

young man, by a serious accident he lost his right hand all but the index finger and thumb. And twenty years ago he had been an inveterate snuffer. By and by he came and sat down quite near me, and was no sooner seated than he pulled out his snuff-box, which he held in his left hand, and used the maimed right to take a pinch. I was now absolutely sure, and resolved to have a talk with him, without in the first instance divulging my identity.

Turning round to him I said in quite a familiar way:

'Well, Mr. Barton, will you give me a pinch for "auld lang syne"?''

He started back and stared at me in a manner which, as in my own case a few minutes before, indicated a considerable effort to recognize me. Handing me his box he said:

'You have the advantage of me, sir. You seem to know me, but I fail to recognize you.'

'I don't wonder at that. Take twenty years off my head and you have only a beardless boy left,' I replied.

'Twenty years!' he exclaimed. 'Did you know me twenty years ago?'

'Oh, yes!' I answered, 'and longer. We both seem pretty much changed. May I ask if you are still in the coal trade? I suppose Dick will be dead long ago.'

'Dick, Dick!' he said, with a smile. 'Do you remember Dick?'

'Dick Dick!' he whispered to himself, as he seemed to be harking back on the past. 'Dick! Ah, those were happy times! But they are gone, never to return.'

'William,' I said, dropping the Mr., 'have your peace of mind and happiness of life not increased with your years? Twenty years ago you were a professing Christian. You haven't changed for the worse, I hope. Many a profitable talk I have had with you, brief, of course, while old Dick was eating a mouthful of grass by the roadside. Has my old friend gone backward? Surely never.'

'Friend, as you seem to know something of my past, I have to own to you with shame that I am not the man I was twenty years ago.'

'Well, I am sure Dick was not to blame for that.'

'No; if I had been content with Dick's company, I should have remained all right. But the fact is, I began to think that Dick was too slow. We made a few pounds, Dick and I, and the love of the world began to grow in me and I wanted to be rich, at least rather than Dick could make me. So I sold good old Dick and his cart, and with the money I had saved I bought a public-house.'

'A public-house!' I exclaimed.

'Yes, a public-house; and I did so, determined to conduct it on Christian lines. It would be a model of orderliness and respectability. I would select my customers; I would never allow people to drink on my premises till they were the worse of it; nor give drink to any one who would come into my shop under its influence; nor sell to women nor children.'

'Good, William! you really meant to conduct your "pub." as a Christian, and on Christian principles, and, like some publicans I have known, you meant, I suppose, to be yourself a teetotaler.'

'Well I managed for a time to do so fairly well. But gradually they gave way, and for years I have been no better than my neigh-

bors, either in the conduct of my business or in my own conduct.'

'Then your religion yielded to your business, instead of your business to your religion. You began well, but— As a Christian man, you would no doubt pray for a blessing. Did you not?'

'I tried, but could not. In fact, that was where the shoe pinched at the very outset. When in the coal trade I used, without a misgiving, to ask God in the morning to watch over me and Dick during the day and prosper me in my calling. And at night, with a grateful heart I thanked him for all his goodness toward me during the day. And I praised his name when I was able of a Saturday to put a pound or two in the bank.'

'But that blessed experience all ceased when you started your pub.? Why could you not ask God to be with you and prosper you in selling your liquors? And why not praise him for all the pounds you managed to deposit in the bank?'

'You needn't ask,' he answered.

'Why? You were engaged in a lawful calling, were you not? You had a license from the state to follow it. You determined to prosecute it as a disciple of Christ, and you believed that it was not only more lucrative than selling coals, but a great deal more respectable. Why not ask God to prosper you in it?'

'I say I tried, but couldn't,' he replied.

'Excuse me, William, if I press this point a little further. Though you couldn't pray to God for a blessing on your business, I hope you didn't lose interest in prayer, but continued to delight in secret communion with your God and Saviour, maintained family worship and were as much interested and benefited by the services in church as when you were in the coal trade.'

