



Temperance Department.

IN DANGEROUS COMPANY.

"There's a sayin', sir, as maybe you've heard, on—Necessity makes strange bedfellows; and if any man ought to know whether that's true, I think I ought to, and no mistake! If I was ever to write my life, and put it in a printed book, that 'ere saying ought to be the mother of it.

"You was a sayin', just now, that you never see'd any English soger drink as little as I do; but if you'd fallen in with me twenty year ago, you wouldn't ha' said that, I'll be bound! More like you'd ha' said t'other way, for I was a good 'n at the lush [drink] in them days; but while I was out yonder (it'll be fifteen year come next month, as I make it) I had sitch a adventure, that it cured me, better'n the talkin' of all the temperance chaps in England could ha' done it. Ay, it was a bit of a adventure, that, and no mistake; and if you care to hear it, as you seem to be fond o' queer yarns, I'll tell it you.

"I don't s'pose you've ever heard of Huttee-Bagh, for nothin' ever happened there, as I knows on, and it aint down in none o' the maps; but that's where we were stationed, anyhow. It's a little bit o' a village somewhere along the Jumna, stuck away by itself like Robinson Crusoe's island, lookin' as if it was a hundred miles from everywhere. You may think there warn't much goin' on there, and the deadness on't seemed to get into our very blood and dry us up, till, 'pon my word, we was a'most glad when parade cum round, 'cause it felt like somethin' to do. So at last (for that's how it always ends) the men began getting drunk for want of anything better—and so did I too.

"Now, mark ye, I don't stand up for gettin' drunk, no more wouldn't nobody as had any sense in his head. I've seed too much of it, and of what comes on 't, for that; but what I says is 'Everything's got two sides to it, and it's always best to look at 'em both.' Drink's 'specially in a burning hot climate, where you may drink a bucketful and be thirsty again five minutes arter; and when a man's got nothin' to do, and is half mad with doin' nothin', and somebody comes and offers to stand him a drop, why, taint in flesh and blood to say No. O' course it's clean agin discipline, and you can't pass it over, nor you didn't ought to it, neither; but there's two ways o' punishin' men, as there is o' doin' everythin' else. Seems to me d'ye see, as how men's pretty much like hosses—keep as firm a hand on 'em as you like, but don't go a-jerkin' of their mouths till you galls 'em, else you just makes 'em vicious, and does more harm nor good.

"But our colonel, he was one of the jerkin' sort, and a power of harm he did do with it. You see, he hadn't never been drunk in his life, and, of course, couldn't know what a temptation it was to us common folk as had; so he was always a goin' on about 'drunken beasts, and lookin' out for every chance of bein' down on us, till at last we got to hate him, so that some on 'em would get drunk out o' bravado, just to spite him.

"But some o' the other officers was a very different lot, and the best on 'em all, to my thinkin', was the junior lieutenant, Mr. Edward B—. We all liked him, for that matter, every man Jack of us, pretty near as much as we hated the colonel. Not but what Mr. Edward could be as stern as anybody when there was need for it; but he didn't lay hisself out to catch a poor fellow trippin', like the colonel did; and when he see'd a man really tryin' to keep steady, he was always ready to hearten him up with a kind word and a kind look, that was better'n the word a'most. Fact, when you cum across him, you felt that you had to do with a man like yourself, as had feelin's of his own, and could understand yourn; whereas the colonel seemed just like some great high and mighty sort o' god away over our heads, seein' nothin' but his own pride and stiffness, and the way he meant to go hisself.

"Now, Mr. Edward had always been good to me, and 'specially arter I saved him from a prod with a spear one day when we had a bit of a skirmish with the black fellers; for he wa'n't one to forget it, God bless him! He never passed me without a kind word or two; and when he found out as I knowed how to read, he'd lend me a book every now and then when I was off dooty, that I mightn't be driven to the canteen for amusement. (Them was his very words, and they was true enough,

for many of our chaps got drunk, not so much 'cause they liked it as 'cause they couldn't find nothin' else to do.) So, o' course, as long as I had his eye on me, I was bound to keep straight; but when he went away to the hills on sick-leave (and I can tell you every man in the regiment looked as glum as a Lunnon fog the day he started) why then—there aint no use denyin' it—I began for to carry on as bad as anybody. And it was just the same with all the rest; the minute the lieutenant cleared out, they all began to go on the spree and get into trouble, just as if, as my chum Tom Lee said, 'The good luck o' the regiment had gone away with him.' The colonel had his hands full that bout, and no mistake; there was more floggin's that season than e'er a one afore, and the lock-up wa'n't empty once for a clean month on end.

