

## THE BLUE RIBBON OF THE RAILWAY.

BY THE LATE FREDERIC WAGSTAFF.

"I feel safer in the train to-day than if I had taken half a dozen insurance tickets."

So said a fellow traveller, the only other occupant of the carriage, as we resumed our journey after a brief stop at Bletchley Junction. Up to that time very few words had passed between us, as he had been occupied with the *Times*, and I with the new number of one of the reviews. When the train pulled up at Bletchley I remained in my seat, while my companion alighted "to stretch his legs" upon the platform. The remark which I have quoted above was made as we glided out of the station, and as I felt inclined to vary the monotony of the journey by a little talk, I laid my review on the seat, and asked what it was that made my neighbor feel so particularly safe.

"Well, you see," he replied, "as I was walking up and down the platform I noticed that both the chief guard in charge of the train, and the engine-driver also, are wearing the blue ribbon."

"Ob, indeed!" was my rejoinder. "But how does that affect the question?"

"How? Why, surely I need not tell you that, for I see you have got the ribbon on yourself."

"That's true," I replied, affecting an indifference I did not feel, and resolved, if possible, to bring my companion out a little, since he had himself started the subject. "That's true; but then I'm neither an engine-driver nor guard; what has that to do with it?"

"Everything, I should think," was the reply; to which I at once rejoined—

"Yes, if the blue ribbon were a badge of honor, worn by the men you speak of as evidence of special skill in their callings."

"Well, of course it isn't that," continued my companion; "but it's a sign that they are both teetotalers."

"That is certainly a good thing for their wives and families," I remarked, still resolved to play the part I had assumed. "If they are both teetotalers I suppose they take their wages home instead of spending them on drink as others do; but still, if you will excuse me, that does not explain your first remark. Why should a teetotal driver and guard make you feel as safe as ever so many insurance tickets?"

As I asked this question with all possible gravity, my companion looked at me with amazement. "Well," said he, "as a teetotaler yourself I should have thought you would have felt that too. Don't you see how much less fear of accident there is?"

"Well," said I, in a tone of affected unconcern, "I suppose it may make some difference; but surely it cannot be as much as your remark implies."

"It makes all the difference I can assure you," said my companion, settling himself into the attitude of one who intended to make a speech and was thoroughly in earnest. "Perhaps you are not a very frequent traveller?" I bowed assent. "Well, I am, sir. I am on the road five days a week on the average, and as my journeys take me to every part of England, and a good deal into Scotland, you may suppose I travel a good many thousands of miles every year. I have been doing that these ten years, or rather more, and though I am happy to say I have never been in any accident, God only knows when an accident may happen. They are bad enough when they do happen, you may be very sure; and as a constant traveller, with a wife and family at home dependent upon me, I cannot help feeling a bit anxious sometimes. Some of my friends laugh at me because I always read all about railway accidents in the paper. Perhaps that helps to make me a little nervous; but I have always done it, and I have always noticed that whenever there is a railway accident the chances are ten to one that drink is at the bottom of it.

The signals are wrong because the man in the signal-box is half sleepy through taking a drop. Or the driver has been drinking, and either can't see or won't see that the signals are against him. Or else somebody has been treating the guard, and he isn't ready to put on his break if the driver gives a signal with his whistle. Why, sir, if you read the papers closely, and especially if you travel much, as I do, and see the treating of drivers and guards, and all the rest of them as I see it every day, you must feel that if there is one thing more than another that makes it dangerous to travel, it is drink."

"Of course," said I, "if you look at the matter in that light—"

"It's the only light you can look at it, sir, if you travel much, and look about you, as I do."

"Certainly," I replied, "what you say seems to have great force; and I seem to understand you now. You feel that the

man that's been drinking just enough to make him careless or reckless that causes accidents, and there's no security against that except to have them all teetotalers. If every railway servant was obliged to wear the blue ribbon there would be few accidents, and the directors could afford to pay the men higher wages to compensate them for giving up the drink."

"Then according to your theory," I resumed, "there is more danger from what we should call a moderate drinker than from a drunkard as an engine-driver?"

"Most certainly; because even a little may make him careless, or reckless of danger."

