

## CHAPTER V.

A Holiday-getter and a Feast-giver—Gentle Rebuke—Taught in a good School—His kindness to young Priests—Grand party in the Cock-loft—The 'Bore' from the Country—His Success as a Peacemaker—The flounced 'Habit.'

THE nature of Father Mathew was eminently *paternal*. The innocence and gaiety of childhood had for him an unfailling charm. He was interested in the plays and sports of youth; and the more they yelled and shrieked in the delirium of childish enjoyment, the greater was his delight, especially if, as was often the case, he had been the promoter and patron of the day's amusements. To promote their enjoyment and add to their happiness was with him to live over again his own youth at Rathoheen. No one better knew the genuine tastes and likings of little people than Father Mathew. He knew that apples and oranges, and nuts, cakes, and sweet things, including toffy and 'bull's-eyes,' were to them the *summum bonum* of earthly felicity; and that these, with an out-of-door holiday, when they could run, and shout, and tumble, and play all manner of wild pranks, were, in their esteem, to be preferred to the finest clothes in the world. And accordingly he made a reputation for himself with the young people of the city, as a holiday-getter as well as a feast-giver. Indeed, his visit to any school, whatever the effect it had upon the solemn master or the sedate mistress, sent a thrill of joyous expectation through the scholars of all degrees; for not rarely was the glad announcement made, in words that surpassed the most ravishing music.—'Young

gentlemen, Father Mathew has asked for a holiday for you, and I cannot refuse him anything he asks for.' 'Young ladies, ditto, ditto.' But if he obtained the holiday, he also provided a feast; and often times the fine old place occupied by his brother Charles, at Lehenagh, a couple of miles outside the city, was the scene of the twofold enjoyment. Entertaining a profound reverence for youthful powers of digestion, he looked on placidly while sturdy boys crammed themselves with quantities of pastry, the fourth part of which would have consigned a full-grown man to the care of his doctor. Considerate to children in general, to orphans he was peculiarly tender; and invariable presents of large bags of apples and nuts, sent on the eve of All Saints—an occasion devoted by youth to perpetual crunching and testing of teeth, as by those somewhat older to the mysteries of melted lead, &c.—to the orphans in the Asylums, and to the children in the House of Industry, exhibited the interest which he felt in these unfortunate little ones. These he frequently had taken to the green fields, and to the pleasant meadows along the river's side, but under the care of watchful guardians. Such excursions were always preceded by a good breakfast, and were usually wound up by a more solid entertainment, both being at his expense. His feeling towards children may be further illustrated by the following incident.

During certain days of Holy Week, it is the custom, in Catholic countries, to remove the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle on the high altar to a side altar, which, with pious care, is elaborately prepared for its reception. This altar is decorated with the richest velvets, the choicest silks, or the most sumptuous brocades—with lace, and flowers, and jewellery—whatever, in fact, is costly and precious in the eyes of the world. Hundreds of waxen lights flood the altar with their radiance, and enhance the effect of the drapery and the decoration. The effect is still further heightened by the sombre gloom of the rest of the church, and the blank

desolation of the high altar, upon which not only is there no light burning, but which is entirely shrouded in purple, emblematical of the mourning of the Church, and the Passion which it commemorates. The small or side altar is the object of devout attraction, and typifies the tomb which received the sacred body of the Redeemer. On these days it is customary for the faithful to 'make their rounds'—that is, to go from church to church, and to offer up in each certain prayers appropriate to the solemnity of the occasion, and to do so with a suitable intention. Nothing can exceed the devout and decorous bearing of those who perform this religious exercise; even the children, as a rule, are reverential in their manner, and repeat their prayers with edifying gravity. But a few are sure to be thoughtless and noisy, and, perhaps with the best intention in the world, are rather distracting by their behaviour. The little Friary, or Father Mathew's Chapel, as it was indifferently called, was at all times, at least since his connection with it, remarkable for the splendour and beauty of this altar, and for the extreme richness and elegance of its decoration. The most costly and beautiful articles were lavished upon it in profusion by the good ladies who thus evinced their piety, and their respect for the priest whose virtues they revered. The temper of these excellent ladies was not at all times proof against the incursions of troops of little ones, whose clattering footsteps resounded in the hushed chapel, and whose artless admiration, uttered too often in a tone of voice more suited to the open air, than to a place of solemn worship, was rather trying, more especially to those interested in the maintenance of decorum. The annoyance occasioned by these incursions excited the anger of a lady, one of the voluntary teachers in the adjoining school, and whose position gave her peculiar authority. She was in the act of driving before her a noisy bevy of very young children, when Father Mathew came up, and, drawing away her attention from the little

Intruders, said, 'My dear madam, why are you driving these children out of the chapel?' 'Oh, Father Mathew,' answered the lady, 'they were making such a noise, that they were disturbing the congregation; and really, I must say, Father Mathew, I wonder how *you* can tolerate them, going in and out, as they do.' 'My dear madam, you must remember the words of our Divine Redeemer, who said, *Suffer these little ones to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.* If they come from curiosity now, they will come to pray another time; and you cannot tell what impression is made upon the mind of the very youngest child that enters the House of God.' The lady never again, whatever her temptation to do so, interfered with the movements of these questionable worshippers.

