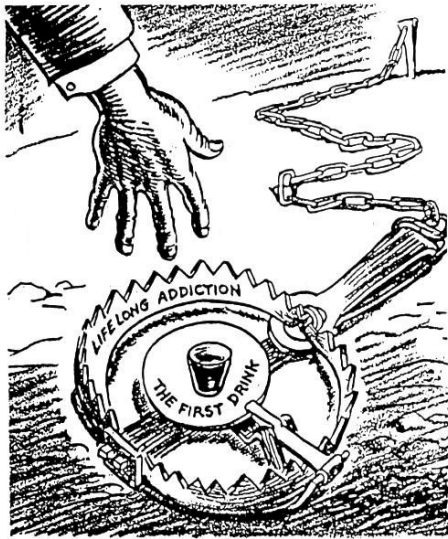


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Alcoholism: the real culprit

Does the liquor dealer's moral responsibility end with the sale of his products?

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After more than 70,000 "research" studies on the subject of alcoholism, many of them underwritten by the liquor traffic or those under its domination, the world still is befuddled about its nature. "Few acceptable research designs have been carried out which would yield valuable scientific information,"¹ although "excellent articles [have been] published periodically reviewing the faults of previous studies and pointing clearly to what needs to be done in the way of research methodology."² "Data collecting methods were generally found to be so inept that no reliance could be placed on the reported findings."³ "The median level of effort remains at such a relatively sophisticated level that most studies were both scientifically and practically unproductive."⁴ Much of this "research" seems to be an attempt by the liquor traffic propagandists to place the blame for alcoholism some other place, any old place at all, rather than on the alcohol itself.

Clapp expresses the opinions of most authorities when he says: "We believe that there is no evidence available that established social or psychological factors are the cause of alcoholism, but that alcohol alone is the cause of alcoholism. Often the attempt is made to attribute to some personality defect or a psychological problem the reason for drinking, in order that we may avoid admitting that we are a drinking society. No

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previous psychological problems are necessary for a person to contract alcoholism.",

At the Yale School of Alcohol Studies, Dr. E. M. Jellinek once said (and it is still true to today): "While all authorities probably agree that certain personality types incur a greater risk in the use of alcohol than others, no completely convincing effort has yet been made strictly to define the types. In fact, so confusing are the suggestions, that grave doubt may arise whether there is any person who may not have some trait which might result in alcoholism.

"In a complex society, with so many tensions at work, we have the neurotic or diseased personalities. It is natural that they should take recourse to intoxication to a larger degree than others. They probably constitute 40 percent of the inebriate population, but 60 percent come to alcoholism from an entirely normal origin and only in the course of drink. They are not seeking release: They are conforming to certain habits of their set. Any normal person may become an alcoholic."⁶

I could quote more authorities, but in this short essay these should be sufficient to get my point across. Alcoholism does run in families: the child of an alcoholic is more likely to become an alcoholic (up to 50 percent more likely). It has not yet been scientifically proved whether there is a hereditary alcoholic thirst; however, Ellen White says: "Think of the children, robbed of home comforts, education, and training, living in terror of him who should be their pride and protection, thrust into the world, bearing the brand of shame, often with the hereditary curse of the drunkard's thirst."?

Recently, however, overwhelming evidence has been discovered of a link between maternal alcoholic intake and patterns of malformations in the fetus. "The offspring of chronically alcoholic women are at the highest risk, but clinical studies show that even moderate drinking during the first few weeks of pregnancy can adversely effect fetal development."⁸ "Every drop of strong drink taken by...[the mother] to gratify appetite endangers the physical, mental, and moral health of her child, and is a direct sin against her Creator."⁹

The Irish are said to be more prone to alcoholism than some other nationalities. I spent a week in Ireland recently and observed the almost overwhelming pressure to drink. As the tourist views castles and museums, free drinks are included as part of the admission price.

It is claimed that Jewish people are less likely to develop alcoholism. This may be true, but as a physician I have treated many Jewish alcoholics.

It is a well-known fact that some persons can use intoxicants for long periods without becoming addicts. It is also well known that some teen-agers can become problem drinkers almost from the first drink. A third fact, possibly not so well known, is that no doctor or scientist can tell anyone after his first drink whether or not he will be able to call a halt. This simply means that many mothers and fathers who thoughtlessly serve beer, wine, and sometimes stronger liquid refreshments in their homes are providing the

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environment for the development of problem drinking in their offspring (in 43 percent of the boys and 21 percent of the girls)¹⁰ and that almost one out of two of these boys and girls will go on to alcoholism.

These will be the kind of imbibers who spend their last dime on liquor. The pace is pretty fast, and hobnail livers, worn-out kidneys, twisted brains, and burned-out stomachs are systematically retiring some of the old-timers to hospital wards, insane asylums, and quiet cemetery nooks. The liquor traffic is in need of new drinkers to step into their places.

That's precisely why the brewers, wine merchants, and distillers are eager to induce our youth to acquire a taste for beer and wine, and, of course, later for stronger stuff. "Get 'em young, and you've got 'em for life"-that's the coldblooded, cynical philosophy of the drink barons. What do they care whether their products leave a stream of broken, twisted lives in their wake? Whether their patrons end up in hospitals, insane asylums, penitentiaries, or as destitute wards of the State or county welfare departments?

Once his products are sold, the liquor dealer's responsibility is discharged. At least that is what he thinks. If someone points out his moral responsibility, and the fact that decent people think such responsibility continues beyond the sale, he'll look at the person blankly. Moral or ethical values cannot be measured on a cash register, and precisely for that reason he does not know what you are talking about. But step on his financial toes and he will scream like a wounded panther!

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