

Importance - Alcohol - Physical Effect

The Alcohol Question

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EDITOR'S NOTES

"The Alcohol Question" was an epoch-making address in the European temperance movement. By 1886, the societies for abstinence from spirits had dwindled to almost nothing. Talk of "moderation" was beginning to be heard in Central Europe. In Scandinavia alone had the idea of abstinence gained foothold. Professor Bunge was, as he himself said later, an almost solitary voice urging the importance and reasonableness of abstinence to the individual and to the nation. The address has not only passed through several editions and been translated into many languages, but its physiological sections were incorporated into Bunge's Text Book on Physiological Chemistry, used in medical schools, and thus the teaching has unquestionably had a direct influence upon the medical profession. In his student days Professor Bunge was a recognized leader in debates, accustomed to such thorough handling of his subjects that even the professors sometimes fell into using an expression current among the students, "Gustel says so." It was this characteristic of simple and sympathetic, reasonable thoroughness that has perhaps given this address its far-reaching influence. Its arguments permeate European literature against alcohol. One hardly finds a serious discussion of the subject as a whole from any country of Europe which does not contain traces of this address by Professor Bunge, which is here for the first time given complete to the American public. While it has especial historical interest, it also applies forcibly to present-day conditions.

PREFACE

This address was delivered November 14, 1886, in the Hall of the University of Basel. It has been re-edited several times, and translated into a dozen languages. In view of recent progress in the abstinence movement, several new passages and different statistics have been added in the recent editions.

G. VON BUNGE, Basel, May, 1907.



PROF. G. VON BUNGE

THE ALCOHOL QUESTION

THE subject on which I am to address you has been treated so frequently in addresses, in the press, and in public discussions, that it must seem presumptuous to wish to speak upon it again. Yet I believe I have, however, the qualifications for doing it, for the alcohol question is in reality, first of all a physiological question, and the physiological knowledge on which one must depend to judge accurately of it has not yet penetrated the public mind. Permit me, then, to lay before you what can be called strictly scientific upon the matter.

We know that alcohol is burned in the body. It is thus a source of energy. But it does not follow that it is a food. To justify this opinion it would be necessary to prove, first, that the energy resulting from the combustion of alcohol in the body is employed in the operation of a normal function. It is not enough that the physical energy be transformation into vital force. This transformation must take place at the desired time in the desired place, at definite points of certain tissues. We do not know whether the muscle fibres or the nerve cells can use alcohol as a source of energy. Our tissues cannot be fed by miscellaneous materials; they take from the blood definite nutritive substances and reject what is foreign to them or harms them.

Alcohol Not a Useful Source of Bodily Heat

But, someone will object, at least in the form of heat the energy produced by the combustion of alcohol will be useful to the body.

Even that is not admissible, because if alcohol increases the sources of heat, it also increases, on the other hand, its diffusion, and the latter carries heat off; the net result is simply a lowering of temperature, proved quite simply by the thermometer by numerous experiments.

This phenomenon is thus explained: Alcohol causes a dilation of the blood vessels of the skin; in consequence, the warm blood flows in greater quantity to the cool surface; there follows a greater dissemination of heat.

The dilation of the blood-vessels is brought about in the following manner: There are some small round muscles in a state of constant contraction in the walls of the blood vessels. This contraction is excited by certain nerve fibres which control the round muscles and have a common center in the brain. Alcohol paralyzes the center, the nerve excitation ceases, the round muscles relax, the blood vessels dilate, the blood flows to the skin, as can be seen in the redness of the face. Thus the reddening of the face after drinking, explained always by the exciting effect of alcohol, is a manifestation of paralysis.

It is a common idea that in cold weather alcohol warms one. The feeling of warmth is an illusion. We feel the warm blood flowing to the skin in large quantities; as a matter of fact, we are not warmed, but chilled. Perhaps also this illusion may prove that the nerve centers which transmit the impression of cold are paralyzed, or dulled.