The sports and gambols of youth were pleasing to the good man's heart, but the spectacle of their piety raised him, as it were, to the seventh heaven. He could scarcely restrain his emotion as he administered to them the First Communion, or witnessed their performance of some work of charity. By teaching and by example, he encouraged his young friends to do good to their fellow-creatures; and when he saw that his teaching was not in vain, that the seed which he had planted in their heart was bearing abundant fruit, his happiness was very great.

Passing through one of the principal streets of Cork, he saw two of his special *protégés*, two young lads of respectable position, standing in a door-way, and deeply engaged over something contained in a little book. 'Good morrow, boys!' said Father Mathew, as he shook hands with his young friends, and gave to each of them his usual caress, which was a soft pull of the ear. 'What are you doing here, my dears?' After some little show of reluctance, they told him that they were collecting for a case of urgent charity, which at the time excited the liveliest compassion. A poor young mother, with a number of helpless children,

had been left utterly destitute by the sudden death of the head of the family, who had held a respectable rank in his native city. And the young lads, taught in a good school, had, of their own accord, taken up the case, and were going from door to door, seeking for contributions. 'Why did n't you tell *me* of this?—why not call on me?—why pass me by, my dear?' said Father Mathew to the elder lad, who had the care of the little book in which the subscriptions were entered. 'Why, Father Mathew, we were really ashamed to apply to you; we knew you had more calls on you than any one else, and you are always giving charity.' 'But, my dear, you were wrong in not coming to me. It would have pained me if I had not the pleasure of aiding you in your good work. Put my name down for 5*l.* I have not the money now, but call on me in two days for it at my house.' When the lads came at the appointed time, they were radiant with triumph. 'Oh! Father Mathew, you have done us such good! The moment *your* name was seen, every one had confidence in the case; and see! we have got over 200*l.*! We are so much obliged to you.' 'No, my dear boys, it is I who ought to be so much obliged to you, for doing such a work of charity for this poor family. God will bless you for it, now and hereafter. It is by such acts that we do honour to God's holy name. Thank you, boys—thank you.' And with another fond pull of the ear, and the promised 5*l.*, the delighted lads were dismissed.

Those of a different faith felt almost the same respect for Father Mathew, and the same confidence in his purity of life and integrity of motive, as did the members of his own communion. A rather remarkable proof of the esteem in which he was held by Protestants may be mentioned. The conductors of one of the very first classical schools of the city, well known to more than one generation as 'Hamblin's School,' made a special application to Father Mathew, requesting him to teach catechism and give religious instruction

to the Catholic boys on a certain day in the week; and on every Thursday, for several years, the catechism was taught and the instruction given by him in the school. The school-boys, Protestant as well as Catholic, liked Father Mathew, who, it must be said, found an easy road to their hearts by procuring for them an occasional holiday, and inviting the whole school out to Lehenagh, where, as one of the pupils of that day now states, they were 'gloriously treated.' The surviving member of the then existing partnership in the conduct of that celebrated seminary, speaks of Father Mathew in the warmest terms of respect and affection. 'He was,' says Dr. Porter, 'one of the kindest, one of the best, and one of the most benevolent men I ever knew—a man of true liberality of mind, and a thorough gentleman.'

To young priests, as well as to young men intended for the ministry, Father Mathew was invariably kind; and many a grey-headed pastor, by the zealous assistance which he afforded to the Apostle of Temperance, paid back the debt of gratitude which he had incurred in his youth—perhaps in the hour of sickness, or at a time when the offices of friendship were most needed. Young priests just left college, and yet without a mission, are not usually in the most affluent circumstances; and at such a time an act of kindness is peculiarly acceptable. Father Mathew, when an opportunity of the kind was afforded him, would say, as if he were asking a favour rather than conferring a benefit, 'You must oblige me and come and say eight o'clock Mass for me for the next fortnight. Do so, my dear sir, if you possibly can.' Of course, the young priest was only too glad to accept the invitation; and it was thus, among other kindly devices, that Father Mathew was enabled to render a substantial service without hurting the pride or lowering the self-respect of him whom he served. If a young priest were sick, formality was then out of the question. He entered the sick room as a father would that of a son; and if anything were wanted, which was often the case,

