

the school; and when they were about eighteen years of age, a partial separation became inevitable, Robert being engaged as assistant in the school, at a small salary, and William helping his grandfathers, who both lived to an advanced age, in the work of their farms. Michael Maher had left home on the day of his wife's death, to sell a load of wheat in the next town, and was returning in the evening, when he was met by an anxious friend, and heard, without the least preparation or a warning of any kind, that he was father of two motherless boys. The sudden shock overpowered the strongman's mind; reason was hurled from her throne; the loving heart was broken, and Maher was taken on his own cart to his desolated home, utterly unconscious of what was occurring around him, and, in truth, an idiot. He took no part in the preparation for his wife's funeral, but ate and drank in silence what food was set before him; and presented a truly pitiable object of compassion, as, supported by his father and father-in-law, he followed to the grave the remains of her whom he had loved so long, and lost so deplorably. During the few months of his after life, he was quite harmless; and when he could escape, unseen by those who anxiously and affectionately watched him, was always found in the small burial ground at his wife's grave; and here, on a cold winter night, when the ground was white with snow, and the ice-covered branches of the trees in the lonely graveyard were creaking and tinkling in the bitter blast, he was found lying in an insensible state; and having been carefully removed, and laid before the fire in the kitchen of the rectory, which was near, he revived sufficiently to break the long silence of months, by exclaiming, in the most plaintive accents, "Mary, Mary, Mary!"

Let us leave him where, "after life's fitful fever, he sleeps" beside the love of his youth, and the wife of his brief manhood, and turn to the "strange, eventful history" of the Twins.

CHAPTER II.

When the Twins attained the age of twenty one years they were as fine, manly-looking fellows "as you could meet in a day's walk" in any country. The bloom of unbroken health colored their cheeks, dark brown hair curled closely around their well-shaped heads. They were exactly six feet in height; and as they walked arm in arm on Sundays, or holidays, in their best attire, no stranger could meet them without admiring their appearance. Robert was an enthusiastic musician, and sang regularly with the chapel choir; and William shared in such exercises, although, truth to say, he greatly preferred singing "Donnybrook Fair," or "The Boys of Kilkenny," with some rather wild companions, over what is falsely called a social glass, of which, to the great grief of his sober, steady brother and other relatives, he was becoming too fond. Often, yielding to his brother's earnest entreaties, he promised to abstain before the practice became a confirmed habit, and required the mighty power which strong drink wields over its subjects; but as often his promises were broken under the temptations of companions, who wanted his funny sayings and comic songs to amuse them, and were utterly indifferent to the consequences to their boon companion. One thing in particular foreboded evil for the poor fellow's future: no inducement could prevail on him to take the total abstinence pledge. He said he needed no bond to tie him down to sobriety, and refused to pledge himself along with his brother, who had never tasted intoxicating liquor, but was

quite willing to make the vow for his brother's sake. Alas! the Devil had entered into his heart for a season, and driven out the Angel of brotherly love!

While matters were thus with the twins, a troop of dragoons halted in the village of N—, in or near which the circumstances hitherto related in this story occurred; and the soldiers, having fed their horses, were refreshing themselves at various public houses, when William came in with some of "the boys," after a long run on foot with the Kilkenny hounds (a common practice with some in that sporting county who have not horses to ride); and of course he was quite ready and willing to take a drink from any one kind enough to give it; and one such was soon found. The sergeant major of the troop was at once struck by the fine, manly appearance of the youth; and handing some silver to a clever sergeant, told him to treat the young fellow, and try to secure him for the regiment; and so, after a short talk about the weather, the crops, shooting and hunting, William found himself drinking a can of beer with the sergeant, as sociably as if they had been old acquaintances. The combined exertions of the two newly made friends soon made a fresh supply necessary, which the sergeant provided, and which seemed stronger than the other, for before it was finished, William volunteered a song and a third measure of ale. The song he gave with his whole heart; but in searching for cash to pay for the beer, he could find none, when the sergeant said: "Never mind, old fellow, it's all one which of us has it; here is a shilling, and let us have some more of the good stuff."

