

THE HISTORY OF WINE

TRACES OF JAGS FOUND AS FAR AS HUMAN RECORDS GO.

Drinks in India Centuries ago—Ancient Egypt—Light Drinks of the Greeks—Alexander the Great's Thirst—Lecture on Drinks.

"In the first place," said Charles Pellew in a recent lecture before the students of an American university, "it is most strongly impressed upon us that the use of stimulants or narcotics has been common to all nations of the world, so far as we know their history. Almost all have used alcohol; a few, like the Mohammedans, the North American Indians, and the Maoris, are exceptions to the alcohol habit, but we find that they have used opium, tobacco, and hemp to produce approximately the same result. The idea among them all seems to have been to make themselves comfortable, this, by stupefaction to become oblivious of discomfort, physical and mental. It seems to have been a natural need of the mankind in the early stages of civilization.

"There is plenty of material for the early history of alcohol. We find traces of it in Chinese literature as far back as we can go. Two or three thousand years before Christ the Chinese passed stringent sumptuary laws to limit the liquor traffic. In India we find, from the earliest Sanskrit writings, that alcohol liquors and the use of liquors were very well known there. We find reference to them in the Rig Veda, and the sacred hymns contain some of the most eloquent praises of the vine that there are in all literature. There were two kinds of liquors used in those days. Soma, an expensive and rare wine prepared for libations to the great gods, was used sparingly for that purpose, and the remainder was piously consumed by the priests and the upper classes. Sura, the other beverage, was a cheap barley wine, fermented sometimes after being mixed with honey, and highly intoxicating. It was used by the common people and its use was very much frowned upon by the priests and wealthier people who were able to drink soma. The Hebrews had wine, both fermented and unfermented. The unfermented wine of the Hebrews, of course, had to be very much boiled down to make it keep in the climate of their country and it was probably used more as a sweetening syrup than as a beverage. In fact the Hebrew word for unfermented wine is now frequently translated 'honey.' We remember that the Bible is full of references condemning the abuse of wine."

"The Greeks were a temperate and abstinent people. They had fermented drinks made from barley, figs and dates, and the like, and they had wine. We must remember that any wine they had was very light, not stronger than our port or hock. Yet they invariably drank it mixed with water, often mixing one part of wine with fifteen of water. The ordinary proportion was one to three. At feasts or dinners, when it seemed desirable to go a little farther than usual, one was appointed who should decide the proportion. If he said one part of wine to three of water he was doing very well; if he made it two to three he was a rather wild young person. He who prescribed one to one was a true sport and a very devil of a fellow. No gentleman could possibly drink unmixed wine. Such debauchery was only the indulgence of barbarians and Scythians. It must be remembered that the festivals of Dionysius, in the season of vintage in the country and in Athens in the spring, were the great meeting periods of the city in which the Greek drama was produced. Dionysius became the patron of literature. He was a very respectable sort of deity. Intoxication at his festivals was not looked upon as drunkenness, but something like a divine effluvia. Over-indulgence in liquor, however, was restrained by law. A crime committed in drunkenness was punished with double the usual penalty."

Mr. Pellew told stories of Philip of Macedon and of Alexander the Great, proving that they and their courts were the most scandalous drinkers of antiquity. He told in great sorrow, of the fatal contest for the name of the greatest drinker, inaugurated at one of Alexander's banquets, when thirty or forty of the diners died; Promachus the prize-winner took down three gallons and died in three days. The early abstemiousness of the Romans was commended. A woman's drinking was punishable with death. There is a gruesome legend that kissing on the lips was invented by the Romans for the detection of women suspected of drinking. Mr. Pellew dwelt at some length on the sinful indulgences of the late republic and early empire. He mentioned the wondrous capacity of the huge Emperor Maximian, who, so it is said, drank six gallons without showing its effects. The Romans,

after they had conquered Italy, were dissipated and disreputable.