Further, one can prove that all the effects of alcohol commonly interpreted as signs of stimulation are, in the final analysis, only manifestations of paralysis.¹

A Brain Paralyzant

This is particularly true of the mental effects of alcohol. The brain function first affected at the beginning of the paralyzing action is clearness of judgment, the power of discrimination. Emotional life comes into full play, unhampered by the guiding strings of reason. The individual becomes frank and communicative, heedless and confiding; he no longer discerns danger even. The paralyzing action of alcohol particularly manifests itself in the way it allays all feeling of discomfort and pain, and above all makes one forget the worst sort of pain—mental suffering, anxiety and trouble. Hence the gaiety which prevails at a carousal. But alcoholic drinks do not make a man really witty. This idea which is so prevalent is an illusion, a symptom also of the beginning of brain paralysis; self-complacency increases as the power of criticizing oneself decreases.

Another effect of this paralysis appears in the lively gesticulations and useless actions of intoxicated persons. The restraint that the sober man imposes upon his whims for useless motions is suppressed. This explains the quickening of heart activity and increased rapidity of the pulse, which are commonly cited as evidence of the stimulating effect of alcohol. The increase of heart activity is not a direct effect of alcohol, but is provoked by the surroundings among which alcoholic drinks are generally taken. Make a reasonable man lie down quietly, give him wine, and you can prove that his heart action will remain unchanged. But when he is among other drinkers, the critical sense is dulled, he prattles foolishly, is no longer master of himself, gesticulates wildly, heats himself up over nothing; hence the increase of heart action.

Dulling the Sense of Fatigue

The deadening of the sense of fatigue is also a symptom of the paralyzing action of alcohol. There is a strongly rooted belief that alcohol renews strength and energy when one is tired. But the feeling of fatigue is one of the safety valves of our bodily machine. To deaden it so that one can continue work, is like tying down the safety-valve of a boiler so that it can be overheated.

This erroneous belief that alcohol gives strength when one is tired is particularly disastrous for the class which is most numerous. Poor people whose incomes are already insufficient for suitable subsistence are misled by this notion into spending a considerable part of that income for alcoholic drinks, instead of using it for nourishing and palatable food, which alone can strengthen them for their hard work.

The experience of hard drinkers explains why this notion of the strengthening of alcohol is so difficult to overthrow. Anyone who is in the regular habit of taking a considerable amount of alcohol turns out more work while he continues to use it than if he were to suddenly leave it off. We cannot at present explain this fact, but it is quite analogous to the effect of other narcotics upon those who habitually use them. Take from a morphine user his morphine, and he can neither work, sleep, nor eat; the morphine "strengthens" him. But no narcotic will strengthen one who is not accustomed to it.

Of more value than all these scientific deductions have been the experiments on large bodies of men in the armies, which have proved the absolute uselessness, the harmfulness of even moderate quantities of alcohol. It has been demonstrated that soldiers in peace and war, in all climates, in heat, cold and rain,

1. See the bibliography on this question in Bunge: *Lehrbuch der Physiologie des Menschen*, 2nd edition, Vol. II., p. 167. 1905.

better endure the fatigue of exhausting marches when they are not allowed any alcoholic drinks.

These experiments have been made in the English army in expeditions among the Kaffirs in West Africa, in expeditions against the Ashanti, in Canada, in India. Observations made on the numerous abstainers in the English army are particularly instructive. These men have pledged themselves not to use any alcoholic drink; hence they drank nothing even in the periods when the other soldiers received moderate rations of alcoholic liquors; they marched with the others and endured exactly the same hardships; yet it was proved that the abstainers endured better the effort demanded of them, that cases of sickness or of death were less frequent among them. The experience is particularly instructive and striking, because it was not a matter of comparing total abstainers with drunkards, but with moderate soldiers who had absolutely no opportunity to procure more alcohol than the very moderate rations distributed by the service.

Similar tests have been made also in the United States where the distribution of moderate doses of alcohol alternated with periods of abstinence. Dr. Frank Hamilton thus expressed himself on this subject: "Observation and experience have led us to conclude positively that the habitual use of alcohol is not, in any circumstance, useful to persons in good health. I do not make any exception for cold, rain, even for old drinkers as soon as they are soldiers."

