

National Temperance Study Course For Sunday School

STUDY IV. OCTOBER 27th (Senior) BEER AS A FOOD (By MARY I. RITCHIE)

(A. The Leader, seats himself at the table and spreads out papers, figures for a few seconds and, as B arrives, moves to allow him to draw the chair. Keeps figuring as B hangs that on back of chair he has drawn up.)

A: I thought everyone was going to be early tonight. Judging by the enthusiasm when it was suggested that we, as a group of serious young people, take time definitely and seriously to express our honest views on the question that led to such argument last week, I thought I should surely be among the late arrivals, and here I find myself early.

B: Aren't you thinking of counting on me?

A: Since you weren't in when I began to count, I haven't counted you. What have you to add to the discussion, B? Do you honestly think that beer—honestly made beer—can be counted among the worth-while foods?

B: Honestly isn't just the word we want to apply to beer. At least the chap who said that there was as much food value in a pint of beer as in a pint of milk was stretching either the truth or his imagination on a little further than was necessary.

A: Then you say there isn't?

B: I'm not saying anything until the others arrive.

C: Entering hastily, takes his place at table: Am I late?

D: Following immediately after C: Well, (seating himself) is everyone brimming with bar-room information?

A: This is a serious meeting, D. We're juniors any more and—

B: We are hoping for your opinion on the food value of beer.

A: It needn't be first-hand information.

C: (Earnestly): It doesn't need to be and after some of the things I have discovered, I am not anxious for first-hand knowledge.

A: Then to get down to business, we may as well start with you, C. Do you think that beer has any food value whatever? And, if so, could it replace any of the foods commonly in use now as a food builder and energy producer?

D: If it hasn't any food value we needn't go on.

C: But it has—some. That's where some of us trip up on our temperance discussions. We won't grant it any value so the beer drinker who knows that it has a little just laughs and won't listen to our argument.

B: Then let us admit that it has some food value and go on from there.

C: Well, it has this value as a food: it does—as most foods are expected to do—provide some energy to the body. But when you've said that you have to go on and explain that its effect as a drug overbalances any good that its energy-making qualities provide.

A: If it has even that much food value, with what simple food can you compare it? Take milk, for instance, then take beer—

D: (Interrupting): The beer drinker wouldn't likely be taking milk.

C: Milk is one of the foods I did take, and I found that it is foolish to compare beer or any other alcoholic drink with such a well-balanced food as milk, which contains all the elements and the necessary vitamins that the human body needs.

A: Doesn't beer contain any?

C: To be sure. It contains some minerals, some starch, a small—very small—amount of protein, a quantity of water, and alcohol.

D: No vitamins?

C: No. And as to its energy-producing qualities—well, my information on that may sound a bit technical. It took me some time to get it straight in my mind, so I tried to make the explanation as simple as possible. You see, the body is made up of cells—cell tissue, you know—and as this tissue has to be constantly renewed in order that the body may grow and keep all its organs working properly, it has to depend upon the food, solid or liquid, taken into it through the mouth and absorbed into the blood.

D: But if alcohol has some food value?

C: It hasn't enough to be considered at all as a tissue builder and proper energy producer. In fact, it is really more a poison than—

B: (Interrupting): Here! You're getting into my field. That's what I was concentrating on.

C: Sorry but—well, to stick to my own subject—

A: But may I interrupt right here? What about the value it has? There are perfectly good foodstuffs—cereals and so on—used in the manufacture of beer. Don't they count?

C: The present-day beer isn't the mild harmless drink made from good grains, as its supporters would have us to believe, D. Do you realize that the beer sold in Canada today averages about five and one half per cent. absolute alcohol in strength?

D: Whew! Then a chap really could get drunk on it!

B: He sure could. But go on, C. you can't deny that there is food value in the beer to the extent of the grain they do use. Even poor grain has some—would you call it caloric value? I mean, contains a certain number of food calories.

C: Yes, I will admit that, but the amount is not great enough. But here, I have it all figured out. I think I have it accurate, too. Take steak—chuck steak, we'll say—and a pint of beer. The nutritious calories (that is, the nourishment) in a pint of beer is equal to less than a tenth of a pound of chuck steak. It is about equal to a thirtieth of a pound of well-sweetened chocolate, and only as much nourishment as a twentieth of a pound of cream cheese.

D: But one could take more beer and obtain more food value.

C: Two arguments against that. The first, and greatest one, of course, is that additional beer adds additional poison to the blood. It has a narcotic effect—

D: I thought narcotics were something one took to make him sleep.

A: So they are, and the taking of narcotics is a bad habit to get into.

C: Very bad. And because it has power to make one sleep, that is, to drug the mind till it loses consciousness, the mind is affected first. As a result one says and does things that would never be said or done if the mind were clear.

A: Then perhaps B can tell us what he has discovered about alcohol as a poison. If it is a real poison, B, why isn't it labelled so? Why does it not have to be sold in different coloured bottles, or signed for over the counter?

B: If you want my opinion, it should be. As a fact, alcohol is a real poison to the blood. A poison is something which, by its effect, kills the thing has affected.

E: But alcohol doesn't kill many

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people, unless you count the deaths that happen when someone who is intoxicated does the wrong thing and hurts himself or someone else fatally.

