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Are "Dry" Nations Doomed?

Alcohol "A Divine Gift"---What Happens When It Is Dropped?

By Colonel Sir Ronald Ross, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., F.R.S.
(In the Liverpool Weekly Post.)

The experiment now being made by the United States is certainly the greatest social experiment of recent times. It is a scientific experiment as distinct from the numerous political experiments to which men are so much more addicted--such as experiments in autocracy, democracy, centralism, devolution, and so on, in which I for one have little faith because they show very small results as regards real enhancement of prosperity, which is the main point. The States have set out to determine by trial whether alcohol increases the total happiness of a nation or not. In the first place, a nation which possesses the self-discipline to stop its drink and its smoke when it pleases is, like an individual who can do the same, capable of going further than those with less will-power; and secondly, if the answer to the question is decisive, that nation will have done a service, not only to itself, but to the whole of humanity.

The Subtle Effect of Alcohol.

Personally, I am by no means clear as to what the answer will be. Like other men of science I hope that I have always listened to both sides of the question. I have allowed myself alcohol and tobacco off and on for more than forty years, and certainly wish that I now had the money I have spent on them. But I can stop my alcohol with ease, whenever I like; have often discontinued it experimentally for months at a time; and generally drop it during my holidays. On the other hand, when I was a young man in India I did as the other young officers there did--drank what we pleased. I have never seen young men so fit and competent. Up at daybreak, parade at 6 a.m., work all day, polo or tennis at 5 p.m., three or four drinks before dinner, billiards or cards (with cigarettes) and bed near midnight! I am now shocked at the memory; but the fact remains that I for one did my best work under these conditions.

What do I observe in myself when I stop alcohol? Simply that teetotaling gives me the placid contentment, let us say, of a cow. There is no fret in my engines. Everything works smoothly. Nothing matters. I do not mind losing umbrellas or trains, or having my pet scientific theories

controverted, or books reviewed. I am like the "dry" Hindus who will wait peacefully for days at a country railway station for the next train which will provide room for them. And, if I have really hard, fixed continuous work to do, I drop alcohol immediately and absolutely. But there is a difference. Without alcohol I have little of that "divine discontent" which, after all, is the great originating and impelling masculine force in life. It is, of course, not mere temporary stimulation of wine that I am talking of, but the general and subtle effect of it on the whole habit of the body--induced in me by so small a dose as one glass of claret a day. It loses for me the placidity of the meadow and drives me into the activity of the city. Personally, perhaps I prefer the former; but I am not sure that it is the only state in which men should live.

Docile and Active Nations.

This is merely an individual case. Let us compare wet and dry nations in the mass. I strongly suspect (though I am not sure) that alcohol has the same effect on entire nations as it has on my humble self. To-day nearly the whole of China, India, and the vast semi-savage tracts of the tropics are dry, while Europe and the Children of Europe are wet. Yes, but for the stimulus of Europe the former nations would probably have been at the present day in precisely the same state as they were in thousands of years ago. It is the wet nations that have made the really great philosophies, sciences, and arts of the world. Probably even India and China were wet in their great and progressive epochs. Now they have become like the cows in the meadows. The "pathetic contentment" of the Indian populations which Mr. Montague innocently ascribes to their political condition, is much more probably due to the fact that they seldom touch alcohol. Even after taking race and climate into account, I think that the non-alcoholic nations are more hard-working but less inventive, more docile but less vigorous, than the alcoholic nations. Similar differences are apparent among individuals, and the drunkard is generally by nature a strong man until indulgence ruins him.

A scientific study of the effect of alcohol on civilization would be interesting, but we can get little information from the anthropologists as to the date when alcohol probably came into use. It has possibly been drunk in northern Europe for hundreds of thousands of years--not only for itself but for the vitamins contained in fermented liquors; and "wet" votaries may argue that such drinks have almost become a part of the food of northern Europeans. These great relics of unwritten history, the Greek and other mythological tales, record the introduction of alcohol as a divine gift. Dionysus appears originally to have been the god of genius; and the wise and great picture by Velazquez on the Prado, showing Bacchus and Mars drinking wine with the peasant, contains only benign suggestions--though it is true that the old man in the right hand corner of the picture looks on doubtfully! But the gods always send their gifts to men by the hand of the Nemesis named Excess; and however beneficial a little pure

neighbours; and alcohol has probably modified history much more than our politicians and historians suppose.



For Little Tots on Chilly Mornings.

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wine may be to temperate persons, the prohibition of Mahomet seems to show that the decision of his time was that, on the average, alcohol is bad for the mass of the people, at least in warm climates. The American experiment will most probably lead to the same conclusion for temperate climates.

When Alcohol Should Be Used.

