

# Pocket Flask and Younger Set

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New York Times (1857-1922); Feb 6, 1921; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times

pg. BR5

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Governor Edwards and Mr. Anderson Enter the Mrs. Grundy Contest

By HELEN BULLITT LOWRY

SOMETHING has really happened to cleave the Young Generation of today from the generations that have gone before it. Something specific has happened in the history of sociology to mark the two sides of 1920-21 as the Before and After Taking. Even though this contest between the Young Generation and the Old Generation we have had with us always, even as we have had playful kittens and dignified cats!

Usually the contest between the two runs an unevenly—the bone of contention is some change in the mere machinery of courting. Church sociables and holding hands in church choirs merge gently into holding hands at the movies. The ripple of disapproval purrs on, muttering that religion is disappearing in the Young Generation. The romantic two-by-two buggy flows into the romantic twosome roadster, and the buggy-reared elders cry "Fie!" In the fourteenth century ladies began to wear dresses that laced down the front, revealing a muslin blouse, and the clergy railed against the new mode, calling it "Hell Gates," even as the clergy before them had railed at the mode that preceded.

But once in a half century something does really happen that cleanly cleaves the past from the present—something that ushers in a new social era. It was so about a half century ago when the waltz came in. To the strains of "The Blue Danube" Man took Maid in his arms upon the public ballroom floor, and the manners and thoughts of the Old Generation dropped from the gay young blade's back.

It is so today, when the hip-pocket flask has got into mixed society.



"Instead of letting some young man take his daughter to the Broadway restaurants, \* \* \* let the father take her home!"

Prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists alike will tell you what the result is on the young things who are the "victims" of the new hip-pocket habit.

"Take away Liberty and you get Libertine," is the way Governor Edward I. Edwards of New Jersey, champion of "personal liberty," expressed his idea.

With equal assurance, William H. Anderson, member of the Executive Board of the Anti-Saloon League of America, said:

"It is the working out of the law of compensation that has given dissipated children and robularies to the man who has fostered lawlessness by breaking the law of the Eighteenth Amendment."

Each has taken the theme of the pocket-flask-munitioned Young Generation, has pointed a moral and adorned his opinion. The report that many 18-year-old girls of formal American society are for the first time indulging in intoxication and in some of intoxication's by-products causes the theme to be laid by each side—"wet" and "dry"—at the other side's door. One difference is that Mr. Anderson, having predicted the betterment of the nation through

prohibition, naturally has to picture the rumored condition of youthful laxity as a mere "temporary manifestation." As for Governor Edwards, his hope is that "Mothers will realize that their daughters are bound to meet new temptations, and will arm them more intelligently with knowledge of the pitfalls than has been the custom of the mothers of the past."

Each of these advocates, one "dry" and the other "wet," was asked to discuss the cause and the corrective of the hip-pocket flask.

"The source of the infection was the rich man's private stock," said Mr. Anderson. "The man who laid up whisky didn't play the good sport and abide by the conditions that the law had placed on the great middle class. Instead, he bought liquor and stored it away. After July 1, 1919, he began to carry it with him against the law, and this brought about a new standard for the ostentatious display of wealth. This encouraged those who wanted to look as if they had wealth to patronize the bootlegger."

"Not only that—but soon the rich man discovered that his stock was

not holding out as he had expected. He decided to buy more—and for this more he pays such profiteering prices that it pays the bootlegger to take the most awful risks of discovery. The rich man, with every reason to protect the laws of the existing order, became as deliberate an anarchist and lawbreaker as is the radical from Russia."

"And now he is getting his reward in the lawlessness that is abroad in the land. Because he, a mature and influential man, has broken the law with a certain amount of discretion, he has made it safe for these young girls and boys to break it with utter indiscretion. Because the older society men and women have connived at the hip-pocket flask, even welcomed it because it saved their own stock when they entertained, these children have taken to the excesses to which indiscriminate drinking inevitably leads."

So it would seem that, according to the Anti-Saloon League theory, Nemesis is striking the older generation when a youngster takes an illegal flask drink. Colloquially speaking, the older generation is getting what's coming to it.

