

Vividly interested, he peered forward, an intent statue, but was moved to life by a distinct cough. With a cry of delight (for three days he had seen no human) he sprang forward.

In a little clearing, which, at some time, had been a camping-place, he saw a little man who might have lived some two-score years or more.

Dressed in dusty black, a satchel on his back, with a dull stovepipe hat over a warty face and a head of long, matted black hair, this queer being was busily engaged in nailing notices on the trees. About a dozen were up already, when he turned a dour face as the Wayfarer stepped into the clearing. He looked at him a second, as one looks at an intruder, then deliberately resumed his work. The Wayfarer walked to him with an air of exultant assurance.

"Sir," he said, "where can I find an inn?"

The little man took no heed, but drove the last nail through another of his notices.

The Wayfarer grew fierce.

"Damnation!" he roared, grasping him by the shoulders, "I ask a civil question, sir, and, by glory, I'll have a civil answer."

The little man cringed, so that his satchel fell from his back, and, pointing first to his ears, then to his mouth, tried to convey the circumstance that he was deaf and dumb.

The Wayfarer released him.

"An avalanche of pardons!" he exclaimed, and, apparently not realising that he was wasting words, continued. "If you had a thirst such as has possessed me these past twelve hours, you would understand and forgive my roughness. For three days I have not wet my throat with ale, and the Lord gave me a thirst that water will not quench. An infinite capacity for sonsuming ale is a blessing and a curse—a blessing when there are full hogsheads, a curse when there is nothing else save water. But, what the devil! Here am I gabbing away to a knave who can neither hear

nor answer me, and who, probably, thinks me mad. Let us deal with him in the ancient language of signs!"

All this time he had ignored the notices on the trees. He put out his tongue, rolled it like a thirsty dog, and simulated drinking a mighty draught. Suddenly, wide-eyed and open mouthed, he saw and read the signs:

WOE UNTO HIM THAT DRINKETH
STRONG LIQUORS.

*

WATER IS THE WINE OF THE
RIGHTEOUS.

*

DRUNKEN ON EARTH: THIRSTY IN
HELL.

*

STRONG DRINK MAKETH MAN
A BEAST.

*

WHO DRINKETH THE BREWS OF
INIQUITY SHALL LAP UP
LIQUID FIRE.

*

"By all that's unholy!" cried the Wayfarer, "an itinerant prig. This is the supreme joke of my existence."

The "itinerant prig" must have sensed something of the Wayfarer's feeling, for a suspicion of satire flickered on his lips.

"Ironical old dog! you shall serve me yet. You must have come from somewhere, unless you are a child of fungus spawn—and, egad! you look it".

The Wayfarer laughed so boisterously that the little man quaked. He began to think that he was really dealing with a madman. Taking a charcoal crayon from his pocket, the Wayfarer stripped a notice from a tree, and scribbled vigorously on the back of it. The little man read, growing red, purple and white by turns.

The scrawl ran:

"Fungus-spawn—itinerant prig—preacher of false doctrines—hearken to me. If you do not tell me whence you come and where I can find an inn, I will cleave your head from