From results of experiments on myself I entirely disagree with the finding of a recent commission, and conclude that the effect on my own health is certainly very largely "drink." All spirits disagree with me--the quality of the medicinal spirit least of all and alleged Highland whisky most. Beer and cider give me "liver," and light wines suit me best. But above all, I find that the habitual use of alcohol at meals, even in small doses, is the worst thing for me--it gives me too much of the "divine discontent." On the other hand, after a week or more of abstinence, a banquet (especially with a City company) does me "a world of good." That is the proper way to approach Bacchus. Do not worry him with diurnal libations. He is a god only at festivals. If used at all alcohol should be used only occasionally.

The teetotaler will have something of a case if he argues that the fact made by German beer, that Bolshevism is vodka, and that the Irish question is whisky. I do not go so far; but I think that national over-indulgence in these drinks may quite possibly produce pathological conditions of national opinion, which may lead to very grave results. When temperate the nation may be annoying or dangerous to the whole world, just as the individual may be to his

neighbours; and alcohol has probably modified history much more than our politicians and historians suppose.

Salvation Army's Jubilee.

The present year marks a jubilee genuinely golden; it is the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Salvation Army, by the late Rev. Wm. Booth, (afterward more widely known as General Booth), with the assistance of his wife, Catherine Booth. Both were possessed of remarkable organizing gifts, and began by preaching in the streets of London in 1865. Five years later they had succeeded in forming a definite organization to carry on the work of reaching a class of people, many of whom were degraded and only by the remotest chance were ever lured into a religious convulsion. At first the organization was called "The Christian Mission," and it was not until 1878 that the idea of organizing its work on the military model and making it universal in scope was put into effect. The picturesque title "Salvation Army" dates from 1880.

It is singular how many religious communions, including the early Christian Church itself, have had their beginnings in street preaching. Like most other religious societies, the Army also experienced its baptism of persecution--and flourished under it. Many readers will recall the ridicule bestowed on its pioneer members in Canada--a ridicule which they in some measure invited by the extravagance of their methods and utterances. All these crudities have since been cured, and the Army has become a vast and beneficent agency of practical Christianity. The genius for organization did not depart from its counsels with the deaths of the elder Booths, and the fact that it has 308 corps in Eastern Canada alone is evidence of sound and remarkable growth.

To-day there is no religious society that enjoys quite so much of the good-will of all classes of the community as the Salvation Army. The reason for this is that its members no longer criticize the older churches but refrain from religious controversy. The greatness of the Army's influence for good is based on the fact that it aims to cure the body as well as the soul, and to ameliorate the sufferings inflicted on innocent people by vice and poverty. Its greatest merit as a charitable institution in connection with its benefactions--almost a new idea when first adopted by the Salvation Army, and now universally recognized as the true theory of charitable energy. Of its services in connection with the late war it is hardly necessary to

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nov29,eod,tf

speaks, except to say that every soldier who was at the front regards the Salvation Army with the friendliest eyes--Saturday Night.

Life of a Gun.

Sooner or later the progress of erosion is certain to impair the accuracy of fire, and upon this the life of a gun depends.

Erosion is caused by the action of the explosive gases at high temperature and pressure. The hot gases cause a thin film of steel to absorb heat. The film expands and becomes set. Upon the release of the pressure it contracts, which action causes minute cracks that grow larger with every discharge. As they increase in size they form passageways for more hot gas, and that tends to enlarge them still further. The inner surface thus becomes roughened and the bands begin to corrode.

Finally, the bore becomes so enlarged that it allows the gases to escape. The shell does not then acquire its proper rotation, and its flight becomes erratic. All guns, except small ones, are now constructed with linings in the tube, which, when the

bore is worn out, are removed and replaced by new ones.

The cost of relining a gun is approximately 30 per cent. of the cost of the gun. There appears to be limit to the number of times the gun can be relined.

Small naval guns can be relined 1,000 times before they are regarded as worn out. Large 12-inch and 16-inch naval guns are considered to have a life, on one lining, of from 200 to 300 rounds. Low velocity guns, such as howitzers and mortars, correspondingly longer lives than velocity guns of the same calibre, because of the pressures they develop and hence the lower temperature.

"Brick's Tasteless." The who takes it must eat. \$1.20 bottle. Post 20c. extra. mar29,tf

BARTLETT RELIEF FUND--yesterday's list of donors toward Bartlett Fire Relief Fund, per Leonard L. Jeeves, Rector of Cathedral Parish, the name of Church of England Institute, members were among the most numerous subscribers, was inadvertently omitted.



MUTT AND JEFF--

AN OPTIMIST ONE MINUTE AND A PESSIMIST THE NEXT--THAT'S JEFF.

By Bud Fisher.

