

Song of the Printing-Press.

BY A. A. HOPKINS.

I AM silent to-night in the basement dim,
And the shadows around me are vague and grim;
But my nerves reach out where the home-groups are,
Where the home-lights are flickering near and far;
And I feel a glad thrill in my iron heart
For the gladness and cheer that I there impart;
For although I am only a dumb machine,
I can move with a wonderful power, I wend!

There are beautiful stories that I can tell,
And that fall on the ear like a magic spell;
And I whisper them sweetly to one and to all—

So sweetly that even the tear-drops fall—
To the maiden who sits in the cottage low,
To the lover who longeth her heart to know,
To the poet who dreams, and the child who waits
For the princess to open the fairy gates.

I am King, and my subjects are scattered wide,
But wherever they be, they are leal and tried;
And though other kings fall and their kingdoms wane,

For ever and aye must my own remain.
It is one to grow greater with lapse of time,
And to tower through ages to heights sublime;

While the cry of my subjects for aye shall be:
"Hail to PRESS! for our King is he!"

Oh, I day after day at my labour sing,
For I know of the gladness I widely fling
With my fingers of iron across the earth—
At the gate of the rich, and the cottage hearth—

And I feel that the living of all who live
Will be richer by far for the gifts I give;
And that millions of hearts shall look up and bless,

With the truest of blessings, the PRINTING-PRESS.

—Inland Printer.

Bob's Talking Leg.

"THAT wooden leg of yours must be rather inconvenient."

"Maybe, sir; but I walk with it better than when I had the natural pair complete."

Bob was our crossing sweeper, and a sort of public messenger—self-established, but recognized in time as one of the institutions of the Bank. The road just opposite our main entrance was rather wide for a country town, and it was here Bob kept a path carefully swept in all weathers.

When employed by the Bank or one of the tradesmen with a message, Bob would leave his broom leaning against the letter-box, and go on his way quite certain that the most mischievous boy in the place would not interfere with it. Bob was so good-natured and kind to all that even his broom was respected.

He was a bit of a character, and generally wore a post-boy's cap and an old red hunting coat when on duty. But these were only sort of trade signs; and work done, Bob put aside his "uniform" and assumed the garb of a respectable labourer.

And a labourer he had been once upon a time—a man well known in the town, and not a little notorious for his

drinking, but he shall tell his own story. Listen to him as he relates it to me.

"Walk better with a wooden leg than with two sound ones!" I said; "how can that be? I cannot fancy a wooden leg would be better than either of mine."

"I was not speaking of your legs, sir," replied Bob, dryly, "but of the pair I had. They were not given to walking very straight."

"That must have been your fault, Bob," I said.

"Well, yes, sir," he said, "of course it was; but I was speaking in a sort of meddlesor way, you see."

"I hear you are fond of metaphor," I returned; "but tell me about this leg of yours. How did you get it?"

"Drink gave it to me," replied Bob, "and I must say that it ain't very grateful to drink in return; for all though it makes noise enough in ordinary, it knocks double as loud whenever I'm nigh a public house. It says 'don't' as plainly as you can, sir—meaning, don't go in. I was once nearly led back in the old ways, and was going into 'The King's Head' with a friend, as I hadn't seen for years, but this leg wouldn't go in; t'other went over the step right enough, but the wooden one tripped up, and down I went. 'All right,' I says, 'you knows how I got you, and I'll go back again,' and out I went, dragging my friend with me."

"Of course," he added, "I don't mean to say as the leg knows it's doing, that's my meddlesor way of speaking; but it's there, and it is always stumping out the same story, 'Don't drink, don't drink.' Just you listen to it."

He stamped rapidly up and down in front of me, and really the leg and his sound foot gave out sounds not unlike the words he had spoken.

"You hear, sir," he said, "the wooden leg says 'Don't,' and t'other says 'drink.' Put 'em both together, and you've got good advice—'Don't drink!'"

"Undoubtedly," I replied, "but will you tell me how you came to lose your limb? It is a quiet day, and you are not likely to be interrupted for a few minutes."

"It's soon told," said Bob. "Eight years ago I was a bricklayer's labourer, a smart, active fellow when I hadn't a drinking fit on; but I used to break out for the week and fortnight at a time and leave my work, and starve them at home in the way of drunkards generally. When the drink's in, kindness and love and industry is out, which is a meddlesor I'll thank you to make a note of."

I promised not to forget it, and with his hands crossed on the top of his broom he went on with his story.

