

The German Drunkard: Bartholomäus Ringwaldt (1585)

Abstract

Bartholomäus Ringwaldt (1532–c. 1599) was a Protestant pastor and poet who was known for his didactic poems and hymns. In the following poem, he laments the excessive drinking that pervaded every stratum of German society. In his view, this particular vice/sin was the bane of the German nation.

Source

Lamentation over the Boozing German (1585)

Would that Germans, great and small,
Did not indulge in alcohol.
No finer nation would be known
Under David's heavenly throne.
But boozing's made them into fools,
May God have mercy on their souls,
Such that they can no longer prove,
With inborn skill, their fortitude,
Nor can these Germans with their sword
Defend honor, as in days of yore.
Instead the booze (so it is said)
Often meddles with their heads
Brother turns against brother
One weakens, maims, and stabs the other
And since boozing is (you know, of course)
Of all vice the mother-source.
From it doth spring torrents of woe,
This, from experience, we know.
Thus would I counsel anyone
The sins of alcohol to shun
Lest, addled by some heady brew,
The devil should play tricks on you.

Source: Bartholomäus Ringwaldt, *Klage vber der Teutschen Geseuffe* (1585); reprinted in Heinz Ludwig Arnold, ed., *Deutsche über die Deutschen. Auch ein deutsches Lesebuch*. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1972, pp. 23–25.

Translation: Deborah Cohen

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