The same conclusion has been reached in the navy and upon merchant vessels. Tests have been made in the tropic and temperate zones and quite particularly in the polar regions.

An Enemy to Enterprise

What has been said of the physical effects of alcohol applies also to mental work. All who have made the trial declare without qualification that they endure mental work better on giving up all alcoholic drinks.

Thus alcohol strengthens no one; it simply deadens the feeling of fatigue.

The feeling of tedium is also one of those which alcohol deadens. But this feeling, like fatigue, is one of the arrangements for self-regulation which the human organism possesses. The sensation of fatigue compels us to rest; the painful sensation of tedium compels us to effort and to exertion, without which our muscles and nerves would atrophy and grow weak and health would be impossible. If one does not drive the sense of tedium away by some kind of work, it grows on one and finally becomes a truly demonical power. It is interesting to observe to what measure desperate, lazy or unintelligent men resort to escape this demon of tedium without exerting themselves. They rush from one company to another, from place to place; they would finally find themselves driven to exercise their brains and muscles in some way or other to obtain the feeling of rest and contentment, and thus to lose their sense of tedium, if they did not have alcohol, which easily and agreeably delivers them from it. A drinker or a company of drinkers is never conscious of dullness. There is no want of interest or ideals; they have the satisfaction of narcotics. There is nothing so deadly to the development of man; nothing which so undermines his highest possibilities, nothing which so surely destroys his last bit of energy, as the continued dulling of the sense of tedium by alcohol.

The Special Peril in Beer

Of all alcoholic drinks beer is the most harmful, because no other so readily lends itself to dulling this sense of tedium. When spirits make a man a thief or murderer, the man on the street grows indignant. But it is of small consequence to him that thousands become stupid and brutalized by beer. Beer is the most harmful of alcoholic drinks because it is the most seductive. To drink spirits is a disgrace in all classes of people; but our finest people take pride in drinking heavily of beer.

There is no drink to which one becomes accustomed so quickly, none which destroys more rapidly the taste for normal food and harmless drinks. No other leads so much to intemperance.

The defenders of beer claim in its favor that it is at the same time a food. It is undeniable that beer contains considerable quantities of carbohydrates: dextrose and sugar. But the diet of most men, so far from lacking carbohydrates, already contains too much. There is, therefore, no reason for adding carbohydrates to the diet in such a costly form.

Again, the claim is made in favor of diluted alcoholic drinks, wine and beer, that they promote digestion. But we know that the contrary is true. Numerous experiments of men and animals, especially those made on man with the stomach pump, direct observations on persons with gastric fistula, have all shown that moderate doses of wine and beer appreciably slow and disturb digestion.

The moderate use of alcoholic drinks is not only useless, but in a high degree harmful. This is clearly shown by the statistics of the English life insurance societies, which have established the fact that the average longevity of total abstainers is much greater than that of moderate drinkers. In fact, these societies grant abstainers a rebate of from ten to fifteen per cent.

In the study of alcoholic drinks, one should carefully distinguish between them as aids to enjoyment and as of remedial value. According to many physicians, alcohol is indispensable as a medicine; they have not, however, as yet furnished the proofs of this favorable action.

It is self-evident to any reasonable man that alcoholic drinks can only be prescribed in acute diseases to relieve a temporary condition, just as one does not prescribe morphine or chloral in chronic diseases except to lessen the agony of a fatal illness.

Impure Water Versus Alcoholic Drinks

One often hears beer drinkers claim that water is "so unhealthful." But the negligence of most people in the matter of water is boundless. They have their Bordeaux wine or Munich beer; they are frightened at the idea of getting water from the neighboring fountain. If one one-hundredth of the time and strength spent in the production of alcohol were employed in procuring good drinking water no one would be obliged to drink impure water. However, in spite of bad water, the sickness and mortality of water drinkers is far less than that of moderate drinkers of wine or beer, as is shown by all the evidence from experiments made in the English army and observations in life insurance societies.

