

How We Carry Liquor

Englishmen have learned a lot about drinking and keeping sober. Winston Churchill, famous statesman, acting as a reporter for Collier's, gives the prescription. Perhaps we can use it

By Winston Churchill

ILLUSTRATED BY GLUYAS WILLIAMS

THE story of wine is the story of human culture. From the dim, legendary days when Osiris, reigning on earth as a king, taught the ancient Egyptians to cultivate wheat and barley, to train the vine, and to tread the purple grapes in the wine press, we find in the use of intoxicants one of the distinguishing marks of the higher types and races of humanity. Throughout the world corn and wine have gone together as at once the agents and the symbols of civilization, and their mystic significance is still recognized today in the most solemn and sacred rite of the Christian religion.

Conversely, the prohibition of alcohol has ever been associated with regressive and destructive forces. The most famous Volstead law in history was that of Mohammed, whose followers sought to overwhelm the Western world in blood and fire and to make of Europe an Asiatic colony. Buddhist asceticism, which renounced wine as it did all else that was lovely, gracious and comfortable, set before mankind as its loftiest ideal the sterile "Nirvana" that was eternal nothingness, and preached the will to universal death.

In our own day prohibition was enforced throughout Russia, at least for a time, by Lenin. In America it was imposed upon a reluctant nation by a sinister combination of bigotry and graft, and the hideous spawn of organized crime sprang up and flourished in its shadow.

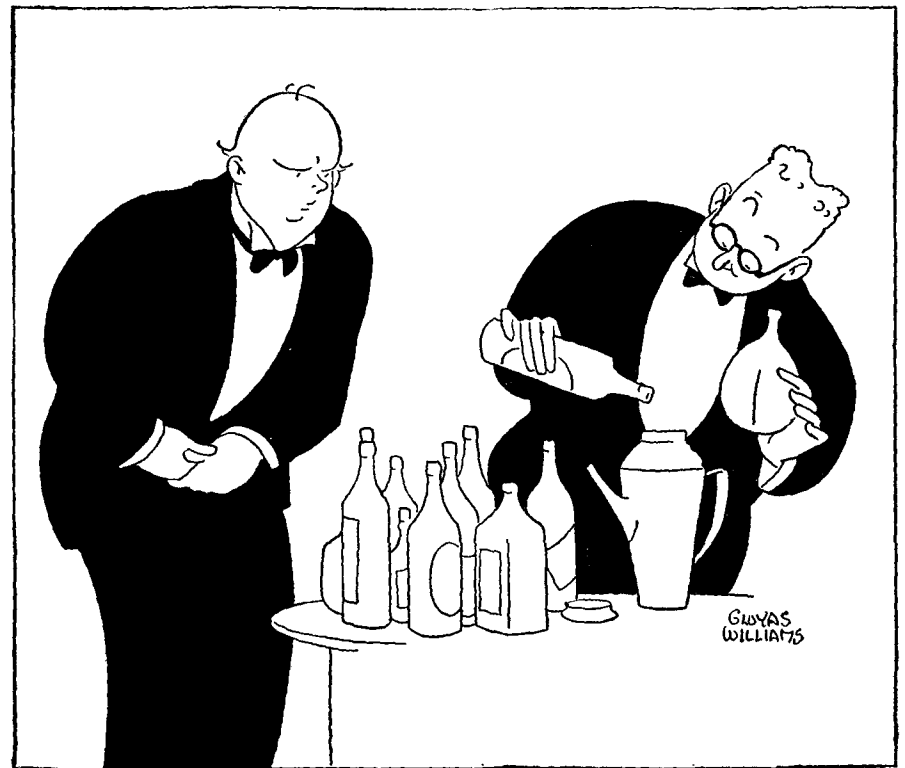
I am not surprised, therefore, that the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed as alien to the genius of a virile, progressive and freedom-loving people. Neither am I surprised that, in the final campaign against prohibition, women were in the forefront of the battle. The creeds and sects which have sought to abolish alcohol have also been the enemies of womanhood. To the Mohammedans, woman was a creature without a soul, useful only as an instrument of pleasure and a vehicle of procreation; the Buddhist spurned the sanctities of home and the delights of love as hindrances to the one great purpose of ultimate extinction; the Communist admitted no relation between the sexes save the purely animal embrace that was the satisfaction of a brief and brutal lust. Nor could the wives and mothers of America regard without detestation and disgust the strange and twisted morality that was willing to accept racketeering and murder, gang rule and the kidnapping of little children, as the price of prohibition.

