

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## THE RED, RED WINE:

A TEMPERANCE STORY.

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THE REV. J. JACKSON WRAY'S LAST STORY.

CHAPTER XXXIX.—(Continued.)

There was a silence in the place—a silence that might be felt. The measure of the feeling that prevailed may be understood when I say that Norwood Hayes sat with a face pale and bloodless, stunned, as though an unseen hand had dealt him a giant blow. There was no further discussion—there hardly could be; the motion was passed without a dissentient voice. It was finally arranged that a minister from Hull, a well-known but comparatively youthful temperance advocate, who had up to now not accepted any pastorate, but had confined himself to temperance work, should be invited to uplift the flag of total abstinence—unique event!—within the walls of the house of God.

A better man for the purpose they could not have happened on. The Rev. Edwin Hallowes believed that Abstinence was a part and parcel of practical Christianity. He did not believe in it as a good thing that might with advantage be tacked on to Christianity, but to him it was a part, and an essential part. Indeed, according to his idea, and it is undoubtedly the right one, whatever thing is wholly good must from its very nature and the nature of Christ Himself, be of the essence of Christianity. Another good point about the man was that he never descended to bandy words and arguments with those who by this means try to shield themselves from the accusations, not of the Temperance speaker, but their own conscience. The point does not arise whether Christ drank fermented wine two thousand years ago in Galilee. This is the question that Hallowes drove home. If Christ lived here and now, what would His course of action be? There is but one answer, and the young evangelist knew that that question fairly answered, decided the matter.

Not only on the Temperance question, but on every other question, this was a favorite formula of his, and though it has no direct bearing on my story, still so good a one is it, that I would fain impress it on my reader's minds as a guide at every meeting of the roads. Sometimes it really seems that either of the two ways is right. It never is so, but it seems to be. Then it is the time to ask the question, 'What would Jesus do?' and there is no longer any mistake as to which is right.

It happened that Mr. Hallowes was engaged two or three Sundays deep, and was, therefore, unable to occupy the Netherborough pulpit for that length of time. Nevertheless, arrangements were made that he should preach on the first vacant Sunday he had. Just two weeks before that date, Cuthbert Hayes, having 'learnt business,' returned to his father's house.

The morning sermon was a powerful discourse on the duty and the privilege of Christian self-sacrifice. It was one sustained home-thrust, and some who heard it visibly shrank through the acuteness of their mental pain. Speaking of the duty of every Christian to abstain from strong drink, he said, after he had painted in strong colors the evil doings of the liquor fiend:—

'Is this indictment true? Then what has a Christian, that is, a Christ's man, to do with this accursed thing? Can a man touch pitch and not be defiled? Can the body of Christ receive into it and assimilate the perilous stuff from which the Head of the body would have turned His pure lips away? It is true that drink has poisoned the blood of the unborn babe, doomed from its first cry to be

the bond-slave of alcohol—but it tastes good! It is true that noble youth, with the stamp of manhood on its brow, is wrecked and shattered and broken in the very morning of his days—but it is pleasant to the taste! It is true that it has prostituted fair maidenhood to a career of shame, and a grave before girlhood's years are past—but it is an enjoyable beverage! It is true that it has shattered manhood, killed character, quenched the fires of genius, hurled noble reputations into fathomless mire, covered grey hairs with grimest shame, and broken hearts almost angelic in their power of faith and love. It has done all this, and dug hells of fire and agony, that may neither be bottomed nor gauged—but it is a refreshing thing to quaff, leaves quite a glow behind it, gives a flip to jaded nerves, and adds an impulse of cheer to the social board!

"So fill up the glass, and let the wine pass,  
And joy in the juice of the vine;  
If others go wrong, as they stumble along,  
Why, that is no business of mine."

'And this is the conventional Christ's man! This! This! This! This is he who hath heard the call of the Master! He of the thorn-crown! He of the wounded hands and side! And as the gentle Jesus moves on with bleeding feet, trampling over mountains, bleak and bare, to seek and save the lost, with an anxious love that surges to a heart-break, He says to the Christian, "Follow Me," and this is the way he does it!'