"Now, I should tell you that this lock-up wa'n't the regular one of the station, 'cause it was under repair at the time; so they had to rig a temporary 'un out of a big shed just outside the cantonment as we'd been used to store our perwisions in. It wouldn't ha' kept in a regular crackman very long, 'specially if he'd had a knife about him; but it was quite strong enough to hold any or'nary man, with only his own four bones to help him; and as I was a sayin' just now, it did keep in a goodish few that season.

"Well, sir, it was a good bit before Mr. Edward cum back, for he'd been mortal bad, poor young gen'lman; but the fust time as ever I see'd him arter his return, I could see d'reckly as he knowed of all the messes as I'd been a-gettin' into, and all about it. He never offered for to slang me—that wa'n't his way; but he just looked me in the face, very quietly and sadly, with his poor thin face, and sunken eyes—and then passed on without a word. Then I got quite desp'rate, and made after him hot foot, and called out, 'For charity's sake, your honor, don't think too hard of me! You knows yourself how hard 't is for a man to keep straight sometimes. I don't care a hang for bein' punished, but I can't stand being cold-shouldered by you!'

"He faced round upon me d'reckly, and I could see the tears a-standin' in his eyes; and then he lays his hand on my shoulder, and says, in the same old kind voice as ever, 'I've no right to judge you, my lad, but I do wish you'd be more careful!'

"Well, for several weeks arter that, I kep' as steady as a rock, for I never forgot them words of his'n; and although he didn't say much, I knowed well enough as he'd got his eye on 'em. A messes to see me a-keepin' everythin' went well enough.

"But one night (just as if Old Scratch had planned it) two or three of our chaps had got some arrack (that's a kind of strong stuff they make out of rice, you know, and it's dirt-cheap out there) from a black feller in the bazaar; and so they set-to to have a reg'lar jollification, and they axed me to jine 'em.

"'No,' says I, 'I've done with that sort o' thing now; I've been on the black list often enough for one bout.'

"At that they all stared, and seemed quite took aback; but just then up cum a fellow o' the name o' Groves, a spiteful chap he was, always a-lookin' out to do somebody a bad turn, and says he, with a nasty sort of a laugh, 'Don't bother him, says he, 'he daren't touch a drop to save his life, 'cause he knows he isn't man enough to pull up when he's once started!'

"Byjingo! that was morae'n I could stand. I started up, and shook my fist in his face, makin' him jump back as if he'd trod on a serpent.

"That's a lie,' says I, 'and you knows it, you dirty sneak! I can take care o' myself as well as any on yer; and just to show that I can, I will go and have a drink with you. Come along!'

"At that they all slapped me in the back, and said I was a right good fellow, and nobody should say a word agin me; and away we all went together. (I've often thought, since, that the whole thing was got up o' purpose to get me in a row; but I couldn't never find out for sartain.) Anyhow, with all my brag about bein' able to take care o' myself, it wa'n't long afore I was as far gone as ever I was in my life; and the next thing as I recollect is wakin' up as if out o' a dream, and findin' myself a-marchin' off to the lock-up atwixt two sogers, with my jacket all in tatters, and a thunderin' pain in one side o' my head. Just as we got to the door o' the lock-up, who should I see comin' along, not twenty yards off, but Mr. Edward hisself!

"That sight was enough to sober meat once. 'Lads,' says I to the two men, 'for the love of heaven, stand afore me, and don't let the lieutenant see who 't is!'