B: It may not seem always to kill because its effect is slower than that of other well-known poisons. But even slow poisoning is poisoning. If enough alcohol is taken into the system it can paralyze the nerves sufficiently to affect other parts of the body that are controlled by the nerves. When these parts—or organs as we call them—do not do their particular work properly, something goes wrong with various other organs.

A: What organs, for instance?

B: Well, take the liver. Alcohol has a very bad effect there. It destroys the cells, and these cells are replaced by what the doctors call "scar tissue" not good healthy cells. In times the liver is less and less able to act as it should as an organ, and the patient who could not live long, would really die of poisoning.

C: Is the liver the only organ affected?

B: No. This poison might paralyze the nerves so much that the person who had taken it might not be able to breathe properly and actually die of suffocation.

A: Then if beer has no food value—or not enough to be counted as such—and the alcohol it contains has been proved to be a poison, I suppose we are to conclude that there isn't much to be said in its favour.

E: I've been thinking of something else, too. A fellow needs to have all his wits about him these days to get along, and I some silly thing like beer, or any other drink, is going to make him lose a big chance for the sake of a little feeling of—of hilarity, I'll say he's crazy.

B: If he isn't crazy—as you call it—to begin with, he may end up with those who are, for one of the worst things against the use of alcohol is what it does to a fellow's brain. I don't mean just confusing it for a time so that he doesn't know what he is doing or saying, but dulling it for all time and making him one more patient for a mental hospital.

D: How about having "Let's ban beer" as a slogan?

E: And meaning it. Come on fellows!

All: (Keeping time): Let's—ban—beer! Let's—ban—beer!

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"The rugby player," interrupted Jerry. "I have his picture hanging in my room. Do you really know him?"

"Sure! Sure!" said the little man, trying not to look too important at having such an important friend.

"Last time he rode in one of my — of our — cars I could scarcely attend to my business of keeping things shiny and oiled and heated and cooled for watching and listening to him."

"Did he know you were there?"

"Can't say that he did. Of course he's a clever chap and knows when he has time to think about it that

I am to be found in all these places, but there's one place I've never been able to make my way, that is, between his lips. Strange to say, I'm rather glad about that."

"So am I," declared Jerry. "You ruined Tom Burns as a player — at least someone of your family did — and everybody would hate to see Billy B. go the same way."

"He won't. He's too anxious to be one of the world's best athletes himself, and I find that the best way to keep him at the top is for me to stay as far away from him as possible. I do help shine his shoes and keep the keys of his typewriter clean — for he does use a

typewriter at times — and I even help rub the pain out of him when he gets hurt on the field, for a good bit of me goes into the making of iodine and arnica and the liniments that all athletes use. Oh, yes, I help him outwardly a good bit, but I'm glad to say I haven't harmed him inwardly yet."

"How did you harm Tom What-ever-his-name-is?" asked Jerry.

"He harmed himself, I tell you. The little man was indignant. "What good did it do him to be the strongest man in the line and the swiftest runner on the field if he wasn't strong enough to say 'no' couldn't run away when friends — he thought they were friends — tried to coax him into places where beer and wine and whisky were sold. Do you think I liked to hear everyone blaming me because the first few drinks that he took poisoned his brain in the line and the feet did not get there soon enough to be of much use in helping him to judge the right play to make and the proper distance to 'cut'?"

"And do you think it made me very happy," he went on, "to know that I was being blamed because he lost his temper once too often and hurt one of the players badly? I didn't want to confuse his brain so that he didn't know what he was saying or doing. And I did not want to weaken his heart muscles so that he will never be able to play again."

"Why, how could you hurt his heart when it's away inside his body?" Jerry was curious.

"Just because it is inside his body and the most important part of it. The heart, which is hollow in turn divide into upper and lower rooms, as we might call them, is made of particularly strong muscle. This, like the other muscles, becomes poisoned and deadened by alcohol and is unable to do its duty as the pump for the body pumping blood through the blood vessels. When this happens again and again, the heart is weakened for good and can't be depended on by the athlete to help him run long distances and do the 'tricks' for which strength is needed. Do you think all this makes me happy?"

"I should think not," declared

Jerry. "I should think not, too," the little man went on. "And while we are speaking of such things — and I don't like to speak about my failures like this — I may tell you that it wasn't my fault entirely that Randallson, the famous yachtsman, was drowned last year. I knew as well as anyone that he shouldn't have taken two drinks before he took his boat out that day. Racing boats are tricky things and one has to be sure not to put on too much sail or turn the rudder even a little too much. It takes a clear head to race a yacht. Even when he upset he might have saved himself, for he was a good swimmer, but he forgot, when he took those drinks, that muscles are like elastic, ready to stretch and come back quite easily when the brain orders them to do so. One of the things I do when I get into a chap's nerves and muscles, it seems, is to take the stretch out of them. They get to be like an old rubber band that just won't stretch and come back so are no use in helping one to swim or to reach out and grasp something when in danger of drowning." And Jerry was sure that a tear crept down Sir Alcohol's sad little face and dropped on the blue, woolly rug.

"I am glad you were brave enough to tell us," she whispered, patting his hand. "It will help Jerry and me to remember that we are outside friends, not inside friends, of yours. And we'll try not to blame you too much when people who ought to know better can't be strong enough to say 'no' or swift enough to run away from you."

(To Be Continued) — QUESTIONS

1. How can alcohol be used as a help to athletes, particularly when they are injured or over-tired? Value 10 marks.
2. Why do athletes avoid drinking alcohol? Value 10 marks.

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