But repeal brings new problems in its train. A modern state cannot leave the manufacture and sale of liquor to the free play of unrestricted competition. In the interest both of the nation and of the individual there must be a measure of control, and this should be universal in its application. Liquor laws which vary from place to place within a single community are a source of endless difficulty and friction.

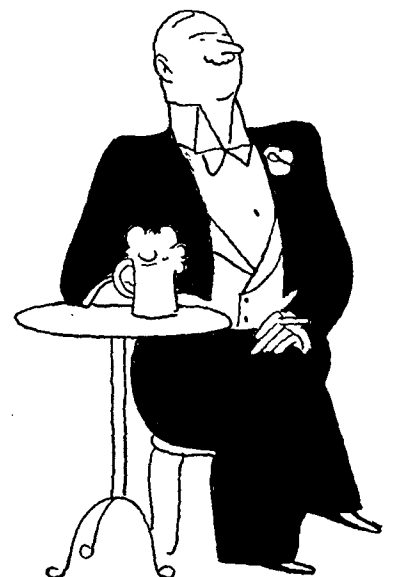
At the present moment each of the states of the Union decides its own methods of regulation. Some states still remain "dry"; some are "wet"; others are trying to strike an uneasy balance between individual liberty of choice and pussyfoot interference. The disadvantages of this multiplicity of methods are obvious. So long as any state is "dry," or even partially "dry," the bootlegger can still find a market, and the task of cleaning up corrupt and gang-ridden municipalities is made a hundred times more difficult.

Three Objects of Liquor Control

Can a nation-wide control be established, and what form should it take? I am confident that the robust common sense of the great American people will resolve the present confusion and secure a unified system of liquor laws throughout the whole country. Legis-



Cocktails are invariably less pleasant than their separate ingredients



lation should, in my opinion, be directed to three main objects: To give reasonable freedom to individuals. To encourage true temperance. To provide revenue for the state and federal treasuries which will enable other taxes to be reduced.

Personally, I believe that much variety and innocent enjoyment is banished from life when alcohol is prohibited. Spirits, as well as wines and beers, have their place and their uses, though I deprecate the combination of different liquors in cocktails, which are invariably less pleasant than their separate ingredients and which destroy our capacity to appreciate the nobler beverages that may follow them. But we can no longer regard alcoholic excess with the same careless tolerance that was possible to our ancestors. In a mechanical age, when millions earn their bread by the boredom of repetitive movement rather than by the sweat of their brow, and men are increasingly herded together in giant cities, intemperance assumes a new aspect.

