

**SIDELIGHTS FROM
SHAKESPEARE ON THE
ALCOHOL PROBLEM**

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Sidelights from Shakespeare on the Alcohol Problem by Christine I. Tinling

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CHRISTINE I. TINLING

**SIDELIGHTS FROM
SHAKESPEARE ON THE
ALCOHOL PROBLEM**

Sidelights from Shakespeare

ON THE

Alcohol Problem

CHRISTINE I. TINLING

PRICE FIFTEEN CENTS

NATIONAL WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

FOREWORD

*"My Shakespeare!
Thou art alive still, while thy book doth live,
And we have wits to read and praise to give."*

—BEN JONSON.

Alcohol is on its trial. It has been arraigned before the bar of public opinion on at least a dozen counts. It stands accused of murder in the first degree and of every other crime. Many are the witnesses who bear testimony every day to its evil deeds; on the other hand there are those who argue in its defense.

Let us hear from a few of these as they speak to us from the pages of the immortal Shakespeare, giving faithful testimony to their innermost thoughts and feelings on this important subject. They are as much alive as they ever were. We pass them on the street, and we live with them in the home, for human nature remains ever the same, and as for Shakespeare it has well been said of him, "He was not for an age but for all time."

It is true we cannot call these witnesses into any court of law. Did we attempt to detain them they would "vanish into air, into thin air," and "like the baseless fabric of a vision leave not a rack behind." They are such stuff as dreams are made of, but they are none the less real for that. Nothing is more real than thought; it remains as strong and vital as ever when the brain that gave it birth has been moldering for centuries in the dust.

In order to secure the testimony of these people we must catch them unawares. We must wait our opportunity and listen to their speech as they talk among themselves of their joys and sorrows, the "mingled yarn" that forms the warp and woof of life.

Let us take five witnesses for the defense and five for the prosecution and listen to them with an open mind, considering carefully, not only each individual testimony but also the character of the witness. If we have learned the priceless lesson "to delight no less in truth than life," let us weigh the evidence pro and con as fairly and dispassionately as we may. Then in our own minds let "even-handed justice" prevail, as we pray that it may ever prevail in the greater court of our national government.

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SIDELIGHTS FROM SHAKESPEARE

I

CALIBAN AND HIS GOD

"That's a brave god and bears celestial liquor; I will kneel to him."

Caliban has been sent by his good master Prospero to fetch some wood. As usual he goes slowly and unwillingly for he hates the duke for having dispossessed him many years ago. Formerly he lived here alone with his mother, a foul witch who for mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible was exiled from Argier and took refuge on this desert island.

He is a strange looking object as he waddles along; dwarfed in stature, "legged like a man" but with fin-like arms, and with long claws for nails. When Prospero and his little daughter Miranda, cast adrift by their enemies, were stranded here, the duke pitied Caliban and took him to live in his own cell. The creature could not even speak in those days, but only gabbled like a thing most brutish. Prospero, however, did not let an hour go by without teaching him one thing or another, so he gained after a while such simple knowledge as how to "name the greater light and how the less." Prospero allowed him to share such scanty comforts as he himself enjoyed. He trained him on the other hand to build the fire, bring in the wood and make himself useful in various ways.

The kind man's efforts, however, have been in vain. Caliban is incorrigible; he cannot take any print of goodness, being capable of all ill. He is one on whose nature nurture will never stick, and as with age his body uglier grows, his mind cankers in like manner.

As he loiters along bearing his load of wood he suddenly sees a man in an odd, variegated costume advancing towards him. But as no one lives on the island except himself, Prospero and

Miranda, and as he has never seen any human shape except these and his witch mother, he thinks this must be a spirit sent to torment him. He falls flat on the ground hoping thereby to escape notice.

This is no spirit, however, but the jester of King Alonzo's company. They have all been wrecked and cast upon the island and are scattered here and there. A thunder storm is brewing and a huge black cloud is ready to burst, so this fellow Trinculo looks around for a shelter.

There is not a tree in sight, no, not so much as a shrub, and he knows not where to hide his head. Suddenly turning he espies Caliban. "What have we here?" he cries, "a man or a fish? Dead or alive?" Though the form is suggestive of a fish, the dress makes him conclude this must be an islander recently killed by a thunderbolt. The "monster" is a curiosity surely, and if Trinculo can only take him to England he will make his fortune. But his immediate concern is to shelter from the storm, so he creeps under the creature's rough cloak or gaberdine and hides there. There they lie, presenting the appearance of a four-legged animal and looking between them even more monster-like than Caliban did before.