"The history of alcohol must begin with the history of distillation," said Mr. Pellew. "Pliny tells how oil of turpentine was distilled by holding wool over boiling turpentine until it became saturated with the vapor, to be squeezed out afterward, a drop at a time. Geber, two hundred years later, tells of a similar way of getting drinkable water from salt water. Raymond Lully, who was born in 1236, and Arnoldus de Villa Nova described the preparation and uses of alcohol. Alcohol had no end of names. Its uses were as a solvent, for cosmetics, for burning, as a preservative, and also as a medicine. Shakespeare spoke of it, it will be remembered, as 'Venetian strong waters.' Its virtues were supposed to be infinite in number. 'It keepeth off fits of the apoplexy,' one treatise says, 'if a spoonful be taken every morning.' There is no thought in the early seventeenth century and before that it was an intoxicant. Previous to that time beer, mead, and kindred drinks had been those most common among Northern nations. After the Restoration, toward the end of the seventeenth century came the day of gin. It was introduced by the Dutch wars. England went gin wild. It was in those days that the sign made its appearance: 'Drunk for a penny; dead drunk for two pence; and clean straw for nothing.' The clean straw, of course, was for the customer to sleep upon in the cellar. In 1736 the Gin law was passed, forbidding all sale of gin; it was treated with open ridicule. There were mock funeral processions of 'Madame Gin'; the mourners were all drunk and flourished gin bottles in their hands. When an attempt was made to enforce it druggists sold 'consolation' drops and 'cough mixtures.' In 1742 the law was abolished and high excise was substituted."

"The Pilgrim Fathers, were hardly an abstemious set. When the colonists sent back a list of their necessities to the Plymouth Bay Company they asked first for a minister, and then for a 'vine planter,' for seeds of wheat, rye, and barley and 'hop roots.' The ship sent out to them with ordnance and arms was provisioned for 100 men. She carried forty-five tons of beer, two tons of canary, twenty gallons of aqua vite, and six tons of water. One Mr. Higginson, a very excellent man, came over in 1628. In 1629 he wrote home most extravagant praises of the wonderful air of the new land. His stomach was strengthened, he said, and 'he could often times endure to drink water.' He went on to praise the water of the colonies by saying that it was 'almost as good as beer.' 'The water that drinke,' he remarked, 'beas healthful, fresh and briske as they that drinke beere.'

He concluded his lecture with a brief review of the various temperance revivals, noting particularly the crusade of Father Mathew in Ireland, 1839 to 1842, when 6,500,000 people out of a population of 8,000,000 signed the pledge. The whiskey consumption, as a result, fell from 6,500,000 gallons to 5,750,000.

A MINISTER'S STORY.

THE PAINFUL EXPERIENCE OF REV. C. H. BACKHUS.

For Five Months he was Helpless and Endured Agonizing Pains—Could Neither Rise up Nor sit Down Without Aid—He Tells How He Found a Cure.

From the Tilsonburg Observer.

The Rev. C. H. Backhus is a resident of Bayham township, Elgin county, Ont., and there is probably no person in the county who is better known or more highly esteemed. He is a minister of the United Brethren Church. He also farms quite extensively, superintending the work and doing quite a share of it himself despite his advanced age. But he was not always able to exert himself as he can today, as a few years ago he underwent an illness that many feared would terminate his life. To a reporter who recently had a conversation with him the rev. gentleman gave the particulars of his illness and cure, with permission to make the statement public. The story as told by Rev. Mr. Backhus is substantially as follows: about three years ago he was taken ill and the doctor who was called in pronounced his trouble an attack of la grippe. He did not appear to get any better and a second doctor was called in, but with no more satisfactory results, so far as a renewal of health was concerned. Following the la grippe; pains of an excruciating nature located themselves in his body. He grew weaker and weaker until at last he was perfectly helpless. He could not sit down nor rise from a sitting posture without assistance and when with this assistance he gained his feet he could hobble but a few steps when he was obliged to be put in a chair again. For five months these agonizing pains were endured. But at last relief so long delayed came. A friend urged him to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. He yielded to the advice and had not been taking them long when the longed for relief was noticed coming. He could move more

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easily, and the stiffness and pains began to leave his joints. He continued the use of the pills for some time longer and the cure was complete. Seeing Mr. Backhus now it would be difficult to think of him as the crippled and helpless man of those painful days. Mr. Backhus is now past his 80th year, but as he said, "by the aid of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills I am as able as those ten years younger. You can readily judge of this when I tell you I laid forty rods of rail fence this year. I am glad to add my testimony in favor of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills."

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S. KERR, Esq.
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Mr. M. Lodge, accountant W. and L. Dept., City of Moncton, and Mr. L. G. E. Lawson, my assistant also (old students of yours), are both in this office. They have spoken to me on different occasions in the highest terms of the training received at your college, and their work certainly adds weight to their testimony.