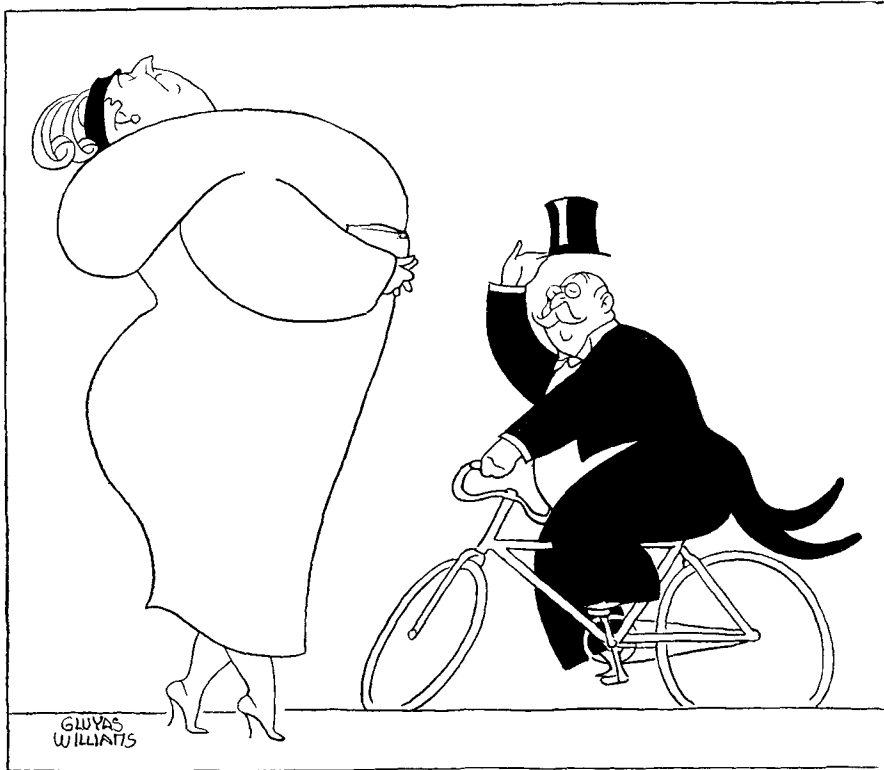
The factory hand—and, indeed, the city dweller generally—breathes habitually a vitiated air; he lives in unnatural conditions; he has not the physical resources of those who lead active, vigorous, outdoor lives. The effects of alcoholic excess are likely to be far graver in his case than in that, say, of

the cowboy and the lumberman, who have, moreover, this further advantage that long periods of complete abstinence may precede and follow their occasional overindulgence. The repercussions of drunkenness on public safety and public morals must also be taken into account. An intoxicated man is a menace in an age of swift-moving motor transport, and women and children must be protected from molestation.

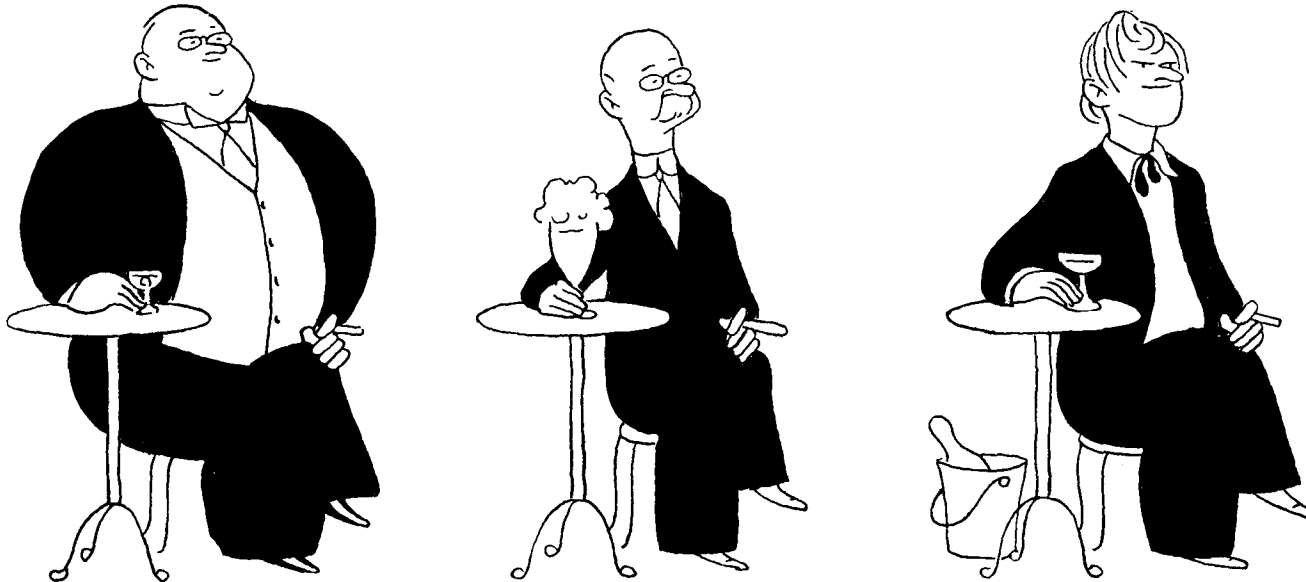
Where Control Always Fails

Any method of liquor control must have regard for these factors. But they do not constitute a case for prohibition. That certain individuals drink to excess does not entitle us to deny the healthy and innocent pleasure of a moderate and reasonable use of alcohol to the millions who would not abuse the privilege.