Soon there comes along the drunken butler of the ship's company, Stephano by name, bottle in hand as usual. He pours some of his liquor into the mouth of the strange animal, with what object we shall consider later.

Let us see what impression it makes upon him. This is of interest to us because Caliban is no mere ugly oddity; he stands as a type of man at his lowest, only slightly raised above the brute. He is of the earth, earthy, and represents the animal nature, just as Ariel stands for thought and rejoices in the free air as his natural element.

Caliban is delighted with the draught. Hear what he says: "That's a brave god and bears celestial liquor; I will kneel to him. I'll swear upon that bottle to be thy true subject, for the liquor is not earthly. Hast thou not dropped from heaven?" he cries. "Out of the moon, I do assure thee," says Stephano. "I was the man in the moon when time was." "I have seen

thee in her," replies the credulous Caliban, "and I adore thee; my mistress showed me thee and thy dog and thy bush."

Caliban cannot do enough for this lord of liquor; he promises to show him every fertile inch of the island, pluck berries for him, catch fish, dig for pig-nuts, in fact, do everything in his power for the "wondrous man" who has brought him this celestial boon, this more than earthly beverage, tasted and enjoyed now for the first time in his existence.

No wonder that a poor monster, more like a tortoise than a man, is amazed when he first makes acquaintance with alcohol. It mystified the alchemists in the Middle Ages, who at first thought they had discovered the elixir that would give perpetual youth. They called it "aqua vitae" or water of life. The name "alcohol" was given to it because of its volatile nature. It is from two Arabic words signifying "most subtle." A few drops poured out would almost immediately disappear. Surely it was a strange substance! It gave peculiar sensations, too, a feeling of exuberance that was very pleasing. So, like Caliban, they considered it a celestial liquor, a beverage fit for gods.

days with the process of distillation; they extracted what they called the "spirits of wine" from a fermented liquid. It is probably the art was for a long time forgotten. Albucassis, a Moorish physician, rediscovered it in the eleventh century and it was improved somewhat later by a certain Raimundus Lullus, a theologian of distinction. He lived in the island of Majorca and learned to love a girl who, alas, was suffering from an incurable disease. He threw himself into the study of physics and chemistry in order to save his sweetheart. This was impossible but he became a famous alchemist and specially busied himself with the improvement of distillation.

Though the alchemists learned by means of heat to separate this volatile substance, this *al kohl*, they had no idea of its origin. This was shrouded in mystery. Mankind had, of course, known since Noah's time that when grapes were crushed and exposed to the air something was formed that would produce intoxication. But aeons were to roll by before men could read "in Nature's infinite book of secrecy" the story of how this came to pass.

At last Louis Pasteur in the nineteenth century announced to the world that fermentation is due to a minute plant, the yeast cell, which lives and grows in solutions of sugar, and gives off alcohol as a waste product. Another scientist, Buchner, a few years later, submitted the yeast plant to great pressure and extracted from it a ferment which he called zymase. He showed that this is the agent that does the work of breaking up the molecule of sugar into two molecules of carbon dioxide and two molecules of alcohol. So now it is clear that alcohol is a waste product formed in connection with the splitting up of sugar. In other words it is a result of decomposition. The work of the yeast plant is thus the exact opposite of that of the green plant cell. The green plant takes carbon dioxide and water and builds them up into a useful food, sugar, whereas the yeast plant uses sugar and breaks it down into carbon dioxide and alcohol.

This excretion, like others, is injurious to the cell that produces it and to all higher forms of life. It is well known that the bodies of all plants and animals, including man, are composed of the minute masses that we call cells. Cells have a few essential needs. One is water; another is oxygen. Alcohol has an affinity for both of these substances; it readily combines with them and thus deprives the cell of part of its supply.

Cells consist largely of protoplasm. It resembles the white of an egg, but is a very complex material consisting chiefly of the class of compounds known as proteins. Alcohol is hurtful to protein and causes it to coagulate or clot. These three simple facts are sufficient to explain in large measure the injurious effects which follow its use.

As regards its character this toxin is narcotic, that is, if taken in sufficient doses it causes narcosis or stupor. In the days before chloroform was known it was often used in operations to deaden the sense of pain. It belongs indeed to the same group of substances as chloroform, ether and chloral, and is classed as an anesthetic. Therefore, by reason of its very nature it cannot be suitable for beverage use.

Because, however, it gives a temporary feeling of elation those who are ruled by impulse rather than by reason will nat-