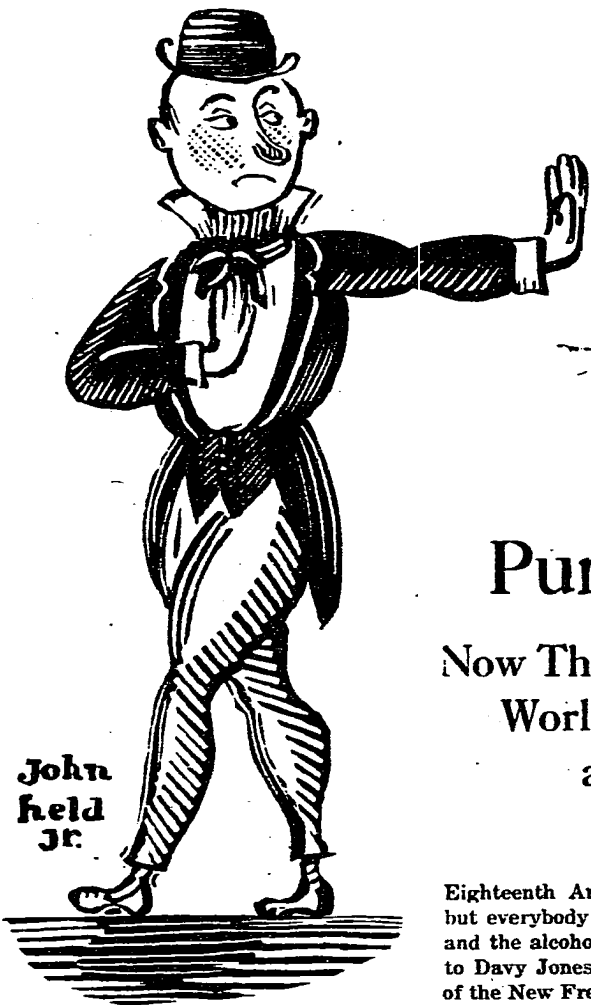


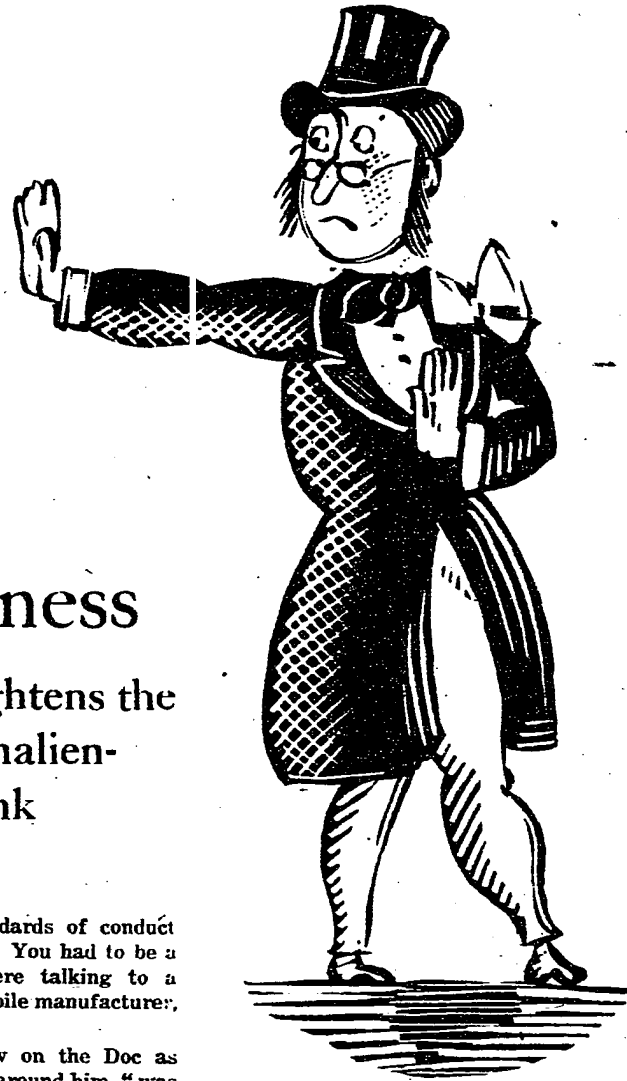
The Drunkard

and the

Prohibitionist.



John Held Jr.



# Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Unhappiness

## Now That Our Bronze Goddess Enlightens the World With Wood Alcohol, the Inalienable Right to Decline a Drink Is Alienated

Eighteenth Amendment. No lives lost, but everybody in water up to his lifebelt and the alcohol chests gone irretrievably to Davy Jones's gullet. It was the date of the New Freedom—for the blackmailer and the blind pig.

'Twas the evening, then, of Jan. 15 at the bar of the Psycho-Aqua Club. The Minute Men of the Brass Rail—a laughter-bound organization within the Psycho-Aqua Club—had gathered to watch the old beer out. Not even a pony stirred, not even a V. O. P. It was a 100 per cent. American crowd being tested to the very limit of their Star-Spangled Bannerism. Not, of course, that they cared about drink particularly, but their divine right of refusing one had been taken from them. They were covertly and whisperingly sore at the triumph of Kansas forordination over Gotham free will. Their eyes were as clear as Bryan's, but their hearts and their throats were as flint.