William went for the beer, and the sergeant slipped away to the stables to report his success to his employer, who soon strolled round to William, now nearly drunk, and calling loudly for his friend. "Don't be in such a hurry, my fine fellow," said the sergeant major; "you'll soon see enough of him; and I'll be shot if you'll be so anxious to see him when he has you under his thumb for two or three months." "What do you mean?" said William; "I do not understand you." "I understand, my man, you have enlisted in this fine regiment (I leave out the oaths, etc., used on the occasion); and a good looking soldier you'll make, when we have you in our hands for a while." "Nonsense," said William, trying to sober himself; "I'm no more enlisted than you are." "Just so," replied the other. "I enlisted ten years ago, and see what I am now; and you enlisted now; and perhaps you'll be as high as me in ten years' time." "It's a lie," roared the young fellow. "If you say that again I'll put you under arrest, you impudent—"; but before he could conclude the sentence, the tall sergeant major had measured his length on the pavement, struck down as if he was shot, by a terrible blow from the strong arm of William Maher, who was immediately seized by half a dozen soldiers and securely handcuffed; and when the dragoons were ready to proceed to the barracks in K—, he was tied on a hired cart, and, having a soldier with a loaded carbine beside him, was taken to taste his first experience in military life. More than half bewildered, and not recovered from the drink he had lately swallowed, part of which had been mixed with whisky, he sat silent, inwardly and bitterly cursing his guilt and folly, but quite unable to realize his dreadful situation, or look into the future, when Robert, who had unfortunately gone to K— on that day, was returning in the public car which plied between the towns, and was beyond all measure, astonished at hearing his name in his

brother's voice, from the midst of a company of dragoons—sprang from his seat, ran after the soldiers, and with frantic cries called on them to stop, to which they paid not the slightest attention, until he begged the officer in command to order a halt for a few minutes, which request was kindly granted; and then, to his horror, he learned the circumstances of his brother's case, as far as he could from the contradictory statements of the soldiers and their prisoner.

Finding it vain to entreat to be allowed to accompany William and stay with him during the night, he watched with tearful eyes the cavalcade proceeding on its way; and, filled with dread apprehensions for the future of his unfortunate brother, returned to his home to watch for the morning, when he was determined to make every effort to rescue the victim of folly and intemperance from the position in which they had placed him.

CHAPTER III.

Having obtained, at an early hour of the ensuing morning, letters of recommendation from his own clergyman, and the rector of the parish, he proceeded to the barracks, expecting to find William still a prisoner, awaiting his trial; but was agreeably surprised, for a few moments, at seeing him at liberty, and waiting at the barrack gate for the loving brother, who he well knew would lose no time in coming to see after his interests. The few moments of pleasure were at an end, when he heard that the recruit had been already attested, passed the surgical inspection, and was a full private in the dragoons; which rapid proceeding had been carried out in consequence of the sergeant major's threatening to punish his assailant to the utmost extent of military law for striking a superior officer; and his promising, on the other hand, not only to withdraw the charge, but prove a friend, if William followed his advice, and was entered on the books of the regiment. The dread of disgraceful punishment, and the flatteries with regard to his success, as a splendid soldier, confused the young man's mind; and almost unconsciously he took the necessary steps, and, before his brother arrived, his destiny was fixed.

Almost maddened by grief and indignation, Robert hastened to the quarters of Captain Selbright, who had allowed him to speak with William on the previous day, and there protested loudly against the cruel injustice of the case, and the wickedness of those men who made his only brother drunk, and led him to do what, in all human probability, would prove his ruin, both in mind and body. The officer listened very patiently to this outburst, and having asked his visitor to take a seat, said:

"Now, young man, let us talk this matter over, and I think you will see it is all for the best: your brother, as I understand, has been only a common laborer—"

"I beg your pardon, sir; you are mistaken; he has only worked on his near relatives' farms, and never received a day's hire," interrupted Robert.

"Oh, well," said Captain S., "it is much the same: a life of dull and constant toil lies before him if he should remain in this unfortunate and uncivilized country (mean, the Captain was the son of a wealthy cotton spinner in Manchester); while, on the contrary, as 'one of ours'—such a fine looking fellow (by-the-by, what a very extraordinary likeness there is between you); but, as I was going to say, he is sure of rapid promotion in our regiment; and, instead of living in a hum-drum, hundred-of-years-ago way, in such a village as F—, he will travel about from place to place at the coun-