



Forbidden Sin Fascinates Youth

SO FATHER TAUGHT US TO DRINK — CORRECTLY

By Lydia Coleman

MY FATHER believes, for which I am thankful, that the best way to cope with the temptations of youth is to meet them openly in a well-lighted living room, among friends. There may be holes in this kind of philosophy, but you'll never be able to convince him, or me.

Among the temptations, often called "sins of youth," that Father brought out into the open were pre-marital sex, narcotics, drinking, and smoking. We learned all about each of these as we grew to the age where we began to wonder, and, left to our own devices, would have experimented. Because Father discussed each subject so honestly and so openly with not only just us but our curious friends as well, we came to consider him an authority on subjects that most children would hesitate even mentioning to their parents.

Just how wide was Father's fame as a counselor I never realized until the day I answered the doorbell to find a small neighbor boy. "My mother," he piped, "sent me over to have Mr. Coleman tell me how our cat had kittens."

Even today, Father's frank discussions might be called too progressive, but not unrealistic. Gradually, parents are coming around to the understanding that they can't shelter their children from life forever.

While Father frankly admitted that he did not approve of our drinking, he also admitted that it was something that every boy and girl would encounter sooner or later, and it was best to be prepared with the facts. It is very important, Father told us, that everyone, and every girl in particular, know the effect alcohol has upon the human

body. Each of us who sat in on that Saturday afternoon discussion (some only with the permission of their parents) have since found at least one opportunity to be glad they listened to Father that day.

Father had been a traveling man during Prohibition. He had seen what prohibiting alcoholic beverages had done to the country. He had seen people risk their health and even their lives for the thrill of forbidden fruit, and he vowed then that no child within his influence would ever reach such degradation.

Dwight Anderson, in his book *The Other Side of the Bottle*, tells his own story of his recovery from a seemingly incurable form of alcoholism. His family background was the kind that Father saw all around him. The results were the same. "Alcohol was dramatized in our house. Father never took a drop and Mother was an ardent member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. When she happened to go to a party where wine was served she would say of her hosts, 'I shall never darken their doors again.' Many a time I have seen her peeping through the lace curtains of the parlor window with opera glasses at her eyes — trying to see what our local caterer's wagon was delivering to the neighbors. If she discovered liquor, she cut the neighbor from her calling list. From my earliest days drinking had the fascination of a forbidden sin."

IN OUR OWN town we knew the minister's son as the town rough-neck. We had "oh'd" when the children of the most law-abiding, strict parents turned to crime. We had seen what we believed to be the saintliest of daughters, sheltered from boys and dates, make the headlines with illicit love.

There may have been many reasons for this, but to Father it was, as Mr. Anderson puts it, "the fascination of a forbidden sin." If we were not forbidden, if we knew the facts — biological, physiological, psychological and sociological — about alcohol, Father reasoned, we would be able to handle ourselves properly under any circumstances. We had good judgment enough, he believed, to be able to do that. He had faith in us, faith in the example he set and the training he had given us. We knew this and his faith was justified. I would not hesitate to say that the total of alcoholic beverages consumed in the last fifteen years by the eight young men and women who sat with Father that day would not equal what some more foolish people consume in a few hours.

It was not a lecture Father gave us, but he told us facts. He must have spent long hours in a library preparing himself, for he knew all the answers and gave them to us without reservation. He spilled forth statistics of men and money that impressed us, but not nearly as much as the effect that alcohol has

on the brain and nervous system. He didn't leave a doubt in our minds that alcohol is a poison, yet he never once told us we must not touch it.

He told us frankly that light wines may add delectability to a dinner and are less likely than whisky to be injurious as their alcoholic content is low. We asked about beer and he answered that it is the mildest alcoholic drink. We learned that it is a bad practice to drink on an empty stomach, to mix drinks, or to drink alone.

He did not dodge our questions of the effects of liquor upon desire. He explained that rather than a stimulant, alcohol is an anesthetic accompanied by a loss of self-control and inhibitions.

Under Father's guiding hand we sipped the sting of brandy and found it hard to take. No doubt pleased with our general displeasure, Father showed us how we could enjoy an evening even at company with tippling people, by holding a half-filled glass and little more than inhaling its vapors, if we did not care to drink.

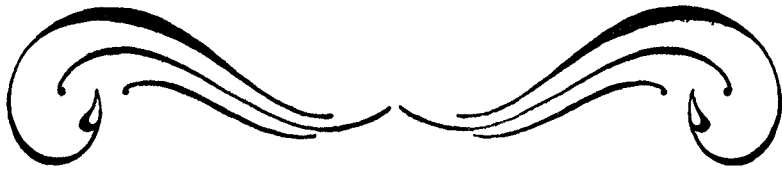
When the afternoon was over, someone quoted from Shakespeare's *Othello* and just about summed up everyone's conclusions: "Oh God! That men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains; that we should, with joy, pleasure, revel, and applause, transform ourselves into beasts."

DANGEROUS to actually introduce young people to liquor? Perhaps, but I believe it is far less dangerous to have them experiment, as they inevitably will, in their own homes with those who would guide them well, rather than those who would encourage them for malicious intent. The California State Board of Education, after a year-long controversy, has come around to this point of view. They have adopted a new manual telling California's public-school teachers what they should teach students about drinking. The manual, titled "Alcohol — the Study of a Current Problem," is not propaganda on either side of the question. Author Jesse F. Williams says that "to expect total abstinence by every one is unrealistic in a nation where 65,000,000 grownups drink at least a little."

Father recognized this, fortunately, in time to guide us and our companions along the proper path. His method was effective. Given a choice, I always answer no, as liquor holds no fascination for me.

But most importantly, I believe, Father's guidance gave us the ability to face any situation that life may present, without ignorance, without fear. One thing for sure: no one would ever be able to take advantage of his daughters through his default, and the same will be true of mine.





Letter from Prague

BY GEORGE L. ATWOOD

IN WRITING anything of our life and experiences in Czechoslovakia, I'd like first of all to make it very clear that life as it exists for those of us in the Western diplomatic group is very different and far superior to what it is for the great majority of (non-Communist) Czechs. Except for the constant and at times irritating harassment of Western diplomats by the Czechs in power, we live a fairly comfortable and certainly an extremely interesting life. We see little of the Eastern diplomats — Russian, Polish, and so forth — except at occasional state functions, and then only very casually; and very few Czechs in an official capacity. To associate with Americans or other “Westerners” is dangerous for the average Czech, since it subjects him to immediate suspicion and possible arrest; those who work at the American Embassy or as domestics for the Western colony do so at their own risk.

The situation being what it is, the Western diplomatic block, which is some two hundred to two hundred and fifty strong, finds that it is more or less forced into the position of being a very compact and tightly knit group. Official and social gatherings, of which there are many, are for the most part managed on a self-contained basis. We find ourselves entertaining, and in turn being entertained by, ambassadors and ministers from the many countries of Europe, the Middle East, South America, and Canada. One advantage enjoyed by members of the Western block is the ability to visit Vienna or the cities of Germany, Switzerland, and France for a change of scene and to shop for the many basic necessities, including food and clothing, that are either not available in present day Czechoslovakia or are far too expensive locally. These breaks also serve to remind us of the calamity that has befallen