Normal Tastes Impaired by Alcohol

Many say that they do not drink alcoholic beverages for their effects, but because they like the taste. This argument contains some truth; we have a

perfect right to try to increase the pleasures of the table. But the satisfaction that the perfume and agreeable taste of wine procure for us are bought too dear, at the price even of other gastronomic pleasures. The use of alcoholic drinks perverts the taste; the drinker calls almost exclusively for meats. The food which most pleases a healthy man with an unperverted taste—which children instinctively call for, fruits rich in sugar and, in general, all sweet dishes—does not satisfy the drinker. Give up alcoholic drinks, and presently you will recover the appetite of a child; normal instinct accords here exactly with physiology, which has established the fact that sugar is the source of muscular strength. The word sweet signifies, in the language of every people, agreeable. If what is sweet does not seem to us agreeable, we are in an abnormal state. This is the state of the drinker. I call every man a drinker who feels uncomfortable if he does not daily introduce into his system some kind of alcoholic drink.

Thus, I affirm that the suppression of alcoholic drinks would only enhance the pleasures of the table; we should have at our disposal a much larger number of agreeable sensations.

Appetizing Food as a Preventive of Drinking

One who takes a position against alcohol is immediately regarded as ascetic. Permit me to make clear my point of view upon this special matter.

The food of most people is not appetizing enough. This incomplete satisfaction of our desire for an agreeable excitation of the nerves by odors and by taste—and through these the whole nervous system—explains why we crave means of special enjoyment. Foods ought to be also means of enjoyment. If all the money spent today for narcotics were used in improving food, if all the refinements of ingenuity put to solving an insoluble problem, the manufacture of a beer which would not do an atom of harm, were devoted to making food more savory, the passion for narcotics would disappear.

We ought to try to bring to our table a great variety, and to enliven heart and senses with ever new allurements. It is not enough for one merely to put into his stomach a sufficient quantity of albumin, fat, and carbohydrate. One ought to take pleasure in eating; every meal ought to be a feast. Thus alone are we truly restored and strengthened for new work and new efforts.

I repel the idea of asceticism. I assert that a man who completely renounces alcoholic drinks deprives himself of nothing; his joy in living and his pleasures increase.

The Effect of Intemperance on Society

Up to this point we have examined only the consequences of the moderate use of alcohol. I need not describe the effects of intemperance. The immoderate use of alcohol is the cause of the greatest misery; the fact has been so often proved, it is so generally admitted, that I will confine myself to recalling briefly what is already known.

It is known that alcoholic intemperance provokes a whole series of diseases, that no organ of the body is safe from its deadly effects. Certain English physicians even claim that a half of all sickness is caused by alcohol. Almost all physicians agree that very much of this sickness, especially the numerous nervous affections due to alcohol—from simple nervousness up to pronounced insanity—are in a high degree hereditary.

We are familiar also with the reports of alcoholism and criminality. Crim-

inal judges, police officers, prison directors, in almost all civilized countries, estimate that 70 to 80 per cent of all crime are a consequence of alcohol.¹ According to a statistical report upon 22,837 prisoners in 120 penitentiaries of the German Empire, 46 per cent of all the murders were committed in drunkenness.² For homicide, the proportion is 63 per cent; for resistance to authority, 77 per cent.

We know, also, that in the majority of civilized countries, from 20 to 40 per cent of male insane, in the judgment of alienists, owe their terrible fate to alcohol.

Let us recall again that an important proportion of divorces—25 per cent in Denmark, of suicides—30 per cent in England, 40 per cent even in Russia, are the consequence of intemperance. [19.5 per cent of divorces in the United States have intemperance as one cause—Editor.]

All this misery is still more graphic if, in place of percentages, we let the actual numbers speak.