he ordered it to be sent in at his expense, and insisted upon its being as freely used as it was freely given. He provided a careful nurse, where it was necessary to do so, and supplied every requisite, either during the stages of the disease, or during the tedious convalescence; and were change of air and a milder climate considered essential to recovery, a bank-note, slipped into the hand of the patient, with a gentle pressure and an imperative whisper—'You *must*, my dear. You will seriously pain me if you refuse'—placed the means of health at the disposal of the invalid. Hundreds of instances of his kindness to his brethren in the ministry might be recorded of him; but it will be sufficient to say, that never was his sympathy or his assistance sought for in vain, and that it was more frequently proffered than solicited.

He was also fond of assisting young persons who had an evident vocation for a religious life, to prosecute their studies, and realise their pious intention. If he felt convinced that the vocation was real, and that they were likely to serve religion, and reflect credit on the Church, he encouraged and fostered their piety; and were they in circumstances which rendered material aid necessary, he contrived to send them to Rome, or to some college at home, to accomplish the object of their desires. He considerably strengthened his own order in Ireland by his selection of subjects, and by his liberality in enabling them to complete their course of study.

That remarkable trait in his character—his hospitality—merits special notice. Hospitality is not always a proof of generosity or kindness of disposition, for there are many who freely entertain from ostentation, or a wish to eclipse their neighbours; but Father Mathew's hospitality was born of his nature—it sprang from his heart—it manifested itself in his youth—it grew and increased with his years.

He had not been long in Cork, when his brother Charles, returning from one of his voyages, came to pay the priest a

visit. Proceeding to the Friary, he ascended the stairs that led to the gallery, or loft, which was occupied by the two friars, Father Donovan and Father Mathew. As he approached the top of the stairs, he was surprised to hear bursts of laughter, and other unmistakable indications of jollity and pleasure; and on entering the low-ceiled room belonging to his brother, he was quite taken aback at the spectacle which met his astonished gaze. There was a company of about twenty surrounding a well-served table, plentifully supplied with glasses and decanters, hot water, lemons, sugar, wine and whisky, the usual and orthodox 'et ceteras;' and Father Mathew at the head of the table, 'looking,' said Charles, 'as happy as a king—quite in his element—delighted at seeing so many people enjoying themselves.' Songs and toasts, wit and humour, fun and jollity, were the order of the evening; but at a reasonable hour—earlier, perhaps, than most of the guests thought necessary—the party broke up, and the brothers were left alone to talk over the past, and speculate as to the future. The guests of that evening were, some of them, his brother clergymen—others, the friends with whom he had become acquainted since his arrival in Cork, and who, loving him then, loved him to the last.

When a grand entertainment of this kind was given by either of the friars, it was necessary to convert the other chamber into a kitchen; and Father Donovan came out in great force on such occasions, for he had quite a genius for cooking.

'Poor Theobald Mathew,' says a brother-priest, fondly looking back to the earliest years of his mission, 'was never so happy as when he had a dozen of us around him. He was as good a host as ever lived—full of innocent gaiety, and as easily amused as a child.' Fond of company as he was, especially when he himself was lord of the feast, he was never, even once, guilty of excess, or indeed of the slightest approach to it. As an intimate friend of his happily

remarked—'He was always cautious, but convivial—fond of seeing people enjoy themselves, but never once bordering on being the worse of wine.' Singularly abstemious himself, he did not in any way run counter to the custom of the day, much less so when he assumed the duties of a host; in which capacity he neither spared his wine, nor refrained from pressing his guests to 'help themselves.' In those days, the idea of any man wilfully abstaining from the use of the 'gifts of God,' was never dreamed of; or if a case were mentioned where a person did not drink wine, or had an aversion to whisky-punch, it was at once set down to eccentricity, or to some constitutional tendency—perhaps, to insanity—which might be developed by the use of stimulants. Father Mathew then took the world as he found it, never imagining that a day was to come when he was to lead a crusade against its most deeply-rooted customs, and to assail strong drink with all the enthusiasm and ardour of a Soldier of the Cross. He may have been constitutionally, or from taste, averse to the free use of wine; but his prevailing motive was the danger of giving scandal, and the necessity which compelled him, a priest, to be more circumspect than other men. A glass or two of wine, or a 'tumbler of punch,' carefully and dexterously 'watered,' was the extent of his indulgence. And, as an invariable rule, long before the hand of the clock pointed to ten, he slipped away from whatever company he happened to be with, and was on his way to his apartment in the Friary, or to his modest, though afterwards historic, house in Cove Street.

Father Mