

# MY WIFE AND I



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**COMING** from a farm boyhood with the common education of the little red schoolhouse, I had worked during the war and afterwards for seven years at high wages in a booming industrial town, had saved considerable money and finally married an able, well- educated woman who had an unusual gift of common sense and for more than the average business vision, a true helpmate in every way.

**In our early twenties, we were both ambitious and had boundless faith in our ability to succeed. We talked over the future all the time, exchanged ideas and really planned our way of life. Just working in a**

**factory, even at highly-paid piece work, and saving out of my wages, did not seem to us to be the best way to go. We talked things over and decided to strike out for ourselves. Our first venture, a neighborhood grocery store, prospered. Another neighborhood store, in an ideal location at a nearby summer resort, looked good to us. We bought it and started in to make it go. Then came a business slump affecting the whole country. With fewer customers I had lots of time on my hands and was getting to like high-powered home brew and the potent liquors of prohibition days entirely too well. That didn't help the business. We finally shut up shop.**

**Jobs were scarce, but by persistence I again found a factory job. In a few months the factory closed down. We**

**had again accumulated a small stake and since the job situation n showed no improvement, we thought we would try business again.**

**This time we opened a restaurant in a semi-rural section and for a time all went well. My wife opened up in the morning, did all the baking and cooking and waited on trade. I relieved her later in the day and stayed open late to catch every possible bit of business. Our place became a regular hang-out for groups of latecomers who showed up with a bottle now and then.**

**I told myself that I was the one man who could handle my liquor because I was always on my feet at closing time. I talked knowingly about spacing my drinks, about taking only a measured shot, and about the folly of gulping big drinks. Yes sir, I was**

**never going to be one of those "rummies" who let liquor get the best of them. Young and strong, I could throw off the effects of the previous night's drinking and stand the nausea the following morning, even abstaining from taking a drink until the afternoon. But before long the idea of suffering for a few hours didn't seem so good.**

**The morning drink became the first act of the daily routine. I had now become a "regular." I had my regular remedy-a stiff shot to start the day and no waiting till a specified time. I used to wait for the need, soon I was craving the stuff so much that I didn't wait for that. My wife could see that it was gripping me. She warned me, gently at first, with quiet seriousness. Was I going to pave the way to losing this**

**business just when it needed to be nursed along? We began to run behind. My wife, anxious for the goal we had set out to reach, and seeing the result if I didn't brace up, talked straight from the shoulder. We had words. I left in a passion.**

**Our separation lasted a week, I did a lot of thinking, and went back to my wife. Quieter, somewhat remorseful, we talked things over. Our situation was worse than I had anticipated. We got a buyer for the place and sold out. We still had some money left.**

**I had always been a natural mechanic, handy with tools. We moved back into town with a slim bankroll and, still determined never to be a factory hand again, I looked around and finding a workshop location with a house adjacent I**

**started a sheet-metal shop. I had chosen a very difficult time to start up. My business practically vanished on account of the depression.**

**There were no jobs of any kind. We fell far behind on our rent and other obligations. Our cupboard was often bare. With every penny needed for food and shelter, and wearing old clothes with nothing new except what our two youngsters needed, I didn't touch a drop for two years. I went after business. I slugged doorbells all over the town asking for jobs. My wife rang bells with me, taking oneside of the street while I worked the other. We left nothing undone to keep going, but we were still far behind, so far that at the low point we could see eviction and our belongings in the street.**

**I braced myself to talk to our**

**landlord who was connected with a large real estate firm managing many properties. We were behind six months in our rent and they saw that the only way to get their back rent was to give me a couple of small jobs. My wife learned to use the tools to shape and fashion material when I was doing the installation work. The real estate firm like my work and began to give me more jobs. In those grim days, with babies to feed, I couldn't spend what little money came in for drink. I stayed sober. My wife and I even started back to church, began paying our dues.**

**They were thin years, those depression years. For three years in succession, Christmas in our little family was just the 25th of December. Our customers saw us as**

**two earnest young people trying to get along and as times improved a little we began to get better jobs. Now we could hire some competent workmen and bought a car and a few small trucks. We prospered and moved into a better-equipped house.**

**My pockets, which hadn't jingled for years, now held folding money. The first greenbacks grew into a roll with a rubber band around it. I became well-known to real estate firms, business men, and politicians. I was well-liked, popular with everyone. Following a prosperous season came a quiet period. With time on our hands I had a drinking spell. It lasted for a month, but with the aid of my wife, I checked myself in time. "Remember how we lost the store! Remember our restaurant!" my wife said. Yes, I could remember. Those**



**times were too recent and their memory too bitter. I solemnly swore off and once more climbed aboard the wagon, this time for nine long months.**

**Business kept up. It became evident that by careful handling we might eventually have something pretty good, a sufficient income to provide a good living for us all and ensure a good education for our children.**

**My business is seasonal. Fall and early winter are rush times. The first few months of the year are quiet. But though business slackened, I got around making contracts, lining up future work in my way. Not yet sensing any great danger, in spite of past experiences, I seldom refused the invitations of business friends to have a drink. In a short time I was drinking every day and eventually**

**much more than I had ever done before for I always had a roll in my pocket.**

**At first I was even more jolly than usual when I came home in the evening to my wife and family. But the joking good fellow who was the husband and father they had known, gave place to a man who slammed the door when he came in. My wife, genuinely alarmed now as week after week went past without any sign that I was going to quit, tried to reason with me, but the old arguments didn't work this time.**

