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# Beer

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"Lehigh?" says the Eastern undergraduate. "Hell of a wet place, I've heard, drink any amount of beer there, too."

From the Sweet Young Thing:

"Oh yes, Lehigh. That's where Jack used to go and get beautifully drunk on beer."

The vaudeville actress:

"Ever been to Bethlehem, dearie? That's where those Lehigh boys give you beer. Only place I know of where they do that."

Rev. J. J. Sproggins:

"Yes, Lehigh is a very good place, indeed an excellent school, so I'm told, but the authorities are woefully lax in the matter of beer-drinking among the students."

Now these are all opinions, but there must be something backing them. The casual observer of Lehigh will admit that there is a remarkably large percentage of truth in them, and, if pressured, will also state that he found the Beer in Bethlehem plentiful, if not first-class. The fact is then, that Beer and the drinking of Beer are old and well known Lehigh institutions.

First of all, what is this beverage? As found in Bethlehem it is a liquid, varying from dark brown to pale yellow, and with a taste that depends on the drinker and the nearness of the local elections. It is a fair quencher of thirst and a reliable, although time consuming, means of attaining that state known politely as inebriation.

But Beer is much more than this. It is responsible for the formation of many beautiful and lasting friendships; it promotes Fraternity, Equality and the Brotherhood of Man; and, as has been pointed out before, it has been the source and fountain head of the most austere and respected college honorary societies. Yet its significance is even deeper than this. In the European universities the concepts of students and Beer are indissolubly linked. From the mists of the Middle Ages, drinking songs have been passed down from one generation of students to the next, forming a vast body of tradition that is a vital part of university life. We see, therefore, that Beer has been the chief delight of the student, the boon companion of culture, and a necessary part of the classical university training.

It will be realized then, that the acquaintance of Beer is one that must be made

slowly, carefully, and with the respect due to a consecrated and venerable institution. It must begin in the Freshman year, and be continued until the time of graduation. Thus, for the neophyte, fresh from the constraining influences of his pre-college existence, a ritual somewhat as follows should be observed. Those who have already taken minor orders, usually Sophomores conscious of the importance of their duties, will proceed thus:

"No Lehigh man can rightly call himself such until he has drunk his numerals in Beer. Frosh, have you done this? 'Tis well. This matter must be attended to. This evening we go to the Inn." And the neophyte goes.

The first glass is poured out, "This foam looks familiar; maybe the stuff isn't so bad after all. Well, here goes, Ugh!"

The initiate makes a heroic effort to produce a sickly smile, glances around, and announces loudly, "Great Stuff." This response, being the orthodox one, is received with grave and approving nods by those charged with the initiation, and the ritual proceeds, until the numerals have been drunk, or until outraged nature calls a halt. The first step has now been taken.

From this time on the Frosh is supposed to prepare himself to take higher orders. If the taste of Beer comes rapidly, then all is well, but for many who are cursed with a delicate palate, long and grueling practice, glass after glass poured down in a solitary bar-room, must be gone through before the son of Lehigh can say with conviction, "Not so bad. Let's have another round." Our subject has now reached that enviable state where he may drink at any time, and enjoy it.

Now, throughout the next three years of college life, or, in some cases, the next four years, Beer becomes in turn for the student a personage whose acquaintance must be made, then a casual friend, an intimate associate, and finally, a bosom companion. In the Sophomore year it is used chiefly on state occasions; after the games, before an unusually large "brawl," or when a rising feeling of exasperation at everything in general required alleviation. The process is yet to a slight extent self-conscious, and there is the least feeling of swagger and braggadocio still connected with the act of entering the bar-room, placing the foot carelessly on the rail, and saying "Four Beers."

By the third year Beer has become for many a habit, to be indulged in as often as time, money, and discretion permit. It now forms a prelude to most activities. Thus:

- "Going down to the game? Let's get a few Beers beforehand."

- "How many shall we get before going to the Colly?"

- "What time is your date? Nine o'clock. Plenty of time to have a few."

And even:

- "Going out tonight, old man?"

"No, got to study."

"Have a couple of Beers with me first, just to clear your head. Nothing like Beer to put you in the right frame of mind."

For the Senior, the adept in the cult of Beer-drinking, many pleasant variations are possible in the form of the worship. He is now in a position to discriminate; it must not be merely Beer but good Beer, and he can pronounce on it with the air of an assured connoisseur. Also the mode of consumption is capable of assuming many forms. The worshiper may elect to sip it slowly, while engaged in communion with kindred spirits at some favorite saloon or exclusive Beer club; he may choose to pass a few hours in solitary meditation on the meaning of Life, with Beer as the only companion to his thoughts; or, in more boisterous company, he may make of Beer-drinking a contest. This last may be quite elaborate, with ten men competing for the honor of downing a glass in the shortest possible time. For this, as would be expected in a scientific school, stop-watches are often used to insure accuracy in timing. The real experts can do it under two seconds, pouring the drink straight down without swallowing.

Graduation, for most, puts an end to this satisfying diversion. The few occasions after Commencement when Beer is indulged in are sporadic and hurried, and lack the surroundings and associates which contribute so much to the pleasure of Beer-drinking in college. The "Old Grads," it is true, try to revive them during reunions, and attempt to compress a year's normal consumption into a few days, but these pathetic strivings to regain past joys lack the old flavor of undergraduate times, and are more apt to achieve a headache than a reincarnation.

Yet all is not lost forever. Although convention and the state of his digestion prevent active participation in the rites of Beer-drinking, the Old Grad can still live over the gorgeous undergraduate days, when much that was desirable could be found within a Beer-mug. Those memories, brightened with the passage of time, form the last stage in the progress of the devotee; he has all the joys of Beer without the corporeal after-effects, and hears again, in the voice of an old and well-tried friend, the magic formula:

"Bottoms up, everybody, this round's on me."