"They knowed d'reckly what I meant, and did their best to keep me out o' sight; but 'twan't not a bit o' use. My tryin' to shirk him that way was enough of itself to tell him who I was; and I see'd in a moment that he'd made me out; but all he said was, 'Barclay, I didn't expect this of you!' Not another word

but that; but I tell you, sir, that it was harder to bear, by a deal, nor all what come arter.

"They shoved me into the lock-up, and made fast the door! and there I was. It was pretty late by this time, and the whole place was pitch-dark; but I made shift to grope out one of the store-sacks in the corner, and roll it into the middle o' the floor; and then I lay down and put my head on it, and tried to sleep.

"But I might just as well ha' tried to fly up to the moon. It was murderin' hot, the door bein' shut tight, and no winder 'cept a little bit o' an air-hole 'bout a foot square; and one thought kep' crowdin' into my head arter another, each worse than the last—how the colonel would chuckle at catchin' me trippen' again, and how that sneakin' rip of a Groves would snap his fingers over me, and how Mr. Edward would think me a downright bad lot, and never trust me or speak kindly to me agin—and how it was all the fault o' my own confounded folly—till I felt fit to knock my head agin the wall. Ugh! I don't think I was ever so miserable in my life; but just then somethin' happened as put everythin' else clean out of my head.

"The sacks were all in a great heap in one corner, pretty close to where I lay; and all at once I heard a noise among 'em, as if one was a-slidin' down over the rest. I thought nothin' on't at first; but the next minute there cum a rustlin' along the floor, as if somebody was a-drawin' a rope over it—and then came the feel o' somethin' cold and slimy slidin' over my bare foot. I knowed d'reckly it must be a snake!

"'Pon my word, I don't like to think of that minute even now! I'd always had a great horror of snakes—as well I might, considerin' how many men die by 'em in Ingy every year; but to find myself locked up with one all alone, and in the dark too—ugh! I only wonder I didn't go mad outright! But mayhap 't was just as well for me as I was so frightened, for it kep' me from screamin' just the fust moment; and then it flashed upon me, just as if somebody had whispered it in my ear, 'Mayhap if I lie stock-still, and don't sing out, the beast won't hurt me!' So I lay still as a log, while the great brute (for I could feel as it was a huge big 'un) came slippin' and slidin' up, fust over my legs, then over my body, and at last right on to my face!

"Plain enough, it was a-tryin' to make out if I was anythin' dangerous; for, d'ye see, snakes is always mighty suspicious, and if they thinks as you means mischief, they're out o' your mind. A messes to see me a-keepin' and for'ard it went all over me, half chokin' me with its nasty rank smell and the horrid feel of its great cold, slimy body wrigglin' and crawlin' over my hot face and my bare feet and hands. I never had sitch a time in my life; and if it had lasted much longer, I think I should just have tackled him, and taken my chance.

"At last (I don't know how long it was, but it seemed a year to me) the beast began to coil hisself off me, and stowed hisself away somewhere for the night. But if he slept, I didn't; I lay crouching there all night (which it seemed as if 'ud never end) till at last I see'd the fust gleam o' daylight begin to shimmer through the cracks in the plankin'. I think that was the welcomest sight as ever I see'd in my life!

"As soon as 't was light enough to make anythin' out, I looked about for Mr. Snake, but he wa'n't to be seen nowhere, till at last I peeped under my sack, and there lay old Sausage as large as life, rolled snugly up, fast asleep. Just then I spied a big stone in t'other corner, so I creeps across and fetches it, as gingerly as if I was a-treading on eggs, and then comes flop down on the sack with both knees, ketchin' the old sinner in a reg'lar trap. He giv' a hiss like a steam-whistle, and a wriggle as a-most sent me over, and out cum his great ugly head, with its mouth wide open; but afore he could get any furdur, I cum down on him with two licks o' the stone, as smashed his old head as flat as a pancake. And when I see'd as he was quite dead, I stood up, and I drew a long breath, like one that's reprieved just as the firin' party's a-takin' aim.

"Just then the door opened, and in cum Mr. Edward. He was just a goin' to speak to me, when his eye fell on the dead snake; and he stopped short, and stared like a stuck pig.

"'Good heavens!' says he, 'you don't mean to say you've been locked up all night with that brute—one of the deadliest in India—and come out alive after all!'