"These same silk-hatted anarchists, these rich men who purchase illicit whisky, are responsible for the demoralized New York police force," continued the speaker. "The police force has been subsidized to protect the illicit whisky traffic, in which these rich men and the speakeasy are engaged together."

"But some day—and that not so very far off, either—the rich man is going to wake up to the startling fact that he's been silly. Because he has the most to lose, he will realize that he has most cause to foster law abidingness. And the same day he will realize that it is the children of the rich, instead of the children of the middle classes, that are carrying about flasks of whisky. Why, the very fact that we hear so much about these conditions shows that the rich drinking man already is horrified when he sees the vices of liquor drinking intensified and made silly in young faces. He is as a man who may swear himself, but unexpectedly hears curses on the lips of a baby."

A year and a half ago, Mr. Anderson recalled, the law against carrying the hip-pocket flask could not have been enforced. "Public sentiment would have been in tumult at arrests for this violation of the law. Instead of trying to enforce it, the prohibition officers have allowed abuse to bring about its own condemnation. Very shortly there will be such a general demand that carrying liquor be abolished, and that this demoralization of youth cease, that every citizen will become a prohibition enforcement officer."

And who is to prove that Mr. Anderson is not correct in his prophecies of a community shocked into enforcing, however unpleasant, a law "to save the morale of the young generation that is the future of the nation." For, wherever you turn, New York, Middle West or South, the formal societies of the cities give forth the same tale.

"We were accustomed to seeing older people drink, and college boys, but not young girls in their teens," is the frequent comment.

"And it is because the Government has placed the fascination of the forbidden on drinking," commented Governor Edwards of New Jersey. A sad minor key crept into the voice of this enemy of prohibition, who adds certain dramatic quality to his opposition by being himself a teetotaler.

"It has added that fascination," he continued, "and then has proceeded to pour the temptation into the young hands—not to mention their hip-pocket and muff. The Government is responsible, remember, through its agents, since it is inconceivable that the Government would have passed a law which is unenforceable. I am informed that more whisky has been taken out of bond during this last year than in any

previous year of the business. And it is the Government that has done it. If people want this law, why don't they see that it is enforced? "I hear that drinking has increased. I hear that drinking among young people has increased. Why did the worldly wise old churches, the Catholic and the Episcopalian, not throw their strength as a body toward prohibition? Individual members may have backed it—but the churches that did so as a body were the emotional churches that think you can convert a sinner in ten seconds.

"And, instead of 'converting,' they've merely succeeded in making a crime and a mystery of drinking. Instead of a responsible hostess serving young girls a glass of wine at her table, young girls are getting off to secret places to be served a surreptitious drink from some young man's pocket. They break the law, and they know that they break the law. A loosening of the moral code in other ways is bound to result. "Those of us who opposed prohibition through no self-interested motives foresaw just this wild abandon

that comes of bottling up the human inclinations. The openness of drinking was what protected it. With their elders and contemporaries sure to be looking on at any results of drinking, moderation was the natural, self-interested thing for the young.

"It is the law of human nature that breaking one law leads to breaking a more serious law. The moral retrogression is sure and steady. This particular manifestation is at present showing itself most unpleasantly in the stratum of society that we erroneously call the 'top.' But

will the new social code which this secret drinking will bring to us spread to the other strata? We can only hope that this will not happen generally. But certainly those young women who are weak will adopt the customs of the richer class. And those girls who have not received the intelligent home training in knowledge from their mothers will be in the gravest danger.

"The only hope in sight is that the mothers and the fathers realize the seriousness of the country's condition and strip the veil of mystery from all of the vices, so that the

young eyes can see them without the fascination of the occult. Instead of letting some young man take his daughter to the Broadway restaurants, with perhaps a flask under the tablecloth, let the father take her himself. I have taken my daughter.

"Conditions will have to get a great deal worse than they are today before the turn of the tide will come, and the country either rise up against prohibition or else see that prohibition is enforced. Meantime the problem of the young people we have with us."