(Signed) J. C. PATTERSON, City Clerk,
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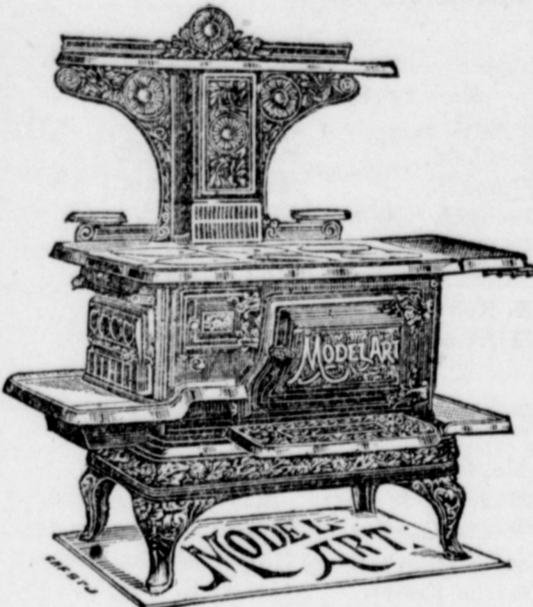
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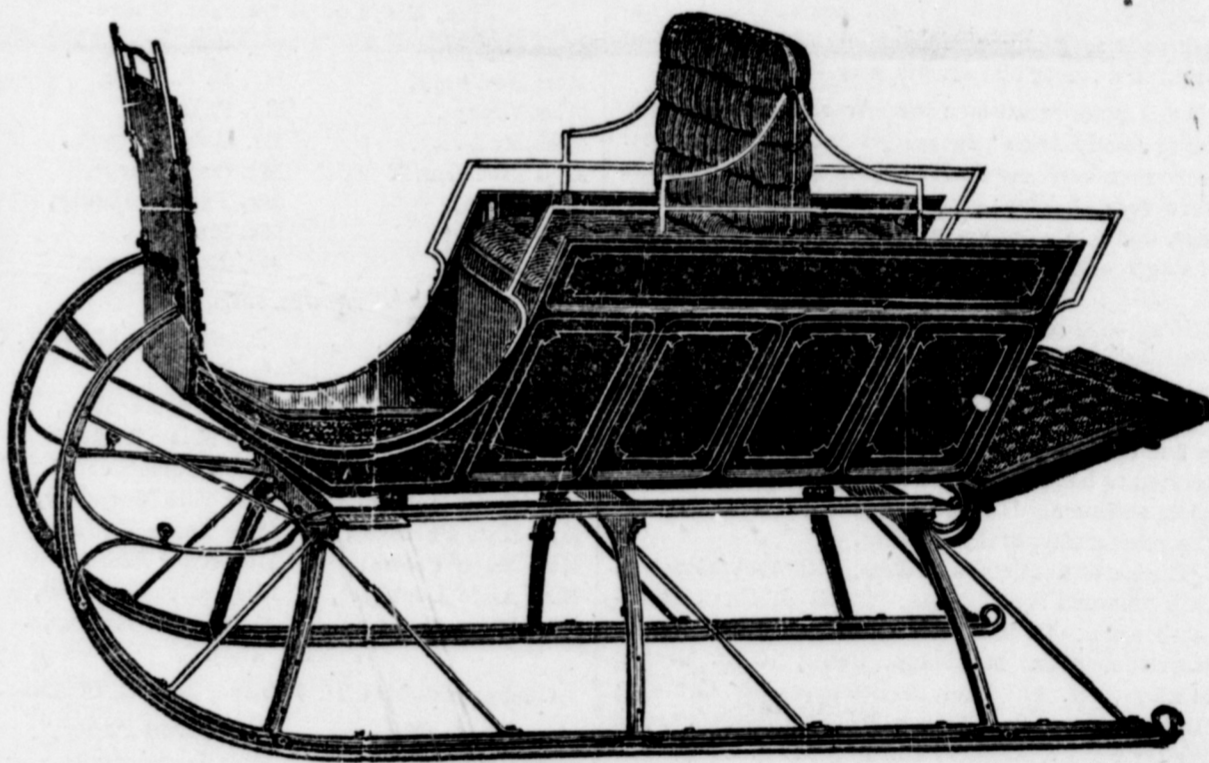
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