"Have you ever studied the rise and fall of democracies?" asked Dr. Low-rail as he bit off a mouthfull of suds. "Do you know that when the barroom goes democracy goes with it? Under the Caesars and Cromwell there were no bars. The bar parlor, the wine room, the cantina, the barroom flourish in direct ratio to the quantity and quality of the freedom that exists in a country. All Bastiles are undermined by the music of clinking glasses in public places. All Bastiles rise also to the pump of hidden stills.

"The American barroom abolished caste. The proletariat, the bourgeoisie, and the patrician got together over the bar rail. All men were created free and equal before a white apron. In the barroom race, color or present condition of servitude melted into universal good-fellowship. Liquor was the eternal democrat. Laughter and drink leveled all humanity before the big mirror. There was, in the good old barroom, a continual interlocking of classes. A high hat was no better than a pair of overalls in the sight of John Barleycorn and Bacchus, not to speak of Fritz Gambrinus.

"When I entered a barroom, whether it was on the Bowery or Broadway, I felt I had entered the democratic heart of America. A bartender, like a cat, could look like a King. Awe, bunk,

dignity, and fake standards of conduct were shed at the door. You had to be a man—whether you were talking to a poet, a bum, an automobile manufacturer, or a retired plumber.

"The barroom," flew on the Doc as the crowd grew denser around him, "was the place of the universal showdown. Clear-headed second-story men and brace game artists had no use for a barroom, for here the cat always got out of the bag. It has kept many a 'bad man' on the level, and dilated the generous instincts of many a tightwad. It put pleasure before business, which reduced the number of profiteers. It kept money in circulation which otherwise would have been lavished on bank directors.

"The American barroom democratized ideas. It was the emporium of brains and wit. No one of us would ever buy a drink for a stupid man—not two drinks, anyhow. No such forum had ever been in existence in the history of humanity. It was a vineyard of ideas, a hothouse of curious dreams, a clearing house of grouches, a magical trick bag of talk, a department store of brains, an undiscovered America, where every man was a Columbus, a"—

Angel Abe, the Kelley pool expert of the club, rammed the idea end of the Thing on His Hip into the mouth of our eloquent psychologist. He drank long and gurglingly. He emerged pop-eyed and radiant.

"The evils that barrooms have done live after them, but the good is interred"—

"In us!" broke in Yogee Maginnis, Chairman of the Ouija Board Committee. "In us! Right-o!" thundered the Doc. "And the barroom crushed to suds shall rise again! For the barroom was the materialization of a need. It was the safety valve of the man with a dangerous idea in his mind. Three whiskies with the bunch ironed out his anarchy and exploded his anger-bomb into a series of idiotic but human grins. Boys, if ever we have real trouble in our country it will come from the sane

and sober bunch—the teetotaler anarchist, the smileless, cold-water Bolshevik. They have abolished the great American soapbox, the tribune of the people—the barroom; the time machine will take the place of the soapbox.

"Young man, go West! said Horace Greeley many years ago. Rot! Young man, stay at home in New York and get your education in a barroom, I would have said.

"The barroom was the limousine of the workingman—and we are all workmen, except the Kaiser and Bryan. After a long day's work do you think the workingman wants to read Herbert Spencer, Ralph Waldo Trine, play with the ouija board or snore in a movie? Not on your Old Adam! He wants to evict a few inhibitions, indulge in a little humbug, stand on his head, hear a good story. If he gets a black eye once in a while, all the better. As between a black eye and a sissy's lip—well, Abe, where's that hip-wagon?"

The Doc leaned heavily on the bar in the grand old Delsartean manner of the days that are no more. Don Condé stroked his goatee mnemonically. Yogee Maginnis drew esoteric arabesques on the suds-weeping bar. Angel Abe wiped off the Battery end of his bottle.

"Again," said the Doc, "did you boys ever stop to think that if the world goes dry—which Bacchus forbid!—it will decrease the production of laughter 50 per cent.? Laughter is a form of cell-combustion, and the coaling process of the cells, in the brain and in the heart, will suffer through the lockout of Bacchus, John Barleycorn, and Gambrinus. In wine and beer especially there were laugh bubbles. Whenever three troubles met over a seidel or a glass of port laughter had the final word. Where there is no laughter there is no democracy.

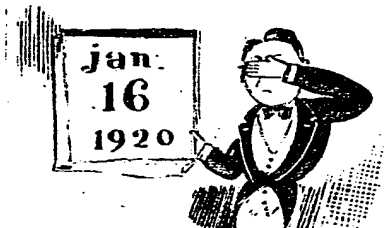
"As things go today we are threatened with a calamity—a decrease in the laughter output. Alcohol created a million laughs where it made one black eye. As Don Condé says somewhere, Exit Falstaff; enter Falseface.

"Boys, democracy and laughter face their Armageddon in the disappearance of the bar rag."

Nox caught the good old Doc and laid his head gently in the suds.

It was 12 o'clock, Jan. 16, 1920. The tail of the Constitution had begun to wag its superb head.

Angel Abe tossed his hip-pocrisy out of the window. It was as empty as life in 1920.



This Was the Date.