

*Importance - Alcohol - Physical Effect*

# PROHIBITION AND HEALTH

FILLMORE CONDIT

*Read at the Eighth Annual Meeting of the National Temperance Council, Washington, D. C., Sept. 20, 1926*



ALCOHOL poisons and kills; Abstinence and Prohibition save lives and safeguard health.

These are *part* of the reasons—

Why: The Eighteenth Amendment prohibiting intoxicating beverages was adopted.

Why: The American Medical Association placed itself on record (1917) as opposed to the beverage use of alcohol and in favor of discouraging the medical use.

Why: Alcohol was dropped from the U. S. Pharmacopoeia (1915).

Why: Life insurance companies, after actuarial investigation of millions of lives, are against alcohol.

Why: All our states have for a generation required the teaching of the effects of alcohol in their public schools, and

Why: Our Nation sent a sober Army and Navy to help win the World War.

William Hohenzollern may have erred in some matters, but he was prophetic eight years ago when he said the next great war would be won by the nation using the least alcohol.

The decision of science, the final opinion of our nation after a hundred years of education upon the subject, was thus stated by Dr. S. S. Goldwater, formerly Health Commissioner of New York City.<sup>1</sup>

"It is believed that diminution of the consumption of alcohol by the community would mean less tuberculosis, less poverty, less dependency, less pressure on our hospitals, asylums and jails."

"Intemperate drinking cuts into the support of families."

"The drinking of parents weakens the vitality of children."

"More alcoholism is found in the parents of feeble-minded children than in the parents of normal children."

"The children of drunkards develop more slowly and do poorer work than do the children of abstainers."

"Alcohol impairs the tone of the muscles and lessens the product of laborers; it depreciates the skill and endurance of artisans; it impairs memory, multiplies industrial accidents, causes chronic diseases of the heart, liver, stomach and kidneys, increases the death rate from pneumonia and lessens natural immunity of infectious diseases."

Justice Harlan speaking for the United States Supreme Court, said:

"We can not shut out of view the fact within the knowledge of all, that the public health and the public safety may be endangered by the general use of intoxicating drinks."<sup>2</sup>

Arthur Hunter, chairman Medico-Actuarial Mortality Investigation, stated as a result of the investigation of 2,000,000 insured lives:

"Nothing has been more conclusively proved than that a steady free use of alcoholic beverages, or occasional excesses are detrimental to the individual.

"In my judgment it has also been proved beyond peradventure of doubt that total abstinence from alcohol is of value to humanity; it is certain that abstainers live longer than persons who use alcoholic beverages."<sup>3</sup>

## IS PROHIBITION SAVING LIFE AND PROTECTING HEALTH?

Let us turn first to the highest evidence, the mortality records of the United States Census Bureau.

### GENERAL DEATH RATES

These are based upon the death records of the registration areas covering 26 states and 77 cities.<sup>4</sup>

These show that in 1917 the average death rate in the license states was 14.3 for each 1,000 population; and for the prohibition states, 12.3.

Other factors beside alcohol affect life and health—among these being climate, race and occupations but none we believe exerted so powerful an influence upon the death rates of 1917 as the alcohol consumed in the license states.

In the same year, 1917, the mortality records for the seventy-seven cities in the registration area, show as to infant mortality (infants under one year of age), that the average death rate in the 62 license cities was 107 for each 1,000 births and the average infant death rate in the 15 cities without saloons, Cambridge, Tacoma, Spokane, Seattle, Portland (Ore.), Wichita, Brockton, Somerville, Lynn, Malden, Duluth, Norfolk, Richmond, Salt Lake City and Portland (Me.) was 82.3.

It may be objected that the dry cities may have had less poverty, less congested tenement house population and less slums than the license cities, but drink produces poverty and slums and when cities "go dry" slums begin to disappear.

Alcohol as an enemy of child life attacks it in myriads of ways, heredity, bad food, insufficient food, filth, ignorance, carelessness and often the poison is administered direct as supposed medicine.

It is too early to obtain and tabulate complete evidence of the results of national prohibition upon health in our nation, but information accumulates from the largest cities which proves the wisdom of the Eighteenth Amendment.

