

# Let's Be Intelligent About Alcohol Greer Garson on "Caesar"

GO back as far as you will in history, alcohol has been used for good or ill. Greek and early Roman philosophers spoke against it, but the Romans later used it to excess. Indian tribes before Christ believed their God, Indra, could do valiant deeds only when under the influence of alcohol. England not so long ago was very intemperate. You could get drunk on gin for twopence. The Pilgrim Fathers did not make alcohol a religious issue. Some developed a taste for rum. In modern society, the world over, alcohol has a distinct place. It is being used with increasing freedom, and, because of this, it is being regarded by some as a cultural need.

Alcohol has uses and abuses. In medicine it is less in vogue than formerly. It is still used to sterilise the skin. It is still used as an astringent and cooling lotion, and also to toughen the skin—for example, rubbing with alcohol to prevent bedsores. In the stomach alcohol can irritate and damage the lining, if too concentrated, and excess ends up in nausea and vomiting. Small amounts in plenty of fluid interfere in no way with the digestion or absorption of food. In fact, tiredness, worries or tenseness, are offset, a jaded appetite is restored, and a meal can be enjoyed, after small amounts of alcohol, where it would have been unattractive without this help. On the nervous system alcohol is a depressant. At first there seems to be a livening up and stimulation. Remember the gradually increasing ease of social contact, the clamour of the voices and the rising crescendo of sound from conversation at cocktail parties! This is the depressant action on the brain, lessening our self-control. You seem to speak better and with more ease, shyness goes,



Spencer Digby

THIS is the text of a talk on health broadcast recently from the ZB, YA and YZ stations of the NZBS by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Deputy - Director - General of Health.

judgment between the trivial and the important and respect for the conventions is less—all this apparent stimulation and new freedom is illusory. In short, it's just that our normal inhibitions aren't working properly.

Alcohol, in small doses, doesn't upset the ability to do work of an automatic or reflex nature. It used to be given to sailors and soldiers, getting worn out in tight corners, to postpone exhaustion and to enable them to carry on a bit longer. Drugs like benzedrine have been used instead nowadays. But alcohol is a bad friend where a task calls for concentration and attention to detail. Judgment of speed and distance is interfered with if alcohol and car driving are mixed. In a controlled test, a large whisky containing 1 oz. of alcohol, increased the driver's speed by 25 per cent and his errors by 40 per cent.

Alcohol has food value, but is not a good food. You can only absorb about half an ounce an hour. Sugar, as glucose, is a better emergency food, and doctors no longer prescribe alcohol as a food. Taken steadily, beyond moderate quantities, alcohol interferes with food absorption, and gives the liver and kidneys extra unnecessary work to do, and irritates both. When you have a hangover from too free imbibing the night before, you are having a combined

protest from stomach, intestines and liver—a self-induced bilious attack. There are all sorts of stories about, as to the avoidance of these hangovers. All that these "avoiders" do is to delay the absorption of alcohol. For example, milk is probably the best at slowing absorption, and I guess that is the rationale of whisky and milk.

An average healthy adult on a good diet can take alcohol in moderation and keep healthy. My authority for this is that of the statistical expert of John Hopkins Medical School, U.S.A. Moderate drinkers live as long as do total abstainers, but heavy drinkers shorten their life span. A Life Insurance investigation compared policy-holders who were moderate drinkers, insured at normal rates, with another group of policy-holders who went on the binge in bouts lasting two to three days, but only did this three times a year. Their relative mortality compared with the moderates was 331 per cent.

We have to be intelligent about alcohol. It's a poison with a narrow margin of beneficial use. If we take alcohol our safety depends on moderation. What is moderation? An American authority defines it as two cocktails or highballs a day, taken before, during, or after the evening meal—more than this shortens your life.

FOOTNOTE ON BEER.—New Zealanders are much addicted to beer, which in this country is six to seven parts per cent proof spirit, compared with roughly 75 per cent for gin and whisky. This means that it takes a little more than 10 times the amount of beer, by volume, to produce the effect of a given quantity of spirits. A guide to moderation may be found in the assumption that one ounce of whisky or gin is roughly the equivalent of 10 ounces of beer.

