THE CODDLED OCTOPUS

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A common species of the octopus has eight arms which reach out in eight different directions for its prey. Then it fastens an arm upon its victim if it is difficult to pry it loose. The most persistent and deadly octopus we know of is the liquor traffic. Too little effort on a national scale is being made to destroy it. Instead of declaring a war of extermination upon the beast or endeavoring to chop off its tentacles, we protect it, cuddle it and tell it to be a nice octopus, while we treat it as a bonsai member of the family. In the meantime it contentedly sucks the blood of our people and our institutions.

These eight arms are reaching out into eight different spheres of operation.

The Young People:

A second arm is reaching out for the young people. We are glad for certain safeguards here prescribed by law. In 32 states intoxicating beverages cannot be sold to young people under 21 years of age. The legal age in New York State is 18. Because of the shocking increase in drinking by teenagers, a vigorous fight is being waged to raise the limit to 21. The liquor interests are concerned in the age level in the various states since millions of liquor dollars are at stake. The octopus is interested in reducing the age limit to younger years.

The Family:

Another arm is working on the family. The beer advertising over radio and television is perhaps the most lucrative in the whole industry. Here all members of the family are reached together. All of us are interested in the daily news. But how often are we interrupted with: “More news in just a moment!” and the moment expands into minutes while we hear: “It is brewed with pure spring water”; “It outshines because it excels”; “Be sure to lay in your supply for the holidays.”

Then the family gathers before the television. Not only do we hear the smooth-tongued salesman but we see the decorated bottles, the frothy foam and the imbuing of so-called high society. We join wholeheartedly with those members of Congress who are chopping away at the tentacles of liquor advertising.

The Housewife:

A fourth arm of the beast is working on the housewife. She must be persuaded that “beer belongs.” Then she makes up her shopping list it must include the favorite brand of beer. For her convenience she will be provided a recipe book that tells how to give the rum flavor to her pies and puddings.

When it comes to entertaining, many small favors are provided for her guests to remind them that the drink is the main attraction, if not the prime purpose of the party.

The Nurturist:

A fifth arm reaches out for the nurturist. Take Seagram Distillers word for it: “Tonight when it’s ‘One for the Road’ be sure to make it coffee.” How considerate! Drink all you want! If you still have room, a cup of coffee will assure you a safe trip home. Too many drivers are following that kind of nonsense.

The latest boon to motorists is a new type refrigerator to be installed under the hood of all kinds of motor vehicles to provide an all day’s supply of drink, including six twelve ounce cans of beer. This will enable the motorists to keep served all the way along. Just chew the empty cans along the highway!
The Traveling Public:
The traveling public is another segment of society which must be accommodated. So the cross-country passenger trains carry a miniature tavern to keep the customers happy. On a crowded train in order to find a seat, I was obliged to ride in a section of one of these rolling taverns; I saw men and women ride for hours sipping at their liquor, glass after glass, throughout the entire journey.

Now the airplanes, despite the protests of the stewardesses and many passengers, are serving liquor. The American Airlines serves liquor in flights of more than four hours duration. The United Airlines follows the same practice. The Capital Airlines is the only one of the five lines operating between Chicago and New York which does not serve liquor on any of its flights. All air coach flights so far have no liquor served on any of their flights.

The Advertising Agencies:
The advertising agencies are held by another of these octopus tentacles. Newspapers, bill boards and magazines collect their millions in advertising all kinds of liquor. They prey upon the vices of the people for money. They defend themselves on the ground of legality and totally ignore the issue of morality.

Thank God not all are like that. Twenty-five million Americans read newspapers which refuse all liquor advertising. Among these are such influential dailies as the

Kansas City Morning Star and The Evening Times, the Des Moines Register and The Evening Tribune, The Minneapolis Morning Tribune and Evening Star. Then there is the Frank E. Gannett chain of ten influential dailies which have not sold themselves to mammon.

The Moderationists:
The moderationist is reserved for an number eight. He is the traffic's most valued customer. He is against the toper, the drunkard and all who "can't handle their liquor." He has no sympathy with those who "drink too much" though he has not been able to define how much too much is.

The latest Business Men's Research says that there are in the United States 65 million drinkers; 5 million alcoholics; and 20 millions who sometimes drink to excess. All of these are termed as moderationists with no intention of drinking "too much." The only ones whom this octopus cannot touch are those who practice temperance in all things helpful and total abstinence in all things harmful.