

"MODERATION."

"MR. GLEANER,

"I am a teetotaler, and one that 's not ashamed of his colours, which are always 'water-colours.' I sometimes dine out, and on nearly every occasion I meet our old friend Alcohol. He is the first to come, the last to go—the presiding genius of the party. I of course drink none of it; but I am generally an exception in this respect, and find myself too often in the respectable minority of *one*. This is noticed by my friends, and conversation turns on the question of Total Abstinence; and I confess I generally feel a'ter a while as though I were pushed by a superior force to the wall, and there I stand in my own corner, defending myself as well as I can, and pleading what the old theologians used to call an 'apology,' that is, a reason,—for drinking water!

"Now, Mr. Gleaner, do you not think that this is hardly quite fair? Water is the natural beverage, other drink is artificial. All the natural kingdom—oceans, rivers, springs; all the vegetable kingdom—trees, and herbs and flowers; all the animal kingdom—*except man*—are water-drinkers. Now, do you not think, with such company as these, we ought to assume the offensive, and make headway against the wine-bibbers? I have generally found what is called the 'defensive' policy to be a losing game. In it we lose momentum, resist, and are simply thrown back on whatever we can get to support us. I once resolved on a kind of 'Greek fire,' which I poured into the enemy, and with signal success. I will tell you about it—

"There were six or seven of us (after the ladies had retired); and I being the only water-drinker in the party, and the rest having had a little wine in them, we were soon actually at sixes, and sevens.—They all talked highly and in an elevated way, of the virtue of 'Moderation.' This seemed to be their cardinal virtue, the Deity they worshipped, though I fear they did not always faithfully serve her. After much fruitless conversation—illustrated by still further 'moderate' draughts of wine—I proposed the question—'What is Moderation?' If it involves a question of *quality*—'how strong?' if a question of *quantity*—'how much?' if a question of *time*—'how often?' if a question of *climate*—'what temperature?' if a question of *constitution*—'what tribunal of appeal?'

"My question was deemed a fair and equitable one; and each of my six friends promised to write his reply. Within a few days I had received the following series of letters:

No. I.

"DEAR FRIEND,—*Difficile est*. It's a dead sell; this question of yours about Moderation. In a general way, I would agree with Feltham, who I believe was a philosopher, that 'the boundary of man is moderation; when once we pass that pale our guardian angel quits his charge of us.'

I grant you, this is rather a description than a definition; but then you want the latter. I am afraid you must inquire elsewhere. What would you think of (say) three glasses of good port—strong; crusty; 7s. 6d. a bottle; warranted genuine; none of your modern legwood in it; and made in Portugal, not manufactured in Bermuda-sey? Eh? would that answer your question?

"Yours, immoderately,

"HARRY CHAFFINCH.

"P. S. You would not object, I suppose, if I were to take a little drop of brandy to neutralize the logwood, *supposing* the existence of that element? *Similia similibus*. One can't be quite sure, these times of universal adulteration. When is the act of Parliament to be brought forward on this question?—H. C.

No. II.

"DEAR FREDDY,—Your question the other evening was a poser. Any way, I have been thinking of it ever since, and can make nothing of it. It strikes me I had better make a clean breast of it, and do my best to answer all your questions.—So here goes it—

"1. 'How strong?' Why, strong as mustard, boy!

"2. 'How much?' That depends upon the strength, the price, the place it came from, the size of the glasses, &c.

"3. 'How often?' Every time you are thirsty, and don't happen to be near a drinking fountain, and do happen to be near a decanter!

"4. 'What temperature?' Bless me, can't say! If it's very hot, one would require a little to make one cool; if it's cold, a draught would restore caloric; if the weather is temperate, it is neither cold nor hot; take half and half!

"5. 'What tribunal of appeal?' Very likely, Bow Street! Questions of constitutional power to bear Moderation are often solved there! If you can only keep aloof from this, and can get home safely, and keep at the right side of 'drunk and disorderly,' you are a 'Moderate Man.'

"Don't be offended with me, if I have not been over serious in my answers. I don't think I have thrown much light on your questions; but I never could do much in the way of definitions.

"Yours, &c.,

"RICHARD HOTSPUR.

No. III.

"DEAR SIR,—My observation of life in myself and others has led me to the conclusion that no fixed law can be laid down regulating the measure of moderation.—Each must be the judge of his own circumstances, constitution, strength, and need. For myself, I know not how much I drink. I never gauge the actual quantity; but I despise the man that I see continually drinking; though I confess I could not exactly define the point at which his excess begins. I regard your questions as incapable of any satisfactory or definitive reply; I hope therefore you will

not press your interrogatories; and I promise you that until I can discover some definition of Moderation, I will so far honour your principle of Abstinence, as to restrain my tongue from joining in any outcry that may be raised against a system the practical results of which are beyond dispute.

"I remain, dear sir,

"Yours, faithfully,

"ERNEST PLATPAIR.

No. IV.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—If you will turn to No. 195 of the 'Spectator,' you will find a very excellent essay on Temperance, by Addison. One sentence of that paper will suffice to answer your question about Moderation; he writes—'Were I to prescribe a rule for drinking, it should be formed upon a saying quoted by Sir William Temple: The first glass for myself, the second for my friends, the third for good-humour, and the fourth for mine enemies.'

"It would appear that four glasses of wine,—whether per diem, or at each meal, or oftener, I cannot say,—would be the rule of 'moderate drinking.' I can throw no more light on the subject.

"Yours sincerely,

"JOHN STEADY.

No. V.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—Jack Steady has just showed me his note, containing an answer to your question. He has been priggish out of the 'Spectator,' but has not read far enough into the book. If you will turn to No. 205, you will discover a little emendation of Jack's capital idea of 'four glasses.' It is as follows:—

"MR. SPECTATOR,—In your paper upon Temperance, you prescribe to us a rule of drinking, out of Sir William Temple, in the following words: 'The first glass for myself, the second for my friends, the third for good humour, and the fourth for mine enemies.' Now Sir, you must know that I have read this your 'Spectator' in a club whereof I am a member; when our President told us that there was certainly an error in the print, and that the word 'glass' should be 'bottle,' and therefore has ordered me to inform you of this mistake, and to desire you to publish the following erratum: 'In the paper of Saturday, Oct. 13, col. 3, line 11, for 'glass' read 'bottle.'

"Yours,

"ROBIN GOODFELLOW."

"I need hardly tell you that I quite agree with my old namesake in this emendation. Four glasses, as prescribed, would leave no room for a glass to the Queen, a glass for the army, navy, and volunteers, a glass for the toast of the evening, and a glass for a dozen of incidentals that go to make up a merry party. I protest against all measures and laws whatsoever; they involve bondage. My definition of Moderation (if you must have one) is, that it is something between a wine-glass and a hog-head.

"Yours as ever,

"ROBIN GOODFELLOW,"

("Of the Nineteenth Century.")