"I have, though, your honor,' says I, rather pleased to show him as I was fit for summat yet; and I began tellin' him how 't was. But I might as well ha' kep' my breath to cool my porridge, for afore I was half through, off he starts, with his heels higher than his head, as if he was a-winnin' a cup. I cou'dn't think what was up with him; but afore I could say Jack Robinson, back he cum agin hot foot, and a lot o' the officers with him, and among 'em the colonel hisself, lookin' taller and stiffer than ever.

"'Now, Barclay,' says Mr. Edward, 'tell these gentlemen your story.'

"So I told 'em the whole thing, just as it happened, and they all looked at each other, and seemed wonderfully took aback. But the colonel he heerd me to the end without movin' a muscle; and then he looks me full in the face, and he says, cuttin' every word atwixt his teeth as if he was bitin' a cartridge—

"'You may thank that snake, my man; for, but for it, I'd have given you the best floggin' you ever got in your life; but I can't flog a man who's done a thing like that.'

"And with that he chucks me a couple o' rupees, and tells me to be more careful next time; and I thinks to myself as how the old Turk wa'n't sitch a bad sort o' chap, arter all.

"Well, sir, the other officers collected a lot o' money for me, and giv' me a good price for the serpent's skin, to hang up in their mess-room; so that, altogether, I made a pretty good thing on it. But from that day to this, b'lieve it or not, as you like, I aint never got drunk not once, nor I don't never mean to it, neither."

TRY WHAT EXAMPLE WILL DO.—Dr. Reid, of Glasgow, says:—Permit me to give a single instance, showing what an advantage abstinence gives to a minister in dealing with such cases. The Rev. John Griffith, M. A., Rector of Neath, tells us that a Quaker friend did much to enlighten and to instruct him. Meeting with this young philanthropist shortly after entering on his present charge, he was congratulated by him on his zeal in attacking the sin of drunkenness which so generally prevailed in the parish; and then asked, "Wilt thou tell me how many converts thou hast had from drunkenness?" "I fear none," was the reply. "Well," said he, "thou hast tried what preaching will do, and what lecturing will do; suppose thou wilt try what example will do!" The appeal was irresistible. It may now be reasonably asked what have been the results of his professing teetotalism. Eight hundred persons in the course of eighteen months signed the teetotal pledge; 700 young people became members of the "Band of Hope." The whole moral aspect of the town became changed; sobriety was soon in the ascendancy, as frequenting public-houses ceased to be considered respectable. The stumbling-block having been removed, the work of philanthropy and religion progressed. "I might fill columns," says Mr. Griffith, "with the mention of the fruits of those labors. I shall only mark out one for especial notice—viz., the increased influence the profession of total abstinence conferred on me, not as an individual citizen, but as a minister of the Gospel. By avowing myself on the side of total abstinence, my influence increased tenfold."

ALCOHOLIC PRESCRIPTIONS.—Some years ago I happened to be recovering from a serious illness, and during a week's absence of my regular medical attendant, a young doctor came to officiate in his place. He advised me to take a little wine. I declined. He then ran over the names of other stimulants, all of which I also declined to partake of. After hesitating a little he said, "Well, I daresay you are better without them." Last winter a fellow-abstainer, within half-a-mile of the table on which this is written, was also recovering from a very serious illness; the doctor (not the same as the one above-mentioned) advised him to get some champagne and use it. My friend said: "What good would it do me, doctor?" The doctor's conscience appeared to be at work for a moment, and then he made exactly the same remark—"Well, I daresay you are better without it." In a large town, not far distant, a doctor, whom I know well, and who is rapidly rising in his profession, states that in very many cases to which he is called, he is quite sure that the chief object with his lady patients is to get his instructions to take this and that sort of wine—and he orders it. Sorry am I to say, sir, that within a twenty mile radius of this table, three-fourths of the doctors are notoriously drunken, not merely reputed so by abstainers, but admittedly so by all. Be the reason what it may, there has scarcely a steady, sober medical student left his college class for years in this part of the country.—*Cor. League Journal.*

Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.