The influence of the sermon was immense. Not a soul present but what was stirred to its very depths, and doubtless had he so desired, Mr. Hallowes might then and there have gained many of those present as soldiers in the Holy War. But he had another plan. He was not content with the possibility of gaining one or two where he might haply gain all, and powerful as his morning's discourse had been, he had reserved himself for a supreme effort, and a more direct appeal, at night. Aaron Brigham was in ecstasies.

'That's preaching nob,' said he, 'naebody can slink away an' say 'at it was t' thing for 'is next deear naybour. There's nae misteeake about it, hit ivery yan o' us, and it's boond te deea good.'

CHAPTER XL.

But how shall I describe the evening sermon? It was a veritable masterpiece, and had a powerful influence for good, because the preacher put his soul into his words.

He took for his text the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses of Mark nine, and graphically described the scene at the foot of Mount Hermon, the gathered crowd, the demon-tormented boy, the distracted father, and the baffled disciples. Up on the hill top the favored three were witnessing the glory of the Master, and Peter, like many a Christian of to-day, felt that it was good to be there, though all the time in the vale below, devils were playing their lawless pranks without restraint. 'Too many Christians,' said the preacher, 'are content to be on the mountain alone with God, while the world, of which they are the salt, goes on its unimpeded way to corruption.'

'Down the mountain side comes the Saviour, but what a humiliating and heart-breaking picture it was that met His sight. A scene of triumphant infidelity and defeat! truth; a picture, more shame to us who bear His name,

painted in standing and staring colors all around us at this present day! British youth, writhing and pining under the spell of regions of destroying devils, a grief-stricken army of despairing fathers, heart-broken mothers, and shame-smitten friends appealing to the Christian forces of the church to "Cast them out"—and we cannot! An atheistic unbelief laughs aloud, and the laughter is echoed from an exultant hell.'

Then in loving, sympathetic words he described how the Man of Sorrow vanquished the devil in the boy, and presented him a living soul once again to his father.

'There may be many demons,' continued the preacher, 'but surely the chief of them all is the demon Drink, and truly the description here given applies to him in every way. He was a "foul spirit." That by common consent is a description of the drink fiend as it wrecks and ruins the lives of those of whom it has become possessed. How a "foul spirit" in one case can be an angel of light in another is beyond my ken.'

It was a "dumb" spirit; and is not this? It is secret, silent, insidious in its approach upon its victim, who hears no warning, detects no harm. The rattle-snake springs its rattle ere it curves to strike; but all unknown, unnoted, the dumb devil creeps amid family socialities, friendly gatherings, and public festivities—secret and silent as the grave it designs to fill. The victim becomes dumb too, and indulges his new-found craving in the silence of secrecy.

'Deaf it was; and is not this deaf? Never an ear has it for the cries and pleadings of the reluctant victim, or the tears of the wife, the mother, the child. The piteous cry, "Come home!" only wakes the vacuous laughter of the bar-room; for all are deaf, stone deaf, and reason, friendship, pity, anger and even love, shall speak in vain to the deaf, dumb devil of Strong Drink!

"Wheresoever he taketh him." The victim is at his power; every succeeding step is downward, and at every step the subtle coils are tightening round the victim of the demon Drink. There "may be" sufficient resistance to snap the damning spell. But will you ask the future of your lad on that fine-spun thread of "may be," while the open gulf of a likelier "shall be" lies underneath? Norwood Hayes hung his head, and a tear-drop glistened in his eye. Just what had he done—he knew it—and the thread had broken. Enticement first, and then compulsion. The devil taketh him and hurries him down the fatal steeps, though the victim knows that the dead are there, and his feet take hold on hell.

"Dasheth him down"; the sight is too common; "foameth, gnasheth, grindeth his teeth"; not half strong enough, a picture of delirium; and then "he pineth away"—for when the fierce, unholy stimulus is away, there is collapse, the nerveless, quaking limb, the devious step, the hesitating foot, the face all blotched or sallow.

'Again, "How long ago is it since this came to him?" Of a child." I have seen a mother give it to her babe, and the bright young folk around the dinner table have become acquainted with it there.' And again Norwood Hayes groaned in spirit, for that was where Cuthbert had first learnt to drink—from his father's glass.

'It hath cast him into the fire or water. Is not that true to life? How many accidents have you had in Netherborough that you cannot trace to drink? Few, I am certain, though I do not know the town.'

(To be Continued.)