A DISGRACE Hollywood will never be allowed to forget is its production of a film entitled "The Taming of the Shrew," by William Shakespeare, with additional dialogue by Sam Taylor. But even Hollywood has grown up a little since it perpetrated that one, and a recent M.G.M. production of *Julius Caesar* has been greeted by critics as good film and competent Shakespeare.

The filming of *Julius Caesar* was not, however, without its problems. In a recent lecture at London University—her own Alma Mater—Greer Garson, who plays Calpurnia, outlined some of them. There is, for instance, a gentle-



GREER GARSON  
Shakespeare was the star

(Solution to No. 691)

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## Clues Across

- Even if you guess this correctly it won't be right.
- I'm confused in a dream, if this is what I see.
- Mean, but not miserly.
- A white animal with black stripes, or a black one with white stripes?
- It sounds a useful sort of headgear, but actually it's a disadvantage.
- Soft spot for Achilles?
- Or in reverse before a depression.
- This kind of falcon is also a magician.

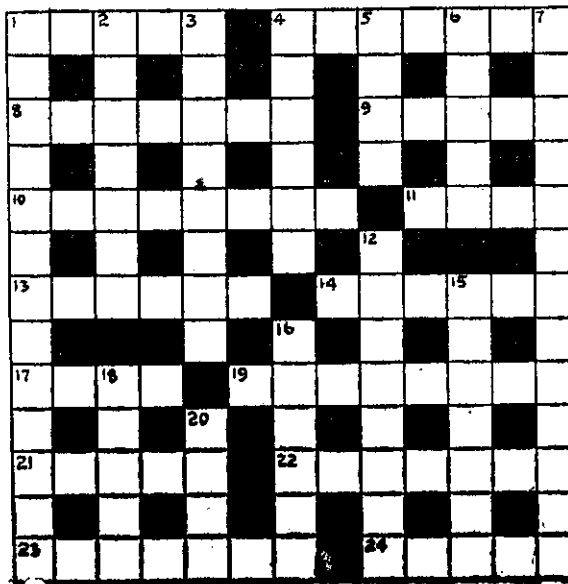
## "THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

- Behead more than one 11 across.
- Blocks of ice solve his housing problem.
- Bounce nob.
- Permanent.
- One of these is unusual, even for a 4 across.
- Scandinavian epics.
- Drives back.
- Small arctic 13 across.
- Square hewn stone.
- Nothing after a fish is a queer way of talking.
- Untidy company feeding together?

No. 692 (Constructed by R.W.H.)

## Clues Down

- A clap of thunder, perhaps?
- Sea nymph—here's a nice adol!
- Pass away in the midst of a concession, this may be a bit steep!
- Bacchante.
- It sounds the opposite of its sense, which is to wipe out.
- There's no start to the ramble here.
- Are these the means of communication of ghosts?



men's agreement among studios about the use of titles. M.G.M. was well down the list for the Shakespeare play and was forced to wait some years. It was finally obtained somewhat earlier than anticipated, only because David O. Selznick agreed to exchange his right to it for the right to the title *Teenager*, which he needed for Shirley Temple.

In the casting, too, not everything was straightforward. Marlon Brando's most notable success had been his playing of the male animal Kowalski in *Streetcar Named Desire*. "There was a good deal of eyebrow lifting," said Miss Garson, "when it was announced that he would play Mark Antony. People seemed to think the dialogue would become a sort of Stanley Kowalski variation on a theme of Shakespeare, and that he might say: 'I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him, ain't dat right, Blanche?'" Brando's performance was, however, one of the most successful of the film, and Miss Garson was moved to say: "I think his is one of the most important acting gifts of our generation, and I can only say that I watched with admiration his intense concentration and devotion to this task."

A recording of Greer Garson's talk, given for the King's College Union Society of London University, will be broadcast by all ZB stations and 2ZA at 20 p.m. on Sunday, May 2.

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 23, 1954