"But if that principle be true, does it not apply a little wider?" was my next question.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, you yourself drink—in moderation, as you say—but you drink a little. If a little is likely to affect the coolness and

course, I cannot help taking a glass of wine with a customer, but I avoid that as much as possible."

"But the effect of the glass of wine or beer you take does not always show itself at once," I urged. "As a man accustomed to observe things that are going on, have you not seen men clearly excited by the little they have taken, even some time afterwards?"

"Well, yes, I have."

"And they have not seemed to be conscious of it themselves?"

"Certainly not."

"And may not that have been the case with you, too, sometimes? What happens in one case may happen in another, you know."

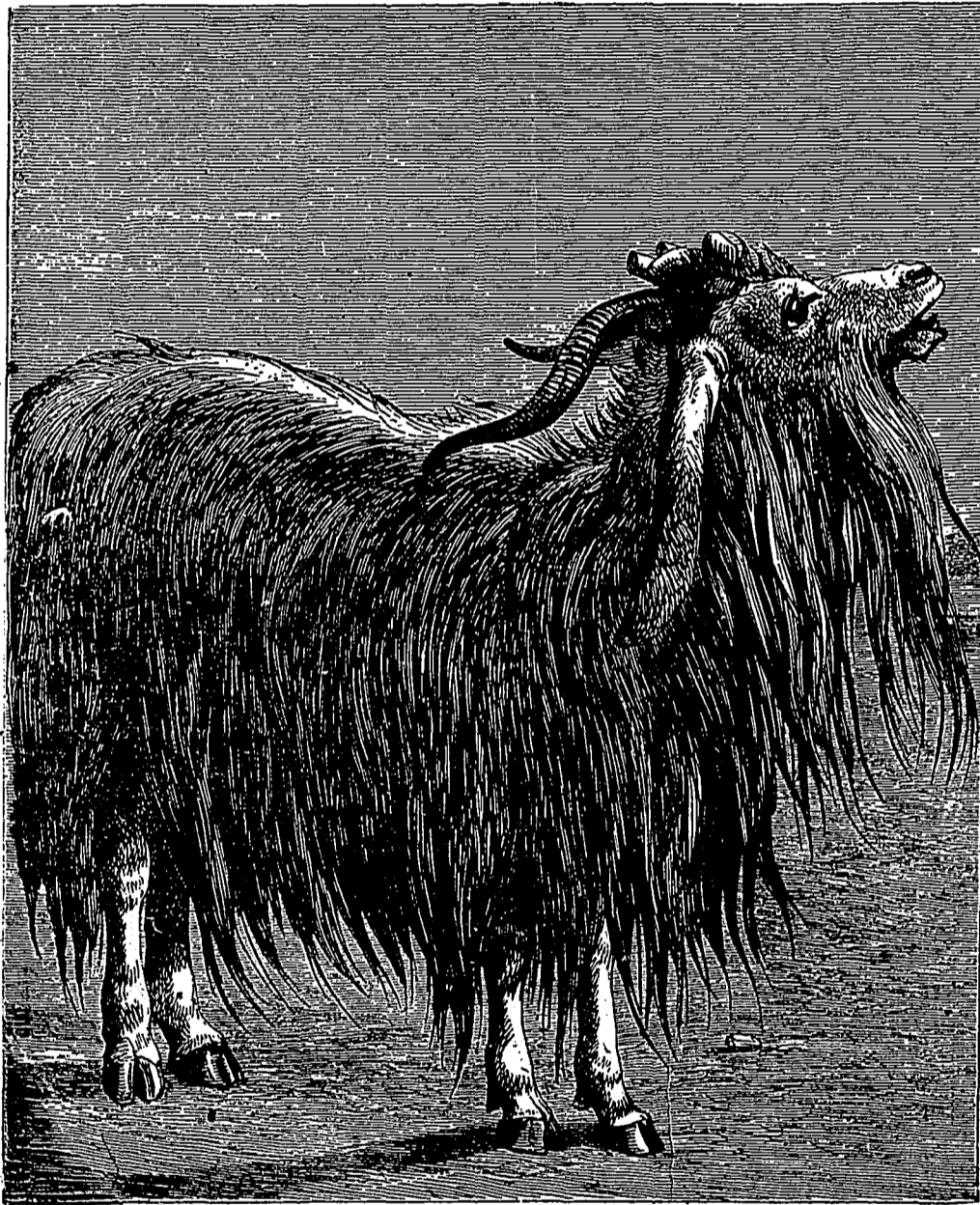
My companion admitted that what I had said was true, and the rest of our journey was occupied by an interesting and pleasant discussion on the question which had thus been raised. My friend laughingly remarked that he found I was not quite so ignorant on the subject as I had at first appeared to be; and when we parted he readily accepted several small pamphlets which I offered him, and promised to give them and the whole matter a serious and dispassionate consideration, and especially to remember that it was his own logic that had out the ground from beneath his feet as a moderate drinker, since, according to his own showing, the blue ribbon, as an emblem of total abstinence, was better than a ticket of insurance.—*British Workman*.