In the United States of North America alone, reports Minister Everett, in the years 1860-1870 the consumption of spirituous drinks caused a direct expense of 3,000,000,000 francs [\$600,000,000] and an indirect expense of 600,000,000 francs [\$120,000,000] to the nation, has cost 300,000 lives, has thrown 100,000 children into public institutions and at least 150,000 persons into prisons and workhouses, has provoked at least 2,000 suicides, has caused the loss of at least \$10,000,000 by fire or violence and has made 20,000 widows and a million of orphans.¹

For the majority of European countries a similar summary would give even more unfavorable figures. Let us not forget this: Statistics record only the smallest part of all this misery. From the first glass to insanity, to crime, to despair and suicide, there are a thousand degrees. Only those who fall the lowest are accounted for by statistics. Let us not forget, further, that these wretched people ruin the happiness of other persons. How many desolate families, innocent tears, profound and poignant griefs there are of which the statistical bureau has no information.

Strength and Energy Expending in Producing a Social Poison

Let us now look at the economic side of the question. In certain countries of Europe, one-fourth of the cereals raised are converted into alcohol. Let us take one-tenth as the average. That means in other terms that one-tenth of the agricultural population is occupied with the production of alcohol. The agriculturalists constitute in Europe rather more than half of the total popula-

1. Read on this subject, A. Baer: *Der Alkoholismus*, Berlin, p. 337-360, and H. Hoppe: *Alkohol und Kriminalität*. See also Otto Lang, *Alkoholgenuss und Verbrechen*.

2. Objection has been made to this statement by Baer on the ground that it could only be proved in court that the crimes were committed by notorious drinkers, and not that they were committed in a state of drunkenness. But we must consider that two phases continually succeed each other in the life of the drinker—drunkenness and reaction (Katzenjammer). He does not commit crimes in the state of reaction, because he is then absolutely without energy and decision: he gets intoxicated first, and then commits his criminal action. We agree that the relations of cause and effect in intemperance and crime can not always be surely established, that it is necessary to make sufficient allowance for variations between cause and effect. The figures quoted may be much too high, they may also be much too low. Alcohol is constantly employed to dull ennui and thus leads to idleness, "mother of all vices;" it lowers the capacity for work and earning ability, it leads the man into bad company, it throws him always into a state of irresponsibility or inertia before temptations, it stifles the voice of conscience. Must it not, then, lead by degrees to crime? The results of psychological deduction confirm the conclusions formulated by those who, professionally, have to study to the core the reports on alcoholism and criminality. Note specially the surprising diminution of crimes in states and communities where alcoholic drinks are legally forbidden.

tion. Let us consider, further, that considerable sections are devoted exclusively to the production of wine, that vine-growing is very troublesome, that the vine is fumigated with materials produced by labor in other fields. Consider also that we must add to the producers of alcohol the workmen occupied in manufacturing tools and agricultural implements, in constructing buildings designed for agricultural pursuits, all those engaged in the construction and management of breweries and those engaged in the breweries themselves; let us then add all the dealers and intermediate agencies who have to do with the distribution of alcohol and the great army of saloonkeepers, barmen and barmaids, and we must recognize that a large part—perhaps one-tenth—of the civilized human race works by the sweat of its brow, year after year, day after day, without ceasing, to produce the poison and to distribute it, and all consume it to lessen their capacity for labor, to empty their strong-boxes, to fill institutions with paupers, the hospitals, the asylums, the insane asylums, the penitentiaries, truly this is a most worthy occupation for the most advanced nations of the earth, the heirs of an old civilization?

Society's Right to Protect Itself Against Drink

One question arises: What shall we do against all this misery?

In answering this question we presently meet two opposing systems of thought. On the one hand are those who believe in moral progress; on the other, those who do not. The latter believe only in intellectual progress. Consequently they have a horror of constraint. Their theory is that no one becomes more intelligent through constraint, he does not improve morally, motives remain at a level unchanged either good or bad; why then, constraint? Let men follow undisturbed the struggle for existence, the sots will fall out, the able-bodied will survive; this is the only progress possible.