Some of the states of the Union are, I understand, experimenting with systems of individual permits to consumers, which will enable discrimination to be practiced in cases where the ability to purchase alcohol produces undesirable effects. For instance, in Montana, a permit may be canceled if its holder "by excessive drinking misspends, wastes or lessens his estate, injures his health, or endangers the peace and happiness of his family."



The change in habits has been accompanied by a change of public opinion



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But it is by no means certain that the person whose permit is thus taken away will stop drinking. He may buy liquor from a bootlegger and so obtain something much more likely to injure his health and endanger the peace and happiness of his family than if he were still free to patronize the state store. Or he may induce an acquaintance who possesses a permit, to resell, at a premium, some of his purchases; in which case the drain on his estate will be greater rather than less.

The English system of control is, I believe, superior to any of those elaborate but inconclusive methods. It does, in fact, combine reasonable freedom for individuals with the encouragement of true temperance and the provision of revenue.

You can obtain any alcoholic beverage, in as large quantities as you desire, from a licensed liquor store in England and consume it, as and when you please, in your own home. You can enter an English public house, during the hours at which the local regulations allow it to sell intoxicants, and buy what you like there. Or you can do the same at a club if you happen to be a member.

And you will have no difficulty in obtaining any sort of drink with a meal at a licensed hotel or restaurant, so long, again, as it is within the permitted hours. If you are a guest at a hotel, you can get a drink at any time and do not need to care about the local regulations.

Taxation and Temperance

There is thus reasonable freedom. The permitted hours vary in different localities, but must not be more than eight and a half in the provinces, or nine in the Metropolis on ordinary days, or five on Sundays. They are arranged to suit the convenience of the people of the district and, as a rule, cover the usual luncheon hours and the evening, with a break of at least two hours in the afternoon. No sale of liquor is allowed earlier than nine in the morning or later than ten-thirty at night—eleven in London.

Revenue is obtained and an automatic check is placed on excess by heavy taxation of all intoxicants. This taxation amounts to as much as 300 or 400 per cent of the cost price and, in

the case of spirits, is about five times as great as it was before the War. It has been just over eighteen dollars a gallon since 1920. The duties on beer and wine vary according to the strength, with an additional impost of two and a half dollars a gallon on sparkling wines and a preference for the products of Empire vineyards. Out of a total expenditure on liquor of about one and a fifth billion dollars, approximately half a billion dollars goes to the state. With the same rates of tax and a proportionate consumption, the United States could expect an annual income from this source of one and a half billion dollars.

But the influence of high taxation on intemperance is of greater importance socially. The days when London gin palaces could announce, "Drunk for a penny: dead drunk for two pence," are over and the workingman, turning his back on alcoholic excess as beyond his financial reach, looks round for cheaper forms of amusement and finds them in radio, the cinema and, in the case of the younger generation, in sport and the dance-hall. This change in habits has been accompanied by a change in public opinion, which now condemns the drunkenness it formerly condoned.

This does not mean that England is becoming a nation of teetotalers. But the average Englishman no longer

And these highly satisfactory results have been achieved, with a minimum of interference with individual liberty, as the result of the high taxes upon alcohol. There could be no better vindication of the utility of taxation as an instrument of policy.

Certain other lessons may be drawn from the English example. I am aware that American opinion, even in the "wet" states, condemns the saloon as, in the words of the Rockefeller Investigation Commission, "a menace to society which must never be allowed to return." But in trying to avoid the Scylla of the saloon, it is possible to fall into a still more dangerous Charybdis.