**Summer came on with its demand for roof repairs and spouting installations. My wife often started the men to work in the morning, did shop jobs, kept the books, and in addition, ran the house and looked after the family.**

**For eight months my daily routine was steady drinking. Even after slumping in bed late at night in a semi-stupor, I would get up at all hours and drive to some all- night spot where I could get what I wanted. I was going to have a good time in spite of hell and high water.**

**I became increasingly surly when at home. I was the boss. I was master in my own house, wasn't I? I became morose, with few lucid moments between drinks. I would listen to no arguments and certainly attempts to reason with me were futile. Unknown to me, my wife influenced some of my friends and business associates to drop in casually. They were mostly non-drinkers and generally ended up mildly upbraiding me.**

**"A fine lot of Job's comforters," I**

would say. I felt that everybody was being of little help and told myself I wasn't getting the breaks, that everybody was making a mountain out of a molehill and so, to hell with everything! I still had money and with money I could always buy bottled happiness. And still my wife kept trying. She got our pastor to talk to me. It was no good.

Drinking and staying drunk without cessation, even my splendid constitution began to give way. My wife called doctors who gave me temporary relief. Then my wife left me after a bitter quarrel, taking the children with her. My pride was hurt and I began to regard myself as an injured husband and an unappreciated father who, deep in his heart, just doted on his children. I went to see her and demanded to

**see them. I up and told her that I didn't care whether she came back or not, that I wanted the children. My wife, wise woman, thought she still had a chance to have me, save our home for the children. She threw aside her sense of injury, spoke right up to me and said she was coming back, that forbidding her the house wouldn't work, that she had helped me get what I had and was going to cross its threshold and resume its management. She did just that. When she opened the door she was appalled at the sight of it, curtains down, dishes and utensils unwashed, dirty glasses and empty bottles everywhere.**

**Every alcoholic reaches the end of the tether some day. For me there came a day when, physically and mentally, I was unable to make my**

**way to a saloon for a drink. I went to bed. I told my wife for the first time that I wanted to quit drinking, but couldn't. I asked her to do something for me; I had never done this before. I realized that I needed help. Somehow in talking with a lady doctor, my wife had heard of another doctor who in some mysterious way had stopped drinking after thirty years and had been successful in helping a few other alcoholics to become sober men. As a last resort, my wife appealed to this doctor, who insisted on a certain situation before he could help; his experience had taught him that unless that situation existed nothing could be done for the alcoholic.**

**"Does your husband want to stop drinking, or is he merely temporarily uncomfortable? Has he come to the**

**end of the road?" he asked my wife.**

**She told him that for the first time I had expressed a desire to quit that I had asked her in desperation to try to do something-anything, to help me stop. He said he would see me the following morning.**

**With every part of my being craving a drink, I could hardly sit still when I got up to await the visit from the man she had talked to on the phone, but something kept me in the house. I wanted to hear what this fellow had to offer and since he was a medical man I had some preconceived notions ready for him when he came. I was pretty jittery when my wife opened the door to admit a tall, somewhat brusque professional man who, from his speech, was obviously an Easterner. I don't know what I had expected,**

**but his salutation, designed to shake me up, I can now see, had almost the same effect as the hosing with cold water in a turkish bath.**

**"I hear you're another 'rummy," hew said as he smiled and sat down beside me. I let him talk. Gradually he drew me out until what I did tell him gave him a picture of my experience. And then he put it to me plainly. "If you are perfectly sure that you want to quit drinking for good, if you are serious about it, if you don't merely wish to get well so that you can take up drinking again at some future date, you can be relieved," he said.**

**I told him that I had never wanted anything as much in my life as to be able to quit using liquor, and I meant every word of it.**



**"The first thing to do with your husband," he said, turning to my wife, "is to get him to a hospital and have him 'defogged.' I'll make the necessary arrangements."**

**He didn't go into any further explanation, not even to my wife. That evening I was in a hospital bed. The next day the doctor called. He told me that several former alcoholics were now dry as a result of following a certain prescribed course of action and that some of them would be in to see me. My wife came to see me faithfully. She, too, had been learning, perhaps more quickly than I was doing, through talking with the doctor who by this time was getting down to brass tacks with me. My friend was the human agency employed by an all-wise Father to bring me into a**

**pathway of life.**

**It is an easy matter to repeat and orally affirm a faith. Here were these men who visited me and they, like myself, had tried everything else and although it was plain to be seen none of them were perfect, they were living proof that the sincere attempt to follow the cardinal teaching of Jesus Christ was keeping them sober. If it could do that for others, I was resolved to try it, believing it could do something for me also.**

**I went home after four days, my mind clear, feeling much better physically and, what was more important, with something better than just will power to aid me. I got to know others of these alcoholics whose human center was my doctor. They came to our home. I met their**

**wives and families. They invited my wife and myself to their homes. I learned that it would be well to begin the day with morning devotion which is the custom in our house now.**

**I was almost a year when I began to get a little careless. One day I hoisted a few drinks, arriving home far from sober. My wife and I talked it over, both knowing it had happened because I had stopped following the plan. I acknowledge my fault to God and asked His help to keep to the course I had to follow.**

**Our home is a happy one. My children no longer hide when they see me coming. My business has improved. And-this is important-I try to do what I can for my fellow alcoholics. In our town there are some 70 of us, ready and willing to**

**spend our time to show the way to  
sobriety and sanity to men who are  
like what we used to be.**

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