

ALCOHOL AND THE HUMAN RACE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649043217

Alcohol and the Human Race by Richmond Pearson Hobson

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RICHMOND PEARSON HOBSON

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By

RICHMOND PEARSON HOBSON

Late U. S. Navy, Late M. C.



NEW YORK

CHICAGO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON AND EDINBURGH

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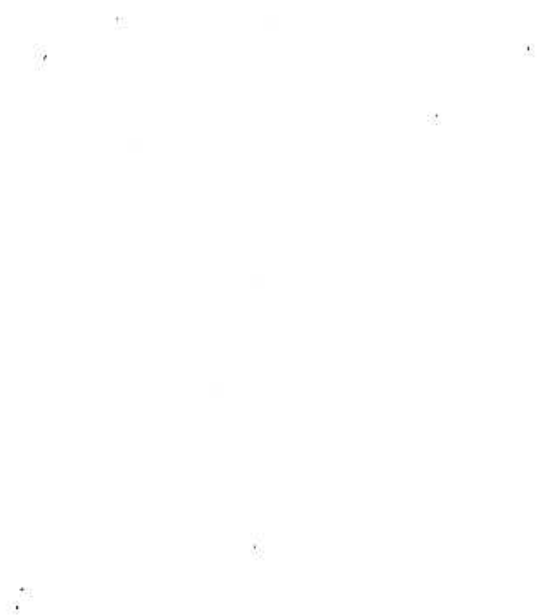
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May 5, 1934

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 17 North Wabash Ave.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
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To
MY WIFE



Foreword

IN 1908 the Legislature of Alabama, after enacting a Prohibition statute, submitted a Prohibition Amendment to the State constitution as a referendum to be voted on by the people early the following year.

I was then a member of Congress from that State. My political advisers, in whose wisdom I had confidence, urged me to come out against the Amendment, as most of the men in public life in the State were doing, and I had about decided to follow their advice, for, though taught in childhood to be abstemious, eighteen years of life in the United States Navy and the superficial observation of an average man of the world, had led me to look upon the liquor question as a mere matter of police regulation which would be out of place in the organic law. The thought that my mother, if alive, would have been for the Amendment, led me to decide, before announcing myself, to make an investigation as to whether any issue of a deep abiding nature, fit for incorporation in the organic law of a state, were involved.

I recognized at once that the question was wholly one of fact rather than judgment, and that it hinged on the actual properties of alco-

hol, a chemical compound. I therefore proceeded, with the aid of the Librarian of Congress, to assemble all available scientific information on the subject. I was startled to find, almost at the outset, that alcohol is not a product built up of grain, grapes and other food materials, but is the toxin of yeast or ferment germs, which, after devouring the food materials, excrete alcohol as their waste product. Though abstemious myself, the thought that intoxicating liquors were really built up of the excretions of living organisms removed all glamour from the cup, and produced a reaction of loathing. Soon I was shocked to find that this toxin causes degeneracy in all living things, disrupts the germ plasm, blights offspring, and, in the end, entails sterility and extinction. I saw at once that instead of being a mere matter of local police regulation its handling was the most fundamental and organic question confronting society, involving not only the integrity of free institutions, but the lives of nations, and the perpetuity of the race. I could not understand how my ignorance had been so dense regarding so important a scientific matter since, at Annapolis and at the Ecole d' Application du Génie Maritime, I had been trained for a scientific profession—that of Naval Constructor and Marine Engineer. After beginning the study of alcohol, however, I never ceased. This book is the product of scientific investigations continued steadily from 1908 until now—investigations in