Social Drinking is Best

When liquor is bought for home consumption, a larger quantity is usually purchased and, where self-control has not been established, habits of indulgence may be created by the very device that seeks to restrain them. Solitary drinking, also, is generally more harmful than social drinking. "Treating" has many undesirable features, but worse still is the morose intoxication of the man who broods alone over his raw spirits in a dingy apartment.

The English licensing laws and recent developments in the English public house point the way out of this dilemma. No one may sell intoxicants without a license, and all public-house licenses are reviewed annually by the local magistrates, so that a publican must conduct his establishment properly if he wants to remain in business. "Permitting drunkenness or selling to drunken persons" is an offense, and there are prosecutions on this charge whenever the facts justify it. They rarely do.

These legal safeguards have been powerfully reinforced during recent years by new conceptions of what a place of refreshment ought to be. From time to time before the War tentative efforts were made in the direction of public-house reform, and the English inn, and even the English village tavern, was quite frequently a pleasant and cheerful place, with its cozy bar parlor, where games and comfortable talk and gossip were as



Outdoor drinking is not popular in England

drinks in order to get drunk; he drinks because he feels thirsty or tired, or to heighten the enjoyment of a meal or an evening's entertainment. Alcohol has taken its place as one of the amenities of life where, before the War, it was too often the destroyer of all the others.

The change is reflected in significant social statistics. The number of convictions for drunkenness is now less than a quarter of that recorded in 1913, in spite of the fact that the police are far less tolerant of intoxication than they were before the War. Thousands of "drunks" who, in the old days, might have been assisted home by a good-natured constable, are now taken in charge. The improvement is most notable among women. Before the War, there were roughly 15,000 cases in which women were sent to prison for drunkenness; that number is now under 2,400, one sixth of the old figure.

Many of those who still appear in the courts on charges arising out of insobriety belong to the older generation. They are habitual drunkards and are convicted again and again in the course of a year. As they gradually disappear the figures will improve still further, and the statistics of deaths from alcoholism and cirrhosis of the liver, which have already been reduced by over sixty per cent, will become negligible.

The End of the Rope

A Short Short Story complete on this page

By Georges Surdez

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE HOWE



"Look, Monsieur." Nicolas waited until the other lifted his white face, showed him the frayed ends. "That's the way mountain accidents occur"

TWO men linked by a strong rope climbed the sheer flank of the giant cliff. Eight hundred feet of space gaped beneath them and the cold mountain air steamed on their perspiring faces.

Nicolas, the guide from the hotel, was in the lead. He was a young man, not very tall, but his thick-set, muscular body was admirably adapted to his trade. He progressed with unhurried, calm, rhythmical gestures, heaving himself higher and higher.

When they halted to breathe and rest, his shoulders rested lightly against the cliff, and his light blue eyes swept down into the abyss without dread, seeking the dots that were villages in the Savoyard Valley and the glint of blue that was the lake.

"Are we getting there?" the man below called out.

He was somewhat older, a tourist. He had dressed for the occasion, wore sundry belts and instruments, his canteen was new and covered with felt. He was the complete Alpine climber, down to the boots and up to the tiny feather of the felt hat. But he was a novice and suffered from dizziness. During the pauses, his eyes remained glued obstinately to the stone inches from his nose, his mouth twitched and his whole body pressed against the cliff, crucified there by terror.

NICOLAS guessed his thoughts. Monsieur Gonthier was wondering what insane impulse, what ill-inspired snobism, had turned him into a mountain climber. His quivering fingers often caressed the rope that held him to the guide.

"Is it much farther?" he insisted pleadingly.

"About a hundred yards, Monsieur."

Nicolas was aware that his client had lost all his fine lust for mountain sports. When they reached the top of this cliff, he would not consider going on to the peak, over the glacier. He would complain of illness and suggest that he be taken down by the trail. And he would tip Nicolas heavily, with a suggestion that the guide should keep the incidents of the trip to himself. For Gonthier had boasted loudly down below.

