our rising generation. Any one of you who, hereafter, as a physician, directs his attention to these questions will be convinced that in this field, too, the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the third and fourth generation. Drinkers beget those who in turn have an appetite for drink, but they beget also idiots, epileptics, criminals and prostitutes. It appears, further, that on account of the widespread immoderate use of alcohol, the number of men fit for military

service, and like wise the average height of whole generations, is lessened, and only as alcohol is combatted is this loss very gradually made up.

If one takes into account, also, that in Germany over 13,000 persons become victims of alcohol annually, that about one-fifth of all mental disorders are produced by alcohol, that alcohol shortens the average longevity and diminishes the power to resist every possible variety of disease, it seems perfectly incomprehensible that physicians have not already entered upon the campaign against alcohol with far greater energy than is actually the case. It is not a mere accident that alienists are the ones who are first beginning to recognize the important bearing of the danger that threatens us.

Alcohol's Relations to Childhood

The direct or indirect injury done to the rising generation by alcohol is undoubtedly the saddest phase of the whole alcohol question. The inquiries made by teachers in the schools have shown repeatedly that an alarming number of children are more or less regularly poisoned by alcohol given them by their parents, not infrequently with the well-meant intention of strengthening them, and even on the advice of the ignorant family physician. The teacher comes to know all too soon these tired, languid, and withal excitable, little creatures who are incapable of meeting school requirements. He sees, too, the sickly, nervous, depraved and neglected children from the families of drinkers, and they show him plainly toward what goal we are tending.

Finally, the drinking bouts of the pupils and the secret societies in the upper classes, with their excesses, doubly dangerous for the youthful brain bring clearly enough before his vision the mischievous influence student drinking customs exert upon the immature ambition of school-boy nature.

So, then, there will not be one of you to whom life will fail to show, over and over, a hundred times, and in the most varied forms, the physical, moral and economic decline consequent upon the spread of the alcohol habit. Perhaps you will meet these experiences with the same equanimity with which we hear, for instance, of the raging of pestilences in distant foreign lands. But, if you have a heart that can be touched by the misery that surrounds you, or if the fate of one of your dear ones wakes you up, then the day will come when you will try to figure out just what causes have brought about the enormous spread of the use of alcohol in our nation. Then you will recognize, with deep emotion, **that we are simply reaping what we ourselves have sown.**

And, if you are then fully conscious of the responsibility that your higher education lays upon you, you will recognize the momentous part that the development of student drinking customs, glossed over with the glamor of youthful pleasures, has played and still plays today in the spread of the liquor habit. The crackling firewood of intoxication, with which we amused ourselves in our student days, has become a devastating brand that destroys the happiness, well-being and health of hundreds of thousands. The drinking and carousing at the university is no harmless sport, no justifiable overflow of gaiety, but the deliberate fostering of one of the most terrible enemies known to our time.

The Deceptive Influence of Alcohol

Inevitably the question will come to you: Why did we in our student days regard drinking as our right—nay, as our duty? The answer that first presents

itself is this: It was the **pleasure** connected with drinking that led us to take up the mug and glass. That is true; alcohol produces a joyous exhilaration, a feeling of increased capacity for work, and enhanced enjoyment of life, which is undoubtedly the final cause of its spread as an excitant. From the recommendation of a wine dealer, I learn that wine enlivens the imagination, facilitates thought-connection, quickens the memory, is favorable to the clear and rapid reception of impressions, and to the formation of judgments. **Every word a lie!** Careful investigation, continued for decades and conducted with the finest apparatus, to determine the physical effects of alcohol, has shown beyond a doubt that **exactly the opposite** of all those assertions is actually the case. Alcohol paralyzes the imagination, renders the connection of ideas more difficult, weakens and falsifies the memory, and produces a very marked derangement of the power of apprehension and of judgment. On the other hand, vocal expression is facilitated and in general the setting free of activities, whereas the movements themselves become slower and less forcible.

Alcohol a Paralyzant

This is the true, unfalsified picture of the effect of alcohol, to which prejudiced observers have added a number of wholly fictitious features. I must confess that I myself have been greatly surprised at the results of accurate experiments, for I was looking for such favorable effects of alcohol upon our mental life as should compensate for the mischief wrought thereby. But now we see clearly what is the nature of the condition into which we put ourselves by the use of alcohol: **A paralyzing of the power of apprehension and the higher mental functions**, which finally leads to the well-defined clouding of consciousness, and an **excitation in the realm of the impulses**, which lets the control of our wills slip away from us more and more. And this is the condition that we lightly make the center of our good times, for the sake of which we fondly form those drinking customs which devastate our nation. Even if alcoholic intoxication produced all those desired effects upon our mental life which are ascribed to it by liquor dealers and drinkers in their enthusiasm, we should have to turn from it in horror as soon as we beheld its terrible footprints on our national life.

Verily, it is nothing but a monstrous self-deception that makes us blind! Even for ourselves the fleeting pleasure of alcoholic excitation is purchased at the cost, temporarily at least, of what is best and most valuable in our nature! We are accustomed to look with contempt upon the abuse of opium in the far East. But, as a matter of fact, the significance of this evil for the general welfare is not to be compared in the remotest degree with the ravages made by alcohol. The committing of criminal offenses, for example, falls out of the account entirely in the case of opium. We have no ground, then truly, for dis regarding the beam in our own eye.

