

TAG RAG.

What he was, and what he is.

Tag Rag!—The name seemed strange, and expressive of something out of the ordinary course. We were seated at tea when it fell for the first time upon our ears. Tag Rag! who is that? The conversation now took a new direction.

Tag's father was a sailor. His mother had four children, of whom Tag was the eldest. Apprenticed early to the trade of block-making, he began with paying what is called an "entry." The master kept a "public," and this afforded peculiar facilities in the way of getting drunk. The journeymen sat on one side of the table, and the 'prentices on the other, imitating the drinking practices of those above them, and thus the boys had learned the art of drinking, before they had learned their trade.

In course of time, Tag became a fisherman, working two days in the week, and drinking four. Next he wrought as a "lumper," and this answered him, he thought, very well, as his thirst for liquor was humoured by a daily allowance of three or four glasses of whiskey or rum. Next he became porter at the Greenock quay, and continued in this capacity as long as his rags and misery would permit.

Tag's mother being dead, he be-thought himself of other quarters. He went to the Vennel, and asked for lodgings, but as soon as the inmates learned who he was, they denied him entrance. Excluded by his wretched appearance from the humble occupation of a steam-boat porter, and denied refuge in a common lodging house, with a bitter sense of his forlorn condition, when night had come, he crawled into a corner of the quay sheds, and sought in sleep to escape from his gloomy musings. Terrible is the drunkard's condition when even sleep refuses to befriend him. No sleep came that night to Tag's relief, but dreamy thoughts of his boyhood came over him, and the big tears streamed unseen, when he thought of his mother's warm fireside, and the kindly words in which she always addressed him. What would he that night have given, to have laid his weary head once more in her lap! The summers and winters of several years came and went, and Tag knew the comforts of no better shelter than the quay sheds. While running his thoughtless career, many were his hairbreadth escapes. His skull had been fractured, one of his legs and both of his arms had been broken, and often he had not a morsel of food. One Sunday morning, while lying in a common lodging house, resorted to by homeless wanderers, a little ballad laddie came to his bedside, and offered him a cup of coffee, a bit herring, and a scone. Who so rich in charity as the poorest of the poor? And how destitute when we find a benefactor in a poor beggar boy!

But, amid all his debasement, Tag never failed to exhibit traces of self-respect and generous feeling, which marked him out as a most hopeful subject of benevolent solicitude. Much as he loved liquor, he never went abroad for it on the Sundays, as his rags would have exposed him to the taunt, "There goes that drunken blackguard." Many were his generous acts. It is told of him that on one occasion he leapt over the quay to save a sheep. Of course his judgment had been steeped in whiskey; but, on another occasion, when better able to act from rational impulse, he plunged into the river and saved a child.

At length, an Irish woman, whose heart did honour to her sex, offered him such accommodation as her humble dwelling could afford. It was while lodging at her house he one day partook so freely of rum, which was being landed from a vessel, that he sank down in a state of insensibility. A crowd collected, and Tag was pronounced dead. Under this impression he was conveyed to his lodg-

ings. His apparently lifeless body was stripped of its rags, and, with such articles as his landlady could command, he was arrayed for the coffin. A company soon assembled to honour his memory with the orgies of a *wake*. Drinking, singing, and telling legendary tales of St. Mary and of other saints, went on for several hours. Many were the kind things that were said in Tag's praise. "Ochon-aree!" exclaimed his landlady, "but he was the lucky ould lodger." "True, he loved a *dhróp*, but he was a broth of a boy." "The kay would be no more the kay of Greenock." "The police would indeed miss him." Such affirmations as these were breaking upon Tag's ears as his confused brain gradually emerged from the oblivion of intoxication. The clock striking the hour helped to clear up his recollection, and, with a sudden start, he leapt into the centre of the awe-struck drinkers, exclaiming, "It's time to be off—there's eight o'clock, and the Liverpool boat'll be in." Tam o' Shanter's witches did not quicker vanish than did the company which had met to wake Tag. The landlord alone ventured to interrogate the supposed ghost. "Are ye alive, Tag?" and to Tag's protestation that he was, he had only breath to ejaculate, "I don't think yeer a man of this world!"