I will not discuss this with the advocates of the system; that would lead me too far afield. I am of those who believe immutably in the moral progress of humanity.

All history is witness to this fact; it would hardly be worth the trouble to live if we did not believe this. But one who holds this belief will recognize that, a people, as little as an individual, can be raised to morality without constraint. The power of the state must intervene. If the state has the right to punish crime, even by death, it has the right also to prevent crime.

I know very well that the whole liberal doctrine protests, "That would be putting society under tutelage." But in the case of another narcotic, **morphine**, everyone admits this right of tutelage. The free sale of morphine is forbidden by civilized nations. The individual is thus, in fact, guarded against his own weakness by the power of the state. It is suggestive to see every year that some hundreds of physicians are victims of morphine; they are the only ones able to procure it easily; they are the only ones who do not participate in the benefit of the state's guardianship. Hence one sees that knowledge does not protect man. No one sees the danger, more clearly than the physician; yet he needs protection against his own weakness.

Usury is likewise forbidden by law. Is that not tutelage, an invasion of liberty? Is not the usurer a thousand times preferable to the producer or trafficker

1. The editors have not been able to trace this statement to its source. The figures seem not improbable, however, for a decade.

in alcohol. The former takes from his neighbor money only; the latter robs him also of health, intelligence, honor and conscience.

Gambling is forbidden in all civilized states. Yet the danger of gambling to society is very small compared with the consequences of intemperance. What would you think if someone should say to you: I enjoy gambling, it affords me agreeable relaxation after work, distracts me and changes the current of thought. There is no shadow of danger for me; I am completely master of myself; this pastime will never become a passion to me. Hence I want to see gambling houses opened on the street corners, so that I can go in and enjoy my sport whenever and as often as I choose. If others lack character to the extent of throwing themselves away and their families into misery, that is none of my business.

Let us confess the truth. That is exactly the viewpoint that the great majority of men adopt on the alcohol question. Nothing more clearly throws light on the selfish spirit of a man than close observation of his attitude concerning alcohol. How shall one characterize a man who says: Every year millions of human beings may enter the hospitals and prisons, millions and their families may fall into misery, be overwhelmed to the depths of despair and to suicide, it is of small consequence, provided I may have every evening my glass of beer or may tranquilly handle brewery dividends.

I decline to accept the habitual evasion: We do not set an example of intemperance; we are always moderate. The advantage of self-control does not release one from the duty of influencing by example those whom abstinence alone can save.

The Responsibilities of the Moderate Drinker

Let us never forget this: **Never yet has a drinker been saved by proposing to be moderate.** In all cases where the drinker is restored, it is by the conviction that the only chance for safety is to avoid the first glass. The alcoholism of a people is not cured otherwise than that of an individual.

Let us not forget also the power of example. Let us not forget that the majority of men do not ask for reasons. They never ask, **Why** ought I to do that? but always, **How** does one do that? The example of people of influence goes a thousand times further than all good reasons and exhortation.

Those who believe themselves called to educate the people ought to begin with themselves; it is the duty of the educated, dominant classes before all things to set an example. Thus alone will one avoid legislating against the intemperance of the masses. As long as we wish to take from the poor man his spirits and do not ourselves give up wine, no one will believe that our motives are disinterested. There is a single touchstone, one criterion only for the purity of motives: the real sacrifices that one makes.

Anyone who is addicted to the use of alcoholic drinks—though this be the most moderate use of wine—cannot defend himself from the reproach of being a seducer. Every drinker was once a moderate drinker. Whoever by his example induces others to drink moderately, thus pushes a part of them on to immoderation. He starts the stone rolling; it is out of his power to stop it.

It is not the immoderate drinkers who have to bear the reproach of being seducers. On the contrary, their example repels. **The moderate drinkers are the seducers.** As long as the seduction continues, there will be immoderation

with all its consequences; sickness, insanity, crime will never cease. One who does not see that, does not know the history of the struggle against alcoholism.