Deeply as the esteem for alcohol penetrates all classes of our people, yet an intuition as to the true significance of this brain-poison is not wholly missing from among us. We still find the natural abhorrence of the taste, as well as of the effects of alcohol among women, and especially among children. It is overcome only by the resistless power of example. In every unperverted mind the later chapters of a drinking-bout can not but arouse feelings of the utmost disgust—the gradual flattening out of the conversation, the growing noise and

shouting, the demoralization of conduct, the ceaseless circulation of the liquors, finally the signs of increasing torpor and unfitness for society along with the secrets of the "chamber of the dead"—in short, the whole wild to-do that is wont to come up in those hours when guests of honor, "in order not to interfere with the enjoyment," have prudently withdrawn from the scene of action.

I well remember that, at the beginning of my alcoholic apprenticeship, when I was still sober enough to appreciate, I felt a deep abhorrence, coupled with shame, at these occurrences. Only little by little did I attain to the height where the enjoyment of the evening corresponded to the stage of the general drunkenness. That was what we were students for! How, indeed, could other ideas arise in an atmosphere in which it was taken for granted that the joy of every festal occasion should be enhanced by plenty of alcohol? The first time that I became intoxicated, something which I regarded as a truly heroic achievement, was on the day after the battle of Sedan. In the tumult of joy over this event, we schoolboys were also allowed to share in a general carousal of the people. What a picture for the student of morals! Here an army which in a valiant struggle had gained one of the bloodiest victories in the history of the world, and there a people celebrating this victory by getting drunk! Assuredly, if at such moments we really needed intoxicants to start the currents of enthusiasm, our nation would be ripe for its fall.

The False Comrade

Well for us if this time never comes. We are still a young, aspiring nation that does not need the pitiable assistance of an artificial excitant in order to think and feel and act nobly. Alcohol has seemed to us a nice plaything, or even an amiable friend, an ever-ready comforter and helper in sickness and weakness. Today, however, we know that the jolly comrade, for the price of one hour of exhilaration, cheats us out of our self-respect, that it brings to ruin every being and every nation that yields to it. Whoever recognizes this incontestible truth can be no true man if he is not seized with righteous anger against the poison which those prize most highly who are its most helpless victims, which, with unheard-of oppression, has forced whole nations into bondage to itself.

What example has produced can in turn be done away with by example. But this example must come from above, from those who are the salt of the earth. For the student world which now forms one of the chief strongholds of our drinking customs and which is credited with greatest knowledge and experience in these matters, there grows out of this fact a peculiarly pressing duty. Yours it is, fellow-students, to do away with the remnants of mediaeval barbarism that still disfigure your customs. New forms of academic life must and will be found which shall lift us out of the quagmire of maudlinism, and not end in that lamentable self-degradation which people try in vain to cover with the mantle of charity. Our movement against alcohol is the sign of a new era, which has some thought for itself, and courageously overturns old, deep-rooted mouldering prejudices. We wish to be **modern men**, and therefore young people must take the lead. Then the nation will follow willingly, as it has followed them hitherto.

University Responsibility Toward the Alcohol Question

To us all, and especially to us university teachers, belongs the imperative duty of entering personally into this question of the national health, and thereby

taking the wind out of the sails of hobbyists. We must forge and wield the weapons to banish alcohol from our national life, even if for no other reason than that, if not by our will and efforts, then **against our will** it will come to pass.

In reality it is alcohol that enslaves our university students. From this they must be freed by their own determination, by the knowledge that science and life afford. They will gain so much thereby that they will be far more than compensated for the alcoholic pleasures they have lost. In place of the stupidity that shows itself amid beer-fumes and on the morning after, will come a richer, higher and purer enjoyment, a happy participation in all the delights of untrammelled student life in full career, but without rowdyism and without remorse, Athletic exercises, excursions, walking tours, dramatic performances, various forms of artistic work, social festivities of every kind, will furnish abundant opportunity for recreation and the exercise of talents, as well as an outlet for gay, exuberant spirits, without its being necessary for health, sensibility and energy to pay the forfeit. Then our women, too, greatly to the advantage of both sexes, will be able to take a more active part in student life, whereas now most of the amusements of students, by their very nature, significantly shut out feminine spectators.

What we want is a happy, healthy people, strong in mind and body.

When foreign enemies threaten our borders, it is our young men who take up arms against them, and the flower of the army is made up of our students. They are the ones who inspire it with that high moral spirit which is the prerequisite of success, and for which our neighbors so greatly envy us. Today, when we have to do with an internal foe, perhaps more dangerous for us than all foreign enemies, should the student-body hang back, simply that it may not be obliged to give up certain favorite customs?

We will not and can not doubt that the cogent necessity of the campaign against alcohol will lead to energetic action in our universities. Already there have sprung up here and there societies of students who are abstainers. These virtually owe their establishment to the example and investigation of the Swiss students, who are already very far in advance of us. In the general student-body, too, there is manifest a certain effort to check excessive drinking, especially the morning dram. Already, even, I have attended student banquets at which not only I myself, but also a number of older students, committed the unheard-of misdemeanor of drinking mineral water.

But, gratifying as are these first indications that reason is prevailing over dangerous folly, yet we want by no means to overestimate their bearing. The opposition offered to the campaign against alcohol by ignorance and thoughtlessness, precedent and tradition, but especially also by love of gain and money interests, is exceedingly great. There will be all too many who will grasp at any straw to save their beloved drinking customs.

To them we will say: "Go on with your drinking; we, fortunately, no longer need it." But all those among our university students who have kept a clear head, a warm heart and a firm will, will recognize the tremendous importance of the alcohol question, will sympathize in the danger to our nation, and with fresh determination will act accordingly. With their help we shall conquer!

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