Yes, poor man, "It was time to be off." Retaining his grave dress as under-clothing, never having been so comfortably provided for in that way before, he went on board the steamer, and learned that an old friend, to whom he was greatly attached, under the influence of delirium tremens, had jumped from the paddle-box and been drowned. Now, he thought, "It's time to bethink myself." What a life he had been living! two words express it—wretchedness and delirium. If he was not drunk, he was miserable; and if he was not miserable, it was because he was drunk. What could be the end of such a course but everlasting ruin? Once more, how he was induced to enter a drink shop; and he and his companions were ushered into a barrel-shaped room. "Well, well," thought he to himself, "this does represent my life; what has it been but life in a barrel? I'll be a man yet; and, by God's help, know something of a man's dignity and rational happiness before I die." It was his last visit to the dram-shop. He had heard of teetotalism as a cure for drunkenness. He went to the meeting—took the pledge—sent word to the police superintendent that he might place over his cell a ticket "To Let," as he would not longer require it. A porter's badge was got for him, and for the first time he began to reap the fruits of industry, and taste the sweets of sober living. The boys ceased to call after him "Tag-a-Rag," and now he rejoices in the honourable designation of Mr. M'Taggart. No man ever so falsified evil predictions, and resisted more successfully powerful allurements.

The comparative security of his life under his two different courses of conduct, may be fitly illustrated by two incidents of an opposite kind. Once, being out with some sailors at a ship just getting under way, he continued to tow alongside of her until his boat was towed under water, and her painter snapped. No way daunted, he struck out for his craft, and getting into her, although full of water, he cheered and hurraed till he was picked up. Such were common freaks while his senses were steeped in whiskey. After he had taken the pledge, two gentlemen came down to the quay one day, and offered him a handsome sum to row them over to Cardross. It was squally, but he could trust his boat. They promised to return shortly, when he had all ready. He waited long, and when they did appear, they were tipsy. He refused to venture out with such passengers; they threatened, but he stood firm. Another boat was engaged; but

it had not got half way across when she was capsized, and all on board were drowned. So much for the prudence which temperance gives.

Like all who have experienced a similar reformation, Tag loses no opportunity in urging upon others the importance of total abstinence, and many a poor drunkard, encouraged by his example, has been rescued from wretchedness. Those that think they cannot do hard work in rough weather without whiskey, may inquire of John M'Taggart, Porter at Greenock Quay, Badge Number Forty-six. When he was a drinker, he tottered under a weight of fifty lbs.; and now he finds no difficulty in carrying two-hundred weight. After having been six-and-thirty years a drunkard, he has, since October, 1842, been a sober man, and never taken any liquor stronger than tea or ginger-beer. And with what result? The police are saved the trouble of looking after him, and the town the expense of his frequent imprisonments. His minister informs me that he is a regular and devout hearer of the word of God. Many attest that a kinder man to his poor relations never was. In the time of sickness and death, he is ready with both comfort and money, and the expense of maintaining and burying more than one relative he has saved the parish. During the time that fever was raging in the town, he cheerfully assisted in carrying those who were seized with it to the infirmary, his only reward being the consciousness of doing good. Thus, from being a pest to the community he has become a public benefactor; and so astonishing is the transformation, that those who knew his past and present—among whom are the bailies, who, in the discharge of their duty, often sent him to jail—declare that henceforth they will despair of no man's reformation.

Although far from being proud of his eventful career, he is sometimes persuaded to tell his own story. In his native town, no speaker is more enthusiastically received; and great is the applause as, in obedience to Hamlet's advice to the players, he "suits the action to the word," with a quaintness of manner characteristic of the man.

