

Arrests For Drunkenness Show Marked Decrease Since Saloons Are Closed

Police Records Disclose Benefits Attendant Upon Stopping Sale of Liquor.

HOMES ARE HAPPIER

Pittsburgh is undergoing a unique experience; it is testing out a law before putting it into effect; making, in fact, a trial of prohibition before it must vote, albeit indirectly, through the election of state senators and representatives, for the ratification of the prohibition amendment. And Pittsburgh, after two weeks of trial, found that it is good.

Whether alcohol is a drug or a food, whether it has medicinal or simply narcotic qualities, is a moot question; medical authorities are divided in their opinions. One thing is certain: In times of stress, civic authorities have found it advisable, for many reasons, to close the saloons and liquor-dispensing institutions.

Facing the worst scourge in the history of the nation, the State Commissioner of Health, believing that the epidemic of Spanish influenza might thus be the more readily combatted, closed the saloons of the state, and a few days later ordered the closing of the wholesale liquor establishments.

Chief among those who have benefited by the closing order, beside the wives and children of the tipplers, are the police, whose duties have materially lessened.

It must not be understood that major crime has shown a decrease. It is too soon yet to make comparative figures in this regard, and it is a well-established fact that crime in time of war always increases. Whether this is due to the hectic influence of excitement, to enhanced opportunity or to a lowering of business safeguards may be left to the individual opinion. Pittsburgh, like every city in the world, has seen a steady growth in crime since the war began. But since the week of October 13 it has seen a most remarkable decrease in the crime of drunkenness.

Slackers and Drunks.

Drunkenness is a minor crime in the eyes of the law. But next to arrests for being slackers it was the most prolific cause of police action. "Slackers" come first; "drunks" a close second.

Now the fact that Statistician McDonald of the Department of Public Safety records thousands of slackers being arrested here is not a reflection on Pittsburgh. Nearly 80 per cent of the 1,800 arrested in one month were apprehended in Pittsburgh, but had no residence here. They had come from all over the United States, hoping to hide themselves in the mazes of a great industrial city. How futile were those efforts the records show.

Figures on Booze.

Then comes the arrests for drunkenness, with the attendant disgrace, the fine, the loss of pay and the entailed hardship. In the week ending October 25, 1917, there were 899 such arrests in Pittsburgh. For the week beginning September 22, 1918, there were 607 arrests for drunkenness in Pittsburgh. Then came a dry period. For the week beginning October 13 there were 272 arrests for drunkenness in Pittsburgh. In the five days ending October 25, 1918, there were but 118 such arrests. There was a falling off, too, in crimes directly associated with booze, such as street

soliciting, visiting disorderly houses and the like.

There have been other benefits, as well as a decrease in crime noted. The Rev. B. L. Scott, superintendent of the Pittsburgh district of the Anti-Saloon League, tells the following:

A prominent Homewood grocer is authority for the statement that in the past two weeks a number of bills which he had put in the lost column have either been paid in full or in part by men who have been heavy drinkers but, with their supply of liquor cut off and the temptation gone, are taking on a new lease of life. Not only that, but the families are being better provided for, if the quality and quantity of groceries sold is any criterion. And this is not an isolated case, for several merchants on the Northside have come forward with the same testimony.

Many Homes Happier.

But the most interesting and yet touching part is the word that comes from the homes which have been too long under the shadow of the beer keg and the whisky bottle. The public would be surprised if it could hear openly the thoughts and sentiments of the wives and the children too, of the men who today are sober and are gladdening the family circle with their presence. Many a home in Pittsburgh and vicinity is the happier and brighter, if we are to believe the telephone messages that have been received.

It would be a fallacy to say that all drinking has ceased and that the millennium has come. No sane person would make such statements. And then too, it should not be forgotten that many of the men in the liquor business, lawless under license or prohibition, are still secretly selling. We have had at least 10 complaints in the last 24 hours, and these doubtless are only a small part of the trade that always has been no respecter of law. But we do claim and can prove that Pittsburgh is a better place in which to live; that some homes are happier and brighter; that old bills are being paid which were almost forgotten and that arrests for drunkenness as well as drinking in general has decreased under the order that now prevails and against which the liquor men are up in arms.

Tabulated Statistics.

Is it not surprising in the light of all this and when it is considered that churches, theaters, moving picture houses and other places are also closed by this order, that the liquor men have had the audacity to send not one delegation but many, so we are informed, to Harrisburg to plead and even threaten, if we may believe what we hear, State Health Commissioner Royer, because he will not open their places and allow them to spread disease and filth and misery and crime? To our way of thinking the conduct of the liquor men in this time of suffering and death should arouse the indignation and contempt of every right-thinking man and woman.

The following tabulation compiled from the records of the police department shows the comparison in the number of arrests for drunkenness at the various police stations for the weeks beginning September 22 and October 13:

Police Station.	Number of Arrests.	
	Week of Sept. 22	Week of Oct. 13
No. 1 (Central)	24	112
No. 2 (Center Ave.)	68	23
No. 3 (Penn. Ave.)	44	19
No. 4 (Oakland)	11	1
No. 5 (Forty-third St.)	25	15
No. 6 (Frankstown Ave.)	26	30
No. 7-9 (S. S. Dist.)	60	14
No. 10 (Hazelwood)	22	7
No. 11 (Alleghen Hill)	0	2
No. 12 (Squirrel)	51	22
No. 13 (Woods Run)	18	13
Totals	607	272

Decrease, 335 arrests, or 55 per cent.