The mountaineer smiled. He had reached a sort of platform, twelve inches wide and three feet in length, hewed from the cliff to enlarge a natural ledge. He nursed his client upward with light jerks on the rope, and when the panting man was at his side, he stretched a big forearm across his back to steady him.

"Take a look, Monsieur," he urged. "The view is magnificent."

Gonthier, his face like moist putty, peeped over one shoulder. Then his glance sought the rock again: "Magnificent, yes."

"An eagle's view." Nicolas laughed. "Only we have no wings! Four years ago a gentleman fell from here. He was a Dane who had climbed all over the world. Nearly three hundred meters to the first stop!" He removed his arm. "I'll go ahead and hoist you later. You have to swing yourself in space once or twice."

Nicolas reached out, his horny palm fastened on stone, and he was off. Thirty feet above his companion, he found a spot on which he could stand at ease. He looked down at Gonthier, who strove to clutch the mountain to his breast. Then he grasped the rope, rubbed it vigorously against a sharp edge, until a twist of his wrists broke it.

"Look, Monsieur." Nicolas waited until the other lifted his white face, showed him the frayed ends. "That's the way mountain accidents occur, you see. Here's your end, Monsieur."

GONTHIER'S eyes followed the rope until he caught a glimpse of the gap below. His mouth opened, and a weak, shrill yelp of horror escaped from his lips.

"Monsieur, you are in no danger," Nicolas said, lighting a pipe. "The mountain is solid. Monsieur came to the mountains two days ago, and scorned them. Climbing them was play for boys. You said so. You stopped at the Palace Hotel. Do you remember speaking to the maid who served your dinner that evening? Maria—a very pretty girl."

"I didn't say anything offensive—" Gonthier protested.

"You didn't. But you, a fine gentleman from Paris, with a big car and good clothes, you talked like her friend. And she said she was engaged to me. Do you recall what you told her?"

"No. Nothing offensive, I'm positive."

"You told her it was a shame for a dainty, pretty girl like her to marry a lout, a mountaineer. You laughed at me, Monsieur—you told her you had invited me for a drink that afternoon, when you hired me for this trip, and that I perspired when I walked across the lobby of the Palace Hotel, because I was embarrassed. You said that I didn't know what to do with my hands. You knew she wouldn't repeat that to me, too. But I saw she was a bit ashamed of me that night, and she spoke of my manners. So I found out where she had got that idea."

"Now, I seldom go into the lobby; I seldom drink in the café. Those are not the places I'm used to. But I accepted your invitation, on your own ground. This time we're in a place where you are embarrassed and I'm not. You come and join me here, and I'll reattach the rope."

"I'll give you five thousand francs to

help me," Gonthier promised. "And if I die, it's murder—"

"Mountain accident, Monsieur. Frayed rope. That happens every season."

Gonthier was mute. He tried to move, trembled and moaned. Nicolas watched him, saw that his nerve had failed completely. He felt no scorn, for he had seen men of proved courage frightened in the mountains. After five minutes he fastened a spare rope to his pick, securely wedged in the rock, and slid down to his client.

"You see, Monsieur," he said, fastening the loose end about Gonthier's body, "that it isn't always easy to play another man's game."

NICOLAS once more at the end of the rope, the tourist took heart, and they reached the top of the cliff. Gonthier sank down, wiped his face, swallowed from his canteen.

"I offered you five thousand francs to come and get me. You did. The offer sticks."

Nicolas scowled and shook his head. "No. If you think your life's been saved, I'll charge you what I think it's worth, ten francs. I wanted to give you a lesson. Even a gentleman like you can be taught a few things. You can complain at the manager's office. Let's go—"

He indicated the easy trail leading to the valley. For a long moment, Gonthier hesitated. Some inner struggle clouded his face, then he spoke calmly: "Nicolas, I hired you to take me to the top."

"You are serious, Monsieur?" Nicolas looked at him steadily. "You will go on, across the ice and up to the peak, with me?"

"We have to learn," Gonthier added. Nicolas grinned and stretched out his wide hand.

"Monsieur, you're a man. Let's go."