### INFANT MORTALITY

Infant mortality, deaths under one year, in New York City is shown on page 3.<sup>5</sup>

"Reports at hand," said Drs. Baker and Sobel, "indicate that all ten of the larger cities in the United States will report a substantial reduction in the infant mortality rate during 1919." Newark, N. J. showed<sup>6</sup> a marked falling off from the rates of several preceding years:

1915, 85.3; 1916, 89.6; 1917, 87.8; 1918, 104.7; 1919, 76.2, lowest rate on record.

Among the causes enumerated for the decrease in infant mortality in New York such as education in child care, Drs. Baker and Sobel also said:<sup>5</sup>

"It is not impossible or unlikely that the Prohibition wave has had some influence. With less alcoholic indulgence on the part of fathers, and fortunately, of the mothers, there arises not only more money for family needs and a general improvement of home conditions, but a general improvement in family moral tone, in better condition of health, greater family stability and better earning capacity. A beginning has only been made in this direction, and time will demonstrate the blessings of Prohibition, absolute or modified, in the health and general well-being not only of the children but of the adult population."

### DEATHS OF INFANTS UNDER 1 YEAR, N. Y. CITY

Year	Total Deaths	Per 1,000 Births
1914	13,312	95
1915	13,866	98
1916	12,818	93
1917	12,568	89
1918	12,567	92
1919	10,639	81.6

### ALCOHOLISM AND ALLIED CONDITIONS

The St. Paul (Minn.) *Pioneer Press* is authority for the statement, "Prohibition has reduced the number of patients in the city hospital almost a thousand in its first six months, and reduced accidents, assaults and the like about 90 per cent."

Dr. William C. Woodward, Health Commissioner of Boston (Mass.) reports (Feb. 10, 1920) deaths as follows:

	Alcoholism	Accidents	Homicides	Suicides	Total
1915	53	250	20	62	385
1916	88	*334	22	42	486
1917	54	306	17	50	427
1918	64	269	15	51	399
1919	12	195	†18	33	258

\*Forty-five of these due to an electric street railway car accident.

†Seven of these incident to the police strike.

The Detroit (Mich.) authorities reported for the year ending April 30, 1918, during which the saloons were open, and the year ending April 30, 1919 during which they were closed:

	Deaths	
	1917-18	1918-19
Alcoholism .....	107	19
Cirrhosis of liver .....	90	80
Suicides .....	122	82
Accidents .....	736	595
Fatal industrial accidents in Michigan.....	358	250
Admissions Wayne County Infirmary .....	2,784	1,271
Non-fatal industrial accidents in Michigan.....	18,186	14,615

Dr. Walter A. Ruhling, Chief Physician of the St. Louis (Mo.) city dispensary has stated that there were 3,587 cases of alcoholism in that city in 1918, and 2,690 in 1919, war-time prohibition having begun July 1st.



The Philadelphia (Pa.) General Hospital which cared for 3,481 alcoholic patients in 1917 and 2,326 in 1918 has closed its alcoholic ward.

Dr. Karl Meyer of the great Cook County Hospital (Chicago, Ill.), stated in the New York *Evening Post*:

"We practically have no alcoholic patients any more. The typical hospital bum seems to have disappeared."

Dr. John Robertson, Health Commissioner of Chicago, said in the *Chicago Journal*: "Facts speak for themselves. We had 235 cases of alcoholic pneumonia in the county hospital in September, 1917, 230 in September, 1918 and 71 in September, 1919."

Dr. Walter S. Goodale, Superintendent of the Buffalo Municipal Hospital states that there has been a reduction of alcoholic patients from an annual average of 408 to 75.

Bellevue Hospital of New York which formerly cared for about 1,000 male and over 300 female alcoholic patients monthly, now (Dr. Jewett, Sept., 1920) has from 100 to 200 male patients and from 25 to 50 female patients.

The New York *Evening Post* quoted Dr. G. Kramer Brighton as saying that in seven hospitals under his control "The intoxicated lodging house and rounder type is now the exception while he was the rule."

The New York State Board of Inebriety has requested the legislature to dissolve it.

Dr. Chapin, City Physician, Providence, R. I., reports (Sept., 1920) the deaths from alcoholism as follows:

1917, 35 deaths; 1918, 12 deaths; 1919, 8 deaths; 1920, to Aug. 1, 1 death.

