

Monday Afternoon

A COLUMN FOR WOMEN

By Rev. William J. May

ANOTHER LITTLE DRINK

Over, and over again in the Gospels we find evil spirits crying out to Jesus, "Let us alone! What have we to do with Thee?" In effect, they said "Why do you not mind your own business? We do not interfere with you; why should you interfere with us?" That has been the cry of every evil spirit in every age. They have no thought for the home that is being wrecked, the spirit that is being tortured, the life that is being ruined, because someone is possessed by an evil spirit. Let us alone! Imagine what it had meant to the man himself and to those who loved him and those who lived near him, that the man at Gadara was possessed by devils. Yet when Jesus endeavoured to heal him, the evil spirits declared that Jesus had no right to interfere with them.

The Drink Evil

In earlier days, we talked of fighting the drink evil; now we have become more polite and talk of solving the drink problem. The change of name has not altered the fact. We are still having to fight the drink evil. Would that we had some of the forthrightness of **John Wesley** who said of the distillers of spirits "All who sell them in the common way to any that will buy, are poisoners general. They murder his Majesty's subjects by wholesale, neither does their eye pity or spare. They drive them to hell, like sheep. And what is their gain? Is it not the blood of these men? Who would envy their large estates and sumptuous palaces? A curse is in the midst of them! The curse of God cleaves to the stones, the timber, the furniture of them."

And to those who would shirk the fight against evil, he said, "You have faith in God, and in Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent, faith which overcometh the world; and hereby you conquer both evil and shame . . . Qualified, then, as you are and armed for the fight, will you be like the children of Ephraim who, being equipped and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle?"

"Will you leave a few of your brethren to stand alone against all the hosts of the aliens?"

You do not need a host of figures to prove the reality of the drink evil; in fact, figures are almost useless. **The real cost of the drink traffic is not measured by the money spent or by the number of convictions for drunkenness, but in the wreckage of homes, in the loss of human happiness, in the betrayed love and ruined character. You know the cost down your street and among your acquaintances. Someone noticed a household hint that alcohol will remove grass stains from summer cloths. He added, "it will remove summer clothes entirely; also spring and winter clothes, not only from the man who drinks it, but also from his wife and children. It will remove furniture from the homes and food from the pantry; the smile from the face of his wife and happiness from his home. In fact, as a remover, alcohol has no equal.**

Thou Shalt Not Kill

This is one of the Commandments, whose authority and truth nobody disputes, but why do we limit it to the killing of the body? There are far more terrible forms of murder than that. Did not Jesus say that the death of the body was not something to be feared, but what we needed to fear was murder of the soul. That is the great condemnation of the drink traffic. Modern plays and novels all persistently suggest that there is no worry, however great; no sorrow, however deep, which cannot be healed and comforted by another glass of whisky. What utter folly it is to prescribe a glass of whisky as a cure for a broken heart. You might as well offer it as a cure for a broken leg. "Temperance," said Xenophon, a Greek philosopher, who lived about 400 years before Christ, "means abstinence from things dangerous, as the use of intoxicating wines."

Alcohol has not changed its nature from that day to this, nor lost its capacity for evil.

Thou shalt not kill—a woman's honour, her self-respect, her health, her faith, her character—in a word, thou shalt not kill a woman's soul. Anything that makes a woman less of a woman, than she might or should be, has committed murder. Anything that takes a woman, who might have been a fine mother, a good wife, the maker of a good home, and degrades her to the level of a slut, has committed murder. The real woman, the woman she might have been, the woman God intended her to be, has been murdered. Do you see now why alcohol is not just a problem, but an evil? Do you see now why Jesus said "Fear not those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I warn you who to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear him." Is not that precisely what alcohol does, and the drinker drags others with him.

George Bernard Shaw hated the drink traffic with a deadly hatred, because his father had been an habitual drunkard and his son was never able to forget the man who was good when he was sober, but horrible when he was drugged with alcohol. Many years after his father died, when Shaw had had long experience as a social worker, he wrote: "The reason why bad social conditions are still tolerated, why there is no divine discontent in the hearts of the people, is that they are doped and drugged with drink. **Liquor is chloroform!**"

So the business goes on. Men and women die in darkness at our side. **Can we stand by in careless indifference while murder is being done?** Like the good man who, in stuttering eagerness invented the word, cry "I'll have nowt to do with this moderation, botheration pledge. I'll be right down, out and out, tee-tee-total for ever," we that are strong are out to bear the burdens of the weak and not to please ourselves.

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