Abstinence as a Factor in National Competition

It is not speeches and meetings that will conquer selfishness, but struggle and constraint, "iron and fire." * * * It is not only in a war of cannon and bayonet that the weaknesses of a country appear. They appear also in that peaceful strife "quite as pitiless and murderous" in which nations engage on economic grounds. In this "peaceful strife" of nations, the ones which are unwilling to abandon alcohol are pitilessly trodden under foot.

One cannot consider the welfare of the nation alone. Private societies ought from the beginning to adopt without compromise the principle of abstinence from all alcoholic drinks. The history of the struggle against alcohol teaches that the moderation societies of all kinds have accomplished nothing, and by their indecisive attitude have become objects of ridicule, while the abstinence societies show a brilliant success. In North America, in several states complete prohibition of the manufacture and sale of alcoholic drinks has been secured, and in all the other states a demand for the same requirements daily increases. The majority of the states have adopted local option laws which give cities or towns, sometimes entire counties, the right to prohibit the production and sale of alcoholic drinks. In England, the number of those who have taken the total abstinence pledge exceeds five millions, and the Liberal party has placed local option upon its program. Sweden has 300,000 abstainers. Norway 200,000, Denmark 100,000. Finland already has a local option law and all rural communities—two millions of people—have availed themselves of it. In Switzerland, land of wine-production, one meets with special difficulties. Yet the abstinence societies number more than 30,000 members, and the movement progresses all along the line. It has been everywhere shown that once the principle of abstinence is established, nothing stops the movement. It must increase, and will increase to the time when finally a strong majority is gained in the legislative body, and the object of the societies, the complete suppression of all alcoholic drinks, is attained.

The Personal Liberty Argument

Protests against prohibition of alcohol in the name of personal liberty only show that one has not yet considered the question. At the foundation of the prohibition problem, there is simply the first right, the most natural right of man, the right of self-defense. Let us never forget that the drinker not only harms himself, but he exposes to harm those about him. Every year, hundreds of thousands of human beings perish through the intoxication of another. Recall the statistics of crime, of accidents. Recall the innumerable families abused by the drunkards. Recall the millions of men who are born sick and miserable through the drunkenness of another, who in their misery fall a charge upon society as a whole, who pass on that misery to their children and their children's children. There exists hardly a man who has not incurred serious loss through the drunkenness of another. **We have the right to defend ourselves.** We are not obliged to live with men whose brains are constantly semi-paralyzed. As soon as we have the power to prevent it, we have the right to do so.

One gains nothing, we often hear it said, by measures of constraint; peo-

ple will abandon themselves to the use of other narcotics, even more dangerous, possibly opium, morphine. That is to be at the end of one's argument. These objections apply to every effort to better conditions. It is as if a father said: "Nothing but trouble in raising my children! If I forbid one improper act, they immediately think of another." A good government ought to combat ceaselessly and tirelessly all the follies and weaknesses of its people.

We also hear it claimed that the abstinent movement brings out hypocrisy. The same objection can be made of any reform movement. As soon as influential, conspicuous people become connected with a movement, there will always be the insincere to follow them hypocritically. But is this a reason for ceasing all effort toward moral progress? At the present time the number of those who show hypocrisy in drinking is a thousand times larger than that of those who do not drink for the same reason.

Finally, there is always the objection: If alcohol were truly so harmful, the human race would have been destroyed long ago because drunkenness is older than history! But formerly it was impossible to produce the quantities of today, when perfected agriculture and the progress of chemistry and of physics, and gigantic capital have been put at the service of popular seduction. We must not forget that spirits did not begin to be common until 250 years ago. Formerly, also, there were no joint-stock breweries, or beer palaces to draw crowds with electric light and gay music.

Alcohol an Enemy to True Pleasure

All the objections that have yet been made against the suppression of alcohol are easily answered. But, even then, I know many of you will meet me with this reply: All that is theory. Why should we not use the magnificent gifts of nature? Why else does the delicious grape ripen in the sun? Why do we have the noble wine? All the poets have sung its praises! It has gladdened the heart of man and of gods! And we should shun it! Why should we not dull our reason? We do not want to be always coldly reasoning and calculating. We want to be good companions, to renew our youth sometimes, to be like children, gay and care-free. What would become of the world if there were only cold reason? Does not reason itself lead also to immorality, to crime? Our emotions ought to have play at any price, if necessary by the aid of alcohol.

Exactly the contrary is true. It is false that we cannot get along without alcohol to give feeling full play. There are more noble joys. There must be much poverty of feeling, much grossness, to consider the joys of Bacchus the highest, and the desire for alcoholic narcotization the height of happiness. Alcohol simply prevents men from seeking the noblest pleasures; it prevents them from cultivating friendship and sociability of a high character; from associating with those with whom we have common high ideals. There are numbers of men together every evening of their lives without having between them anything of common interest except their liking for the same kind of beer. How ridiculous these social gatherings often are. Nobody asks whether the people who are coming have ideas to exchange or not. The host is care-free, he has only to put the bottles on the table, all feel at ease, and the next day they boast of the intellectuality of the company and the courtesy of the host.

If we did not have alcohol, the would-be host would first seriously ask himself if the persons whom he would bring together have any common interests. The result would be that many gatherings would not take place at

all. People would sometimes withdraw to fill up their own emptiness until the desire to exchange thought broke out irresistibly.

Then we should have a social life whose intellectuality and spontaneous gaiety would surpass anything wine has ever been able to produce. The desire for intercourse and sympathy are of such perennial growth in our nature that we can not smother them. Every normal longing grows strong in proportion as we try to repress it. Our desire for sociability is never really repressed; it can never be otherwise than encouraged; but it is artificially nourished by alcohol. Consequently it merely grows like the hothouse plant which soon withers.

It is particularly unfortunate that young people should resort to alcohol to make life endurable. Goethe has said, "Youth is intoxication without wine." Look for such youth in a students' club, for example. I maintain that if these sons of the Muses were to try to lead the same kind of life without alcohol, sheer tediousness would drive them from one another in all directions.¹ The life of society artificially convoked by alcohol prevents students from forming natural associations on the basis of common ideals and interests.

The situation is still worse for our younger people in school. Servile imitation of student life begins there. The collegian knows no meeting more agreeable than that behind a beer glass. These customs tend fatally to age him prematurely. Idealism is slain in the germ.

Alcohol makes a man lazy, reluctant to exert himself. It spoils his power of enjoyment in the beauty of nature because easy physical effort, pleasure in walking, boating, mountain-climbing, are inseparable from such enjoyment. Alcohol destroys those pleasures. The beer-drinker painfully drags himself to the neighboring public-house. He stays there as though glued to his seat. It is true that some of these places are built so as to command fine views. But the world is more beautiful seen when walking, than through the window of a drinking place. Alcohol blunts the feelings, makes them incapable of the noblest joys of life; it tends to narrow the spirit.

In destroyed idealism, alcohol is a powerful obstacle to the moral progress of humanity. Chronic narcotization, alcoholic poisoning, prevents a people from feeling the lack of a moral ideal. Wherever the voice of conscience rises, alcohol stifles it. Wherever the noblest joys appear, a flood of beer drowns them. This disappearance of the idealistic sense shows itself in external appearance. The thoughts of a man reveal themselves on his countenance. Watch drinkers, as little by little their countenances lose the expression of nobility and take on a coarse expression. Half our men are disfigured by the so-called moderate use of alcohol.

The obstacle to the gradual and complete disappearance of alcoholic drinks is brutal selfishness. But this selfishness will not conquer. Unselfishness will win. Victory will lie with those who with steady purpose and determination make the greatest sacrifices. All human history teaches us this lesson. Let this be the thought that sustains us in all life's disappointments, let it be the source of our strength, and perseverance in the struggle. The victory is ours.

¹ The author is himself a former member of a student's corps; no one can dispute one's right to judge himself. If I wrong my comrades, it is easy to disprove me by the test I have indicated. I would gladly admit my error.

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