"When sober, I worked as a runner. I headed a gang of labourers, and timed 'em, as it were. If there 'nt a runner they don't keep up the work, and get into confusion. One day, when I was

a little worse for drink, I went to the works, and kept at it all right until eleven o'clock, when a man from a public house close by came round. I had two pints of him, and that, with what I had taken, finished me. The next time I went up the ladder, I lost my hold, and the sky seemed to turn right over; then I heard a shout, and I lost my senses."

"When I came to," he said, "I found myself at the hospital, with a sensation of being as helpless as a child. At first I didn't feel any pain, but soon my leg began to throb, and I was going to put my hand down, when the nurse, as was close by, stops me. 'Don't touch it,' she said, 'you've injured yourself.' They gave me some medicine and it soothed me and I went off to sleep. When I awoke again several grave looking gentlemen were standing about the bed talking, but they stopped as soon as it was known I was awake. I asked for my wife, and they said she would soon come to me. To cut a long story short, sir, one of the kindest told me that my leg must be taken off, or I should lose my life."

"And what am I to do in the world with one leg, sir?" I asked.

"He told 'e to leave all to the wisdom of God, but I didn't know much of religion then, and found no comfort in it. That night they gave me something, and I lost my senses. While I was in that state my leg was taken off, and I shan't forget the feeling when I came round and found it gone."

"And yet it wasn't exactly the feeling in the leg that told me so, for at first I fancied it was there; and what is more, I feel it now, and a very curious thing it is. But I'll get back to the hospital, where, after my leg was taken off, my poor wife used to come and cry over me as 'if I had been the best of husbands, instead of one of the worst; but women, speaking in meddlesor, are angels on earth, they are."

"With my wife a gentleman used to come. He was grave and quiet and kind, and I recognized him through having often seen him down our street visiting the sick and poor. I wouldn't have nothing to do with him in the old days, but lying there maimed and helpless, I was glad enough to listen to him, and I'm thankful to this day that I did so; for there I first really understood what salvation through the Saviour meant for me and other sinners, and learnt to see the blessings of a sober life."

"I was a long time getting well, for my constitution was terribly cut up, and it was supposed at one time that I could not live; but prayer and faith saved me, and I got about at last, full of good resolve and hope for the future."

"Being only a labourer, I wasn't fit for much with a wooden leg; so after casting about, I thought I'd take this crossing—the man who had it afore having just died of drink—and try to

get a little public messengering. The young gentlemen inside the bank has their little joke, and calls me the 'Dot and carry one,' but I don't mind that. I shall not object to my leg so long as it keeps on saying, 'Don't' and the other leg may say 'Drink' as often as it likes. Don't drink. I've told lots of people what my legs say, and some as do drink thinks it funny to call me 'the man with the talking leg.'

"And this wooden leg have done some good to others. When I came out of the hospital and stumped around to my mates, and told 'em what I'd suffered, and that I'd signed the pledge, five of 'em did the same, and three have kept it to this day. The other two went back and one is dead, and t'other nobody knows where. He left a wife and three children behind him."

"When I first took my stand here I got hardly any messages. I had a bad name and people mistrusted my leg, but when they got to know that it was a leg that wouldn't go into a public house, work began to roll in. On Saturday I'm running about all day, and I lose a lot at the crossing, no doubt; but the messenger money is fairly earned, while a shilling a day gained at the crossing is very fair pay. I sweeps it in the morning about seven, then again at nine, and so on every two hours if I am here, and if you put it all together you won't make more than an hour's fair work of it. I like the messengering as it's honest labour, and I'm trusted and it fits in with t'other, so that I'm hardly ever idle."

"And what do you make per week?" I asked.

"One way and another, about as much as I did as a labourer," Bob replied; "and the misses does a bit of washing and clear-starching" (Bob himself was renowned for the linen he wore, "and we've got three children, and a little picture of a home. Mr. Sawyer, the photographer, he took me here one morning and he put a lot of my pictures in his window. I've got one at home he gave me, but it ain't quite right. He ought to have done the jacket red, and it came out white; but the leg is took splendid, and that is the chief point. They do tell me that the publicans hate the very sound of my leg, as the very noise it makes is a sort of accusation against 'em, and I do know that it is often cast into their teeth by angry customers."

"So you see, sir," said Bob, in conclusion, "that I walk better in every way since I had this wooden leg, and I'm content to travel so until it shall please God to call me away to dwell with him in heaven."

A voice from a house on the opposite side called Bob from me, and I walked away, musing upon what I had heard. The story was not without profit to me, and I trust it will be of benefit to the reader, who has yet to realize the deadly work drink is everywhere doing in this fair land of ours.—*The British Workman.*