Lately, when the advocate of the publicans' movement against Forbes Mackenzie's Act was addressing a meeting in Greenock, he sought to throw scorn on the temperance cause, by disparaging its promoters. "Teetotalers! What are they? notoriously gathered from the most dissipated class in the community. Every one knows Tag Rag, and these are the men—" The close of the sentence was drowned in a perfect storm of indignation. It was a most impolitic hit. A noble cause had been assailed in the person of one of its greatest trophies. The result was that a subscription was set on foot, and in less than a week Tag was presented, at a crowded meeting of the inhabitants, with a silver medal, which he would not exchange for even a Crimean one—memorial as it is of a nobler victory; "for better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." And now Tag, of all the porters at the quay of Greenock, is the only one that can boast of a silver badge.

A career so remarkable induced me to solicit an interview with Tag. There he was—a bluff, honest-looking, sailor-like old man, bearing unmistakable indications of rough weather, and rougher usage. As I took his massive medal in my hand, I said, "You were not always led by this chain, Tag."—"Deed no, sir," was the reply; but often I expected to end my days with a rope about my neck." Deceived by his man-of-war appearance, a naval officer one day asked him if ever he had been in the navy? Jack replied in the negative. "Then," said the officer, "you must have been in the army?" Jack still replied, "No, sir." The officer making a still closer inspection, declared, "You must have

been engaged in some sort of warfare." "Ye'r richt there, sir; but it was in the whiskey war, and it was then I was so severely wounded; but I am now in the cold water army, where there is good pay, and the expectation of retiring with a liberal pension."—*Scottish Temperance League Pictorial Tract.*

REVOLVERS AND PISTOLS.

The Queen's Park shooting case is one which illustrates very forcibly the extreme folly and danger of habitually carrying firearms, a practice which is so prevalent that hardly a day passes without some record of the use of pistol or revolver, attended with more or less of disastrous results. Whatever may have been the actual amount of provocation, real or supposed, which young Mills met with on Saturday evening, the results of this imbecile practice in the present instance are very serious, and were well nigh attended with loss of life, to be followed by a charge of the gravest crime against a man who probably never entertained a feeling approaching murderous revenge against any one in his life. As it is, the case is serious. Mr. Ross is afflicted with a scalp wound, and Mills is committed for trial, without bail, on a charge of a most serious nature.

There is really not the least excuse for this practice. Young men mistake the facts when they imagine themselves safer with a revolver. Their own personal danger is increased ten fold. Had Mills not carried the murderous toy he could not have thus risked the lives of his fellow-creatures and his own neck. At the worst he could have only spent his passion over the imagined wrong in fisticuffs, and it would have been better for him had he gone home sorely beaten than that the present charge should stand against him.

Parents and guardians and all who have influence with young men are under an urgent duty, both to the young men themselves, and to society generally, to restrain and where practicable to prevent the custom of carrying fire-arms. It is alarming to contemplate the number of revolvers which are carried in secret by the most ordinary individuals ready for murderous use in case of the slightest offence or insult. Even a procession of college youths present the danger that a majority of them carry one of those innocent-looking little toys with their well polished silvered barrels over which these boys gloat in secret, comparing their pistols with the same kind of *gusto* as they expend over their cricket bats. Their minds, too, are the more easily enflamed and prepared for the use of these weapons by the blood-and-thunder dime literature of the Dick Turpin type which is greedily devoured by them.

It is the greatest mistake to suppose that it is an evidence of bravery to shoot down the man who insults you. There is no surer indication of cowardice than when a man deliberately proposes to protect himself against the ordinary dangers of civilized society, by carrying a revolver. True courage fears nothing. If wild beasts are expected, it prepares the loaded rifle, but men, in common, civil life, are met by brave men *as men*, and not as brutes. That there are instances, even in a civilized community, which justify the carrying of a revolver is admitted, but these exceptions are limited to those who have special duties involving special dangers, such as night-watchmen, and constables on dangerous errands; but generally speaking, he who never carries a revolver never needs one.—*Citizen.*

A DRUNKARD took his eleven-year old boy with him on a spree, at Maquoketa, Iowa, and gave him as much liquor as he drank himself. The boy died in the stupor of intoxication.