The record of deaths from alcoholism in the state of Virginia is as follows:†

1913, 65 deaths; 1914, 72 deaths; 1915, 65 deaths; 1916, 60 deaths (state Prohibition went into effect Nov. 30); 1917, 20 deaths; 1918, 19 deaths; 1919, 25 deaths.

The reports of the Health Department of the City of New York as published in the *Weekly Bulletin* of the Department show the number of deaths directly due to alcoholism as follows:

1916, 660 deaths; 1917, 557 deaths; 1918, 243 deaths; 1919, 176 deaths, of which 133 occurred in the first six months; 1920, to Aug. 14, 80 deaths.

#### GENERAL HEALTH

Dr. Woods Hutchinson writing of the health results of prohibition (*Saturday Evening Post*, March 20, 1920) said: "In New York City in 1919, there were more than two thousand fewer deaths from tuberculosis than the average of previous years and nearly fifteen hundred less deaths from diarrheal diseases of infancy.<sup>8</sup> Teachers in the industrial and tenement districts of cities are reporting almost unanimously that their children are coming to them better dressed, better fed and in better physical condition than before. They seem to be less nervous and less easily tired and their standing in both school work and in conduct is distinctly higher than it was last year.

"On inquiry many of them frankly reply that:

" 'Mother gets more of dad's wages than she used to and we get better eats and more of them.' "

Frederick D. Green, Secretary of the United Hospital Fund of New York City states: "Alcoholism has clogged our hospital systems with unnecessary cases of sickness and accidents. . . . Physicians, nurses, equipment, time, space and food have been pre-empted by alcoholics while other patients have been denied admission. . . . Recent figures gathered by the United Hospital Fund show, that in New York City alone, thanks to prohibition, 7,000 beds have been released for the care of maternity, mental, tuberculosis and general cases."

Seven hundred vacancies for tuberculosis patients are reported in the Departmental Hospital and 300 vacancies in the private hospitals of New York since prohibition became effective. According to Dr. Dillingham of St. Joseph's Hospital, this decrease is largely due to prohibition. The man who drank much and ate little, contracting consumption and developing hemorrhages, has practically disappeared.

Dr. Wm. A. Evans, formerly Health Commissioner of Chicago, states: "As well as public health men can judge by the one year of experience, prohibition will make it easier to control certain types of contagion. For instance, last winter in Chicago the County Hospital had very few cases of pneumonia from the lodging houses of the old week-end cases, when in former years the wards were full of them. For some reason the death rates are now unnaturally low. Whether this is in any measure due to the high wages and the fact that less of the household money goes to booze and more to care of family is a question that is difficult to decide."

Health Commissioner Royal S. Copeland of New York City announced in January, 1920,<sup>8</sup> that the general death rate in that city was lower in 1919 than in any year "since the establishment of accurate vital statistics, fifty years." Fifty-three years ago at the time of the organization of the Health Department the death-rate was a little over 28 per 1,000 of the population. The death-rate in 1919 was 12.39 per 1,000 as compared with 16.71 in 1918, and an average of 13.94 for the five-year period, 1913-1917. The deaths in 1919 numbered 74,433 against 98,119 during 1918. There was "an unprecedented drop in mortality from tuberculosis of the lungs."\* (For deaths from alcoholism see page 140).

Not only New York, but Chicago, Washington, New Orleans, Detroit, Newark, N. J., Providence, R. I. and Dayton, Ohio, now have the lowest death rates in their history. It seems reasonably certain this condition exists in other cities. Newark, N. J., had 6,205 deaths in 1917, 8,483 in 1918, 5,316 in 1919, and 3,891 in

<sup>8</sup>In evidence of the fact that this lowered mortality from tuberculosis in 1919 was not the consequence of a heavy death-rate among the tuberculous by influenza in 1918, the report says:  
"It was evident during the epidemic of influenza that persons suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis were not at all affected by the prevailing epidemic. Apparently tuberculosis conferred a relative degree of protection against the epidemic so that the mortality from tuberculosis was not decreased by reason of the influenza infection. As to the cause or causes which have led to decreased mortality during the year, it is fair to assume that with the city and country as prosperous as it had never been before, and keeping in mind that tuberculosis is not only a disease of infection, but also one of nutrition, a decrease in the mortality therefrom was most probably partly the result of great improvement in living."  
How much prohibition contributed to this "improvement in living" can not be estimated, but that it was a factor can not be doubted.—Ed.



1920 to September 20. The influenza epidemic made the 1918 death rate abnormal. The general population of the city has increased about 2.9 per cent. annually. The average death rate of New Orleans from 1910 to 1919 was 19.80. The 1919 rate was 18.21.

#### PROHIBITION AND INSANITY

Alcohol causes insanity, as a single direct cause, as a cause of alcoholic heredity, and as a contributing cause where several factors have together impaired mental health.

A census taken by the National Committee for Mental Hygiene of New York, in 1918 showed that there were 239,820 cases of insanity in the United States at that time.

Of these cases, 167,469 were in the 24 license states which had at that time 64,536,527 population as estimated by the census bureau, or 259 insane people for each 100,000 of population.

Sixty-seven thousand one hundred forty-four (67,144) of the cases of insanity were in the District of Columbia and 24 states having an estimated population of 38,787,968 which had been under state-wide prohibition for a period varying from one to seventy years, or 173 cases of insanity for each 100,000 people in the dry territory.

Insanity has other causes besides alcohol, but it overshadows all others in the relative proportion of insanity in wet and dry states.

A large proportion of population in cities in the license states does not explain their excess of insanity as the high rates of insanity in Nevada (224), Montana (232), Wisconsin (313), and California (325) indicate.

There is no reason for believing that city life is less favorable for mental health, than rural life, other than drink and the poverty, misery, and vice which drink often causes or is related to. California as one of the license states has had a high insanity rate compared with other license states of large urban population as follows: California 325, New York 367, New Jersey 254.7, Connecticut 333, Massachusetts 376.

For the last biennial period ending June 30, 1918, for which a report has been issued, the State Commissioners in Lunacy in California report that of 2,580 cases admitted, the causes of which were known, *1,115 were caused by intemperance, alcoholism and dissipation.*

The Commission is composed of Governor William D. Stephens, Frank C. Jordan, Secretary of State, U. S. Webb, Attorney-General, Dr. F. W. Hatch, General Superintendent of State Hospitals and Dr. W. H. Kellogg, Secretary of State Board of Health.

According to the Census Bureau reports the whole population of the United States increased during the seven years ending Jan. 1, 1917, 11.80 per cent., whereas during the same period insanity increased 24.64 per cent. For a long time the insane have been increasing more rapidly than the entire population in every license state.

The rapid increase has taxed the capacity of hospitals, the ingenuity of authorities and the resources of state treasuries.

The first ray of hope, the first prospect of relief, the first encouraging news, in a generation, on the insanity problem of our nation has come from the adoption of national prohibition.

From many great hospitals evidence is coming that the flood has been checked, that the admissions are no longer increasing but have begun to diminish.

From Stockton, Norwalk and Mendocino hospitals in California, Morris Plains and Trenton hospitals of New Jersey, Farnhurst of Delaware, the Springfield of Maryland, Norwich of Connecticut, Middletown and Bloomingdale, N. Y., Worcester of Massachusetts, Mendota and Northern of Wisconsin, Western of Washington and the State Hospital of Oregon come reports of decreased admissions.\*

A. L. Brown of the Department of Public Welfare of Illinois writes (Sept. 2, 1920): "There has been a reduction in the number of alcoholic patients received in the state hospitals of Illinois."

Two years ago strange news came across the sea. At that time when the horrors and anxieties and sorrow of war overshadowed all Europe, when food was scarce and drink unobtainable our people were surprised by cablegrams that insanity was decreasing in Vienna and Berlin.

We now know that along with this improved mental health, in Germany at least, there was better average physical health.

Arthur Hunter, actuary of the New York Life Insurance Company stated to the *New York Globe*:

"I have had compiled the mortality experience of our company during the first four years of war, Aug. 1, 1914 to July 31, 1918, with the following remarkable results:

"First. Our total mortality in Germany, by amounts, during the four years is found to be 95 per cent. of the company's standard mortality.

"Second. Our total mortality in Germany during the eleven years prior to the war (1902 to 1913 inclusive), by amounts, was 107 per cent. of the same standard.

"Hence it is apparent that the mortality during the four years of war was about 12 per cent. better, including war losses, than in the preceding eleven years of peace.

"It is probable that this has been the result of restriction in diet, limitation in the consumption of alcoholic beverages and a large amount of exercise which the Germans of middle life, the bulk of our insured, have had to stand.

\*Inquiries from Massachusetts insane hospitals (August, 1920) elicited the natural reply from several that it is too early yet to expect the results of prohibition to appear to any considerable extent in reducing insanity. Northampton State Hospital had seen "a marked decrease in the number of admissions with alcohol as a cause. The Westborough superintendent was of the same opinion. At Bridgewater State Farm, where criminal insane are sent, "the alcoholic psychoses appear to be fewer." Boston State Hospital's admissions of alcoholic insanities for the year, Oct. 1, 1918, to Sept. 30, 1919, were 118; from Oct. 1, 1919, to July 31, 1920, they were 35. The rate of admissions of alcoholic insanities to all admissions fell from 6.94 per cent to 2.61 per cent. At Danvers State Hospital, the total admissions for the two periods, Oct. 1, 1918-Aug. 27, 1919, and Oct. 1, 1919-Aug. 27, 1920, were respectively 685 and 585. For the year Oct. 1, 1918-Sept. 30, 1919, the alcoholic diagnoses were 57; for the period Oct. 1, 1919-Aug. 27, 1920, 30.—EDITOR.



"Statistics of the seven leading American insurance companies prove conclusively that a higher mortality must be expected among those who drink freely, although not to the point of intoxication than among the total abstainers."

The Journal of the American Medical Association, May 15, 1920, stated:

"The benefits of temperance to the thousands of men in the armies can scarcely be debated.

"An elaborate investigation by a commission of scientists and clinicians for the German government and published in 1919 affords interesting conclusions for the civilian population of a country accustomed to liberal indulgence in alcoholic drinks." "It appears particularly from the report of Professor Partsch, that in Prussia, as a result of restricted drinking, there was an extraordinary decrease of chronic alcoholism and the mental disorders attendant on it.

"Related bodily illnesses were also diminished.

"The decrease in physical maladies was widespread, not being confined to any portion of the empire.

*"If temperance enforced by the exigencies of a War has in truth exercised a highly beneficial influence on the nations, the problem of retaining its essential benefits is surely one worthy of consideration in any propaganda for the public health."*

Alcohol endangers and kills. Prohibition saves and protects life and health.

We would appeal to every man who cares for the welfare of our common humanity, to stand for loyal obedience to what is now the fundamental law of our nation, and we urge with all our heart and strength that the policy which is bringing happiness to a multitude of American homes be carried to all the earth.

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>*Weekly Bulletin* of Dept. of Health, City of N. Y., June 15, 1914.

<sup>2</sup>*Mugler vs. Kansas*, 123 U. S. 205.

<sup>3</sup>Arthur Hunter, Chairman Central Bureau Medico-Actuarial Mortality Investigation: "Can Insurance Experience Be Applied to Lengthen Life?" Dec. 10, 1914.

<sup>4</sup>American Year Book, 1919.

<sup>5</sup>Dr. S. Josephine Baker and Dr. Jacob Sobel in *Monthly Bulletin* of Dept. of Health, City of N. Y., June, 1920.

<sup>6</sup>*Monthly Bulletin* of Dept. of Health, City of N. Y., Jan., 1920.

<sup>7</sup>Dr. W. A. Plecker, State Registrar of Virginia. Letter to Scientific Temperance Federation, June 9, 1920.

<sup>8</sup>*Weekly Bulletin* of Dept. of Health, City of N. Y., Jan. 17, 1920.

#### OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

World Almanac, 1920.

Anti-Saloon League Year Book, 1920.

Hospital Superintendents, Stockton, Norwalk and Mendocino, Cal.; Mendota, Wis.; Trenton and Morris Plains, N. J.; Farnhurst, Del.; Norwich, Conn.; Westborough, Worcester, Danvers, Northampton, Boston State and Bridgewater State Farm, Mass.; Illinois Board of Control; San Francisco (Cal.) Board of Health.