

Professor Blames Beer for German Outrages

Cumulative Effect of "Mildly Alcoholic State" on the Minds of Men Who Have Imbibed National Drink Since Babyhood

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IT is a mistake to assume that Germany's official atrocities are purely due to the calculated plans of cold intellect. They are also the product of collective feelings.

The intellect was kept in the background when official Germany began its attempts, with shootings, arson, and Zeppelins, to "scare" men and women in lands where unshakable valor has had its home for centuries. These stupidities have lost the war for Germany; more than anything else they have steered the will of every great democracy to defeat the bully. No, surely, not the head but the heart prompts frightfulness. It is the fruit of two things—fear and plain bad temper.

Before the war Germany was afraid for its place in the sun, afraid for its share of the world's commerce, afraid for its reputation as a world power, afraid of its own taxpayers, afraid for its ability to win in the coming conflict by fair fighting. Decades of subconscious fear and of exasperation at the prosperity of neighboring powers finally led to a general loss of self-control, and the strategic railways to the Belgian border were ordered. Here wisdom was displaced by personal, though official, bad temper. After the war broke out, self-control was further shattered and we have had the orgy of Louvain, the murder of Miss Cavell, the Lusitania massacre, the deportations, the sinking of hospital ships, and numberless other brutalities ordered by the High Command.

I suggest that mild, eternal intoxication is a partial, but very real, explanation of those unforgettable crimes. The poisoning of nearly all officials by perennial beer means collective fear, collective panic, and collective stupidity in the higher strategy. The bad tempers of millions have approved the acts of their bad-tempered rulers. Thus the boasted unity of Germany is in part the fine flower of integrated quarrelsomeness.

Physiologists have proved that the steady use of alcoholic drinks causes permanent degeneration of bodily tissues, especially nervous tissue. Probably connected with this change in the human body is the growth of moral irritability. The case is quite clear for most fully intoxicated persons. Even in the so-called "jolly" stage of his poisoning, a drunken man may become violently irritated if he is crossed; the succeeding, bad-temper stage is but too well known in home, club, and street. The researches of Kraepelin, perhaps the greatest authority on the effects of German beer, and of others have shown that there is no qualitative difference in the physiological influence of beer and spirits, so far as the alcohol contents are concerned. Persistent use of beer, a 4 per cent. solution of alcohol, like whisky, a 50 per cent. solution, produces "release of inhibitions," a loss of self-control.

In that excellent work, "Alcohol and the Human Body," by Sir Victor Horsley and M. D. Sturge, we read: "Self-control is one of the highest functions of the brain, and the racial power which results to a people as a consequence of the individual practice of self-control cannot be estimated too highly. Therefore we train our children as far as possible to control their emotions and their actions, in the hope that ultimately they may become worthy members of the community."

"Now the effect of alcohol in diminishing and breaking down this acquired self-control may be seen in every condition of social life, undoing the work of all educationalists and parents."

"By deadening the brain cells, wherein are registered the ideals on which we depend for calmness of judgment, alcohol causes serious lapses of self-control in many people, especially in young adults. Quite small doses are often responsible for the commission of reckless, self-pleasing actions, and for the inordinate sway of the passions, which are no longer kept in full control by the higher powers of the mind, because these are more or less in abeyance as the result of the paralyzing effect of the drug."

Abundant scientific experiments have demonstrated that a man who drinks beer even quite moderately every day is

never quite sober. This mildly alcoholic state is usually not conspicuous by a very decided lack of efficiency or of social decorum in the poisoned man. Hence the effects of steady beer drinking are not as striking as in the case of persons poisoned with whisky, rum, or absinthe. Yet I venture the hypothesis that lifelong drinking of mild beer has been one of the more potent causes for the amazing brutalities of official Germany. Those crimes have been ordered by men who, for decades, have been poisoned by beer. In times of peace and quiet the poisoning causes derangement of brain tissue, often expressed merely in some form of sentimentality, plain or maudlin. If, however, the victim is put under stress, his nervous disorder is likely to lead to bad temper and bad judgment, with endless possibilities in the way of loss of dignity, poise, and the sense of human fellowship. The final result here considered is the development of true savagery.

One may reply to this suggestion that about as much alcohol per capita is drunk in England and France, where official brutality has long been practically unknown. There are, however, two important contrasts between the drinking of Germany and that of France or England.

The Germanic peoples are the only great group who feed alcohol to the babies or very young children of middle and upper classes. Just at the time of life when the nervous system should be specially protected against all poisons, vast numbers of German children are kept mildly charged with alcohol. If the baby has not already been prenatally damaged because of the beer drunk by his mother, he still runs the risk of poisoning from the alcohol-bearing milk of a drinking mother or wetnurse. The child grows to manhood, drinking alcohol and continually handicapped in his development of cerebral, and therefore moral, control. On the other hand, nearly all the alcohol drunk in France and England is consumed after the formative years of childhood are past, distinctly lessening the danger of permanent cerebral degeneration.

Secondly, it makes a deal of difference as to who does the drinking. The drunkards of France and the British Isles are, as elsewhere, brutal and mean when crossed or provoked; but, fortunately for the good name of the Governments of these two countries, many men of the

ruling classes, the men who issue orders, are not addicted to the daily use of alcohol, either in youth or maturity. Neither were their mothers, who bequeathed to them their steady nerves. The restraint and sporting fairness of the sober Englishman or Scot contrast with the selfishness and unrestrained violence of the ale-poisoned Englishman of East London or the whisky-poisoned Scot of Glasgow. The war policy of France or England is being controlled by men who have not been at all poisoned by alcohol, or at least have been less poisoned than many prominent German officials, who, day in and day out, are kept irritable by the national drink.

Many of us have lived in Germany. We are convinced that a goodly number of Germans disapprove of the atrocities planned and executed by their officials. We cannot share the notion that the Germans are necessarily of a different race from the peoples of Western Europe and America. But there is some insidious influence at work in Central Europe which has produced horrors, treacheries to civilization, futile and stupid. If this influence is alcoholism, it can be eradicated. In the future, abstinence or great temperance among the ruling classes of Germany may enable them to win back our respect by behaving as "true sports" even under stress and competition, exactly as thousands of sober Germans are now behaving. The pity of it that so many of these are now, and are destined to be still more, put to shame by the berserker rage of some of their leaders!

In writing this I do not, of course, forget the larger issues leading to the great war and its bitterness—the tragic accidents of geography; the vitality of that foolish doctrine, the Divine Right of the State; the decay of religious faith in much of Europe; the reversion to the barbarian's belief that personal and national honor stops at the national boundary; and the political inexperience of most Germans. All these and other factors enter into the problem as to why the German High Command orders murder, rape, and slavery as essentials in the making of war. That problem as a whole is beyond any pen, but some part of its solution may be found in the relations of chronic alcoholism to the human soul. Was the great von Moltke right when he said: "Beer is a far more dangerous enemy to Germany than all the armies of France"?