## THE SCAPEGOAT.

We find it recorded in Old Testament history that God desired Aaron to take two young goats for a sin offering, and to present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Then he was to cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat. The goat upon which the Lord's lot fell was offered up as a sin-offering, but the other goat was allowed to escape away into the wilderness, for a scapegoat, but not until the High Priest had solemnly put his hands upon its head and confessed all the sins of all the people. Then the creature was set free.

In all this, a good God would teach us to understand His mercy towards us in Jesus Christ. The goat which was sacrificed set forth Christ suffering for our sins; they were imputed to Him, and He bore the punishment of them. For His sake the sins of all believers are entirely forgiven and remembered no more, and this was shadowed forth by the scapegoat being sent away into the wilderness, never to be heard of any more.

Thus, in the scapegoat we see our Saviour bearing the sins of all true believers into the land of forgetfulness. But we should always remember that it is only truly humble persons who repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, who can share in this blessing.—*D. B. McKean, in The Prize*.



THE SCAPE-GOAT. (Levit. xvi. 10.)

risks of accident are reduced to a minimum because we have got both a driver and a guard who wear the blue ribbon."

"If I had my way I'd make every one of them do the same," exclaimed my companion, who had worked himself into a condition of considerable warmth in his endeavor to make me see with him on the subject.

"Perhaps you are a teetotaler?" I said, with a smile. "A good many teetotalers don't wear the badge, I believe."

"Oh no, not at all," was the reply. "Not but I have always been very moderate, and always mean to be."

"But do I understand you," I asked, "that those accidents you have been speaking about all arise from drunken drivers and guards—those I mean, where drink has anything to do with them, of course?"

"Not drunkenness," replied my friend. "That's where the mischief is. If a fellow gets right down drunk he isn't allowed to go with the train, and gets discharged. It's the

nerve of an engine-driver or a guard, is it not just as likely to affect, say a business man like yourself? If you are travelling every day, you meet scores of customers in the course of the week. In these days of competition, as I have heard my friend say, a business man wants all his wits about him if he is to get on. It strikes me, sir, on your own principles, that many a bad bargain is likely to be made, many a contract entered into that proves a loss instead of a profit, and many a bad debt is likely to be the result of the mental excitement of the one or two glasses that would still be regarded as strictly within the bounds of moderation. Come, isn't there some truth in that?"

I could see that my companion felt himself slightly put into a corner, as he hesitated before replying, "Well, certainly, I have no doubt there is some truth in that; but then I never drink, if I can help it, during business hours. Once in a while, of

course, I cannot help taking a glass of wine with a customer, but I avoid that as much as possible."

A YOUNG LADY was once writing to a young man indulging in vicious courses, whom she desired to warn and counsel; but before she began her letter, she sought her greatest Friend. "My Father," she pleaded, "Thou hast commissioned me to write this letter; do Thou, then guide the pen thy child shall hold, and give the thoughts that pen shall trace. In such a spirit was it written that the recipient, in his reply, said: "Surely God dictated that letter; bad as I am, I yet understand every word of it, and could believe it was written with a quill from an angel's wing." Of course this was an exaggerated piece of compliment as to the latter idea; but the young man was led, by that letter, to give up his evil companions, and to seek the Lord with all his heart.—*Christian*.