He looked somewhat inquiringly at me.

'Well, I think that you are pressing me a bit too hard. I am not prepared to go into the confessional with a man I don't know.'

'Perhaps you are right, William, and there is no reason why I should keep you in the dark as to my identity.'

A few words of explanation sufficed to bring me to his recollection, and then he said:

'The remembrance of those old days with all their precious privileges only fills me with sorrow and shame.'

'That is so far well, William. But let us go back to the point in your experience which I raised a minute ago. You admitted that you could not pray about your business. What I want to know now is whether or not, after you became a publican, you continued as thoroughly under the influence of the spirit of prayer, and delighted as much in the exercise of prayer both in private and public, as when you were in the coal trade, Did you continue to pray as earnestly and regularly for the extension of the kingdom of Christ, and the removal of everything that hindered its advancement. Were you as anxious to grow in grace in yourself, and as interested in the prosperity of your church?'

'I frankly answer, No. When I went into the trade, I not only meant to hold my ground but to make advances. I soon felt that it was going to be a tough battle. For a time I faced it courageously, but gradually, and at first almost imperceptibly, I drifted. I became less scrupulous about selling drink; could see men getting tipsy on my premises without compunction, and poor, miserable women not only spending their husbands' hard earned money, but stripping off their own clothing and the clothing of

infant children, going out to the pawnbrokers, and coming back to give me for more drink the money they had received in return for their pledges. Then I began to taste liquor, very temperately at first, but by and by to drink to excess; and here I am to-day a sot, the love of Christ burnt out of my heart, my name removed from the roll of the church I used to love so well; and just now, as the result of a drinking bout, I don't care whether I go home or go down to the bottom of the Clyde.'

'William, that is a miserable tale. By the by, is your wife still spared to you, and has she managed to keep clear of the influence of your dram-shop? Then, you used to speak proudly of two fine boys you had. Are they in your business, or what?'

At the mention of his wife and sons tears began to run down his face, and with a choking utterance he managed to say:

'My wife is as good as gold, but I am breaking her heart. She did her utmost to keep me from selling Dick and going into the spirit trade; and what she then prophesied has long since come to pass. But she keeps praying for me, and firmly believes that God in his mercy will yet pluck me as a brand from the burning, though there is little sign of her prayers being answered.'

'And your sons?'

'They are brave, good, enterprising young men. They have always continued under their mother's pure and elevating influence, and are now in business for themselves. They have often urged me to give up the public-house and come into their "work," and just dodge about and do anything or nothing as I pleased; and they have promised a good steady income. Those dear boys want to bring back old times to their father's and mother's home.'

After uttering these last words William Barton completely broke down. I waited a minute or two till he became somewhat composed, and then said:

'And why don't you take advantage of your sons' generous offer?'

'Why? There is just one reason; not the love of the trade, nor the love of its money, but the love of strong drink.'

By this time we were past Renfrew. I therefore took full advantage of our last half-hour's sail to urge him to repentance. I used every argument I could command and appealed to him as a husband and a father, as well as a man who had once 'tasted of the heavenly gift,' to give up his business at once, and become an abstainer, accept his sons' offer, return to his old spiritual home which was once so dear to him, and above all, and without delay, return as a humble penitent to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose 'blood cleanseth from all sin.'

To all my arguments and appeals he only shook his head, saying, 'It's of no use. I'm a done man.'

'Yes,' I replied, 'a done man as far as your own strength is concerned; but the Lord says, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me."'

'Ah! but,' he dolefully remarked, 'an expression you used a minute ago about having once "tasted of the heavenly gift," reminds me of a passage somewhere which says it is impossible, if one falls away, to renew him again unto repentance. That is my position; I have fallen away; oh how dreadfully! I have taken the downward course, and must go on to the dreadful end. For as a man sows, so shall he reap.'

'Now, my dear friend, you must not yield to this feeling of despair. The Lord says,