

A GOOD FELLOW—A GOOD-HEARTED FELLOW— A GOOD FOR NOTHING FELLOW.

(Concluded from the Witness.)

Of the two past states of this being, it is admissible that there is a something which some one has found good; but a period arrives when all of this quality which once pertained to him has dropped away, and he is "good for nothing." The melancholy fact of the matter connected with the three degrees of the character which we have endeavoured to sketch, is that it is all downwards. The course of man, without God in the world, is all, spiritually, a descent "going down to the chambers of death." Still he who guards himself from the love of strong drink, and braces the mind for intellectual achievements, is likely to rise amongst his fellow men, and do many things which are great, and good, and useful. To the fellow himself, and to those around him, a comparison of his condition at long intervals of time may be necessary to make it quite certain that the change for the worse is going on; but not the less certain is it that the time does come for his being "cast out and trodden under foot." Even the great author of evil, who having once got the individual to enrol himself practically as a good fellow, felt satisfied that he might leave him to the influence of the habits of the order which would do his work for him, may be conceived to suppose that as far as any good to the kingdom of darkness is concerned, it is sometimes too effectually done. Even good-for-nothingness, in his opinion, may verge on the extreme, for while good fellowism generally acts as a lure, men will shrink from the very idea of their becoming such as the good-for-nothing, when this impersonation of folly, guilt, and wretchedness ventures to shew himself before the garish light of day.

In this last stage hope may be considered well-nigh gone; it is not gone in reality, but the individual himself usually thinks so, and admits despair. Occasionally during his career, conscience has whispered that there is danger, and there has been a temporary pause. It has sometimes flashed across him, that he was under an influence soothing him, urging him, beckoning him, enslaving him. He has sometimes asked himself the question, how it happened that he felt it necessary to frame excuses for the use of intoxicating drinks, to others occasionally, but more particularly to himself; but, unhappily, while he mused, some brother came in and broke up the conference, and unthinkingly he again went on "as an ox to the slaughter, as a bird to the snare, as a fool to the stocks, and knew not that it was for his life." It is a terrible thing for a man who has given himself up to a destructive habit, and begins to be conscious of it, to look on the joyous freedom of others, and know that he can take no part therein. And yet should we say, "can take no part?" It is true. All experience of intoxicating drinks seems to show that he who has once acquired the taste for them, never altogether loses that during the whole course of his life. He may abstain, and thus lay aside the chains, but the sense of bondage, the mark of the galling fetter, the consciousness of continual necessary effort and watching, will prevent him ever after from having the same impression of liberty which he who has never begun the habit feels. Still, with all the difficulty, the impossibility, great as to drive a camel through the eye of a needle, have men been brought back from the *ultima thule* of good-for-nothingism, and by the grace of God, though scarcely, yet actually saved. But how is it with the greater number? They "pass on and are punished."

During the earlier stages, before the physical system was worn up, there seemed to be a power of resistance to conscience, which set her at defiance; her whispers were drowned amidst the "revelries and such like" of good-fellowism, or she was put off with the excuse that there was good time for retreat still. There was no intention of ever going

beyond a certain depth, there was time enough for retreating when the footing was felt to be insecure. The day of such felt insecurity comes when it is not looked for. For years past, every one but the good-for-nothing himself, has known him to be a miserable drunkard. He never has admitted it, and may pass out of existence without once confessing that the name is applicable to him. Some day, as he hangs about his old haunts, visions of the past flit across his memory, there is a dreamy consciousness that all is not right. Some association carries him back to a time when he saw a drunkard reeling to his home; he pitied, but never thought of asking how that man became a drunkard, but considered him a worthless, helpless creature, and that it would be better for himself and others that he was dead. He was a useless good-for-nothing. That was the time when he was thinking how he might act usefully for himself and his fellow creatures. It was just about that time that he first entered a tavern, with the sole object of having some intoxicating liquor. He had often used before; wine after dinner, and some compound of spirit and water were every day matters in his father's house, but somehow this day that initiation into tavern life came up very vividly in mind. He had not gone alone, he would never have done that, there were several others, and on the succeeding day he had an impression of having done something which he immediately gave himself, in a kind of private way, by means of conscience to understand he must never do again. It would disgrace him. He had made a sort of resolution then never to be a drunkard, and probably the reason why memory happened to recall that day was, that now the poor lost wretch, utterly unconscious of his degradation and impotency of resolution for anything, his utter good-for-nothingness, had actually glimmering in his mind some scheme of usefulness in which he might engage. How it might happen to come there who can tell, it seemed the last place in which to expect any such thing. Probably the dying effort of hope to obtain a lodgment in his mind, had stirred amongst the ashes of intellect a single spark which flitted for a moment and disappeared.

The good-for-nothing is now in one of his haunts, and intends to be so, regularly for a long time to come, until he fears it may be unsafe, he may become a drunkard. On retiring, he deems he is not alone, and to be quit of his companion whom he has never seen before, he passes as quickly as possible from the spot. Nothing is said, no salutation is given, but no complaint is made. Street after street, and lane after lane is passed, and yet, who follows? Trembling, he knoweth not why, he finds himself again in the vicinity of one of his haunts, and he must soothe his nerves with liquor. That imbibed, he passes on, and wonders why he should have been so easily frightened. Still, who was with him, and who, and what are these now? Before, he was able to control his fears, now, all that he has ever heard or read of the horrors of delirium tremens rushes on his mind. This is for him the beginning of the end. From it he partly recovers, and the consequence of his fear is that each successive day finds him trying to resolve and re-resolve, but the hour which follows this semblance of resolution drives it all away, for it is awakened by terror alone. "Conscience, which long asleep has lain, now lifts her snaky head and frights him into madness."

We shall not attempt to describe the repeated attacks of mania a potu, which are more or less frequent, according to the strength of constitution of the individual.

All that he has to offer now to his God for a mis-spent life, is the dregs of his existence, and it truly is good-for-nothing. Despair makes him its victim, and under its influence rejecting the mercy and pardon offered in the gospel, the good-for-nothing passes away—whither? Holy writ declares "no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God."

F. F. B.