

A Policewoman's Experience with Beverage Alcoholic Problems

By VIOLET HILL WHYTE

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Of all inducements to antisocial behaviour, to acute delinquent acts, or to the commission of crime, beverage alcohol is, I believe, the most frequent cause and the most speedy contributor to violations of law and order.

We will agree that it is easily secured and may be quickly consumed. We will agree that no two individuals react exactly alike after drinking.

We will agree that frequently it transforms a good citizen into a bad citizen, an unobtrusive quiet man into a relentless murderer, a citizen of good repute into a rapist who will kill to satisfy his lust, a business man with a good family background into a desperate, determined burglar, or a care-free happy youth into a surly, unmoral sex delinquent or thief.

Beverage alcohol is a known deceiver, a blackout for illicit acts of every kind, a defence mechanism for the unwary, the disillusioned, the frustrated—in other words, many thousands of persons who need spiritual or social guidance, medicine, or surgery take a drink because of a lack of courage to face facts or to face man or God.

Character is a beautiful flower, but in little children it is an exceedingly frail plant, one that needs air, sunshine, pure water, careful handling. In my work I see countless little children who live in back rooms behind the corner bar, children who travel up and down rickety steps over "Paradise Inn" or "Charlie's Bar" or "The Ritzy Hole" or "Slimey's Cafe," or who nightly go up three-foot alleys to "my home"—the children who constitute a large section of the masses. These children see men and women drink; they listen to men and women using profane language while drinking; they see men engaged in indecent exposure and other revolting acts; they see women (sometimes their own mothers) vomit on the streets; and yet we expect them to be girls and boys who will conduct themselves according to Christian standards of right and wrong. These girls and boys have no fear of God or man. They do not fear God because they do not know Him. They do not fear man because he has no respect for himself.

As an officer of the law I see older youth as they are coaxed or persuaded towards delinquent action, many times by mature and hardened frequenters of the streets or slums. I see some of the innately finest take their first steps in the direction of the "underworld"—through late hours, in questionable company, at commercial dances, patronising the alluring walking bars.

That First Bottle of Beer

Often I handle cases of high school and college age youths in a bewildering

state of sex receptivity because of the effects of the social cocktail, stalwart youth suddenly become timid, listless, or perhaps incoherent, restless or even incorrigible because of that first bottle of beer.

I listen time and time again to their explanations, "I don't understand why one bottle of beer should do me this way," or "Honestly mam, all I had was one cocktail. No, I did not buy it—a man gave it to me."

Often I feel a twinge of pity for the mass of youth who are restless and confused because of adult misdoing, because of the wholesale licensing of places to sell alcoholic liquor; youth who have thrown aside tradition, education, family, and even home because they love the seductive music; they love dancing (the kind you cannot understand); they love beverage alcohol and are powerless to resist it. It is not easy to resist the tavern in the slums, where it is the only bright spot.

These same young people—many of whom come from substandard homes—love luxury, just as you and I. All in all they travel in gangs that seek soft lights, music, comradeship, cocktails—they find what they want in the brothels of our cities, in the jitterbug dance halls where alcoholic beverages are sneaked in, if not sold openly.

My sympathies are with those young people. It is the aiding, abetting, conniving of adults that gives me grave concern. My experience has taught me that when a teenage girl stays out all night and sometimes many nights, it is likely that she will have mastered many of the primary lessons in acute delinquency before we can find her. She will boast of how much she can drink. I know that when young men become over-aggressive, unruly, defiant, it very often indicates involvement with criminals or other adults who are really responsible for the misbehaviour being evidenced.

Beverage alcohol paves the way for a "multitude of sins." I see it as a master key, a key that will open the main gate in the huge circus tent. Once inside, youth leisurely takes in side show after side show, each one different, perhaps more exciting, most certainly more alluring. A drink of whisky and the adolescent youth joins the crowd in a gambling joint. A drink of gin or whisky or rum and he (or she) becomes a party to prostitution. A drink of any intoxicating liquor and men and women of every age often behave in a manner below the level of the lowest animal. Beverage alcohol usually is on hand also where there are other narcotics and frequently the alcohol is the tool that

prepares the individual for addiction to other habit-forming drugs.

During my eight years' experience as a policewoman I have covered every type of crime and delinquent act generally discovered and brought to the attention of law enforcement officers. Through careful study and observation I truthfully can say that the majority of crimes I have investigated were committed by men and women and young people either while directly under the influence of beverage alcohol or during the period when the drinker exclaims, "I'm all right now, I'm all right. You see I was drinking, but I'm all right now."

Why and Where the Dangerous Criminal Starts

With God, all things are possible, but surely one needs to know the extent of underworld pressure on youth of to-day. One needs to know how bloodthirsty the scavengers of vice and crime are to make recruits and to what extent they go to find them. As I said before, my experience has proved to me that beverage alcohol, as licensed today, is the master key that unlocks the gate to the big circus tent. Daily our nation's finest go in and leisurely drifting from side show to side show they become weak, involved, confused, lost, and, as the underworld so aptly puts it, "beat." Yes, "beat" in the race of life, because the decent people in the world are too ignorant of conditions, or too indifferent, to realise why and where and how the dangerous criminal starts.

—From "The Union Signal," 15/12/46.

WORLD CONVENTION—continued.

strange, too. In the evenings, little flies of some sort have a light in the end of the body. It is like a little electric bulb, but they seem to have different colours. They remind me somewhat of our glow-worms, except that they fly.

If you ever get an opportunity to visit America, do take it. I just love the women here. They are so very gracious. Some day I want to come back to this country. I may when I go to the London Convention.

I have a World Superintendency now. I have taken it for three years to see how it works out with my Peace Superintendency.

Well now, I could write pages more. The heat makes me very shaky. I will conclude with my dear love to all New Zealand friends and sisters in our beloved cause. Thank you for your many prayers. Our Father has given us many "Journeying mercies." Don't stop praying for us, please. (Sankey 494.)

Our united love. Mrs. Kasper is writing soon.

Ever your friend,

ETHEL M. MACKIE.

P.S.—Temp. 91 degrees. Humidity 95 degrees.