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Anti-Alcohol League is Active in France

Paris.—Models of ravaged brains and livers, dramatic colored charts, posters showing father brandishing a drink in one hand and a black bottle in the other, while he kicks the children about the house, hold a crowd open-mouthed all day before a great window frontage on the Boulevard St. Germain.

Thirst-driven Americans see the exhibit and shudder. They are afraid it presages the beginning of the end of what they regard as the golden age of European culture; the present blissful time when the French bartender has at last learned to mix a good martini and a palate-soothing bronx. For the big window on the boulevard houses the exhibit of the Ligue Nationale Contre Alcoolisme, a name that needs no translating.

The league is not a prohibition measure. It is, strictly, a league against alcoholism and is receiving the support of a large faction of the French people. Already it is making itself felt in France; its posters are in all railway stations and public places, and its greatest practical achievement has been the banishment of absinthe from France.

Its posters read something like this:

1. Do you know that liqueurs are one of the greatest causes of tuberculosis?
2. Do you know that aperitifs are deadly poisons?
3. Do you know that the use of picons often leads to insanity?

At the bottom of the poster, however, in small type, is the announcement that the league does not want people to drink only water; but no, there are the wines of France, yes, and the beers. It describes some and tells of their good effects so attractively that the reader usually leaves the poster in search of a cafe. The Frenchman still believes that water is only useful for washing and to flow under bridges.

Just across from the offices of the league is the Deux Magots, one of the most famous of the Latin Quarter cafes. Here at tables you see students sipping the liqueurs that cause tuberculosis, quaffing the aperitifs that are deadly poisons, and swigging the picons that often lead to insanity. But occasionally they cast an eye toward the crowd in front of the league window, and as they walk up the boulevard, they have a worried look at the models that show the horrible state of the human liver and lights under alcohol. The window has a sort of fascination for them.

An educational campaign takes years, but I believe that it is the beginning of the end and that alcohol, except for wine, beer and the cider of the north, is doomed in France. The reason I think so is because of the look on the students' faces when they leave the league's window, the fact that absinthe has already gone, and because the anti-alcohol forces are organized while the consumers are not. It is only a question of time.