

To your Health

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION PRESENTS

TO YOUR HEALTH
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A HALAS AND BATCHELOR CARTOON

*Here is any man. John, Johann, Juan or Jean.
À ta santé! Salud! Prosit! Your health.*

Alcohol. What is alcohol anyway?

“Alcohol is the root of all evil. Down with King Alcohol!”

“Have you tested the delicious flavour of Bacchus’ sparkling nectar?”

“It’s drinking that causes most of the world’s misery.”

“It’s the miserable state of the world that causes so much drinking.”

“Why can’t I get some unprejudiced opinion? Some facts.

- Facts? For years, alcohol students have experimented, analysed and weighed the evidence. So far, this is what we know: alcoholic beverages can be made from almost any fruit or grain, each containing different amounts of ethyl alcohol. Alcohol, of course, enters the stomach and intestines and from there, it’s rapidly absorbed, unchanged into the blood stream. In this stream, it’s circulated again and again through all the organs, through each and every cell of the body. As it passes through the liver, alcohol is gradually changed into acetaldehyde and then into acetic acid which, in its turn, is changed into water and carbon dioxide by other body tissues. In this way, most of the alcohol is gradually oxidised but for a small part, which is eliminated through the breath and the kidneys.

- But drunkenness, how is that caused?

- Well, you see, alcohol is an anaesthetic which is brought to the brain in the blood stream. Imagine the brain as a complex control centre which determines our actions and behaviour. When alcohol enters the brain, it interferes with these functions. First to be affected is the reasoning part, then inhibition and memory. Gradually, alcohol affects vision, speech and hearing. Eventually, muscular coordination is affected. If all those faculties are put to sleep, your consciousness goes, leaving only the automatic processes such as the control of breathing. If this is overcome, the heart stops.

- Then alcohol must be very dangerous.

- Very few people die from taking too much alcohol at one time but there are other dangers. See what I mean?

- Why? Why do people drink?

- Most people drink because it's the accepted custom. Some drink to escape the tensions of everyday life. But for a few people, alcohol becomes an obsession. Such a man begins with some deep conflict in his personality. His friends drink for relaxation but when he drinks, it's to escape his conflicts. So he begins to look for drinking occasions as often as possible. When he can't find any other excuse, he sneaks a drink alone. Eventually, there comes a time when he draws a blank. Forgetting everything he's said or done. Later, when sober, he can remember only fragments. Now, after a few drinks, he can't stop. For him, alcohol is no longer a beverage, it's become a drug. Then follows reproof, resentment, aggression, remorse. He loses his job, tries to start again in another town. It doesn't work. He can't begin the day without another drink. And after one drink, he must have more and more and more, more until he lands in prison or the hospital depending on whether his community understands that he is not a criminal but a sick man for whom the only price of freedom is to break away completely. This isn't easy, he needs help. There are doctors, social workers and nurses who understand the alcoholic and can help him. And there are those of once were alcoholics themselves, whose understanding comes from experience: Alcoholics Anonymous.

- But why do people continue to drink in spite of these dangers?

- Alcohol has been used since the beginning of time when it was believed to be the stream of life. A brotherhood of blood later began a brotherhood in wine. A contract signed and sealed in alcohol would not be broken. Birth, betrothal, marriage, all celebrated in a cup. The roots of superstition are deep. Listen.

- I'm afraid we can't trust Bob. He won't drink with us.

- Look how well Bill holds his liquor. He's a real man.

- But Doctor, if I stop drinking, people will think I'm peculiar.

- You see? Alcohol means many things to many people. To some, it means release and to some, torture. The problem stands: will alcohol control us or can we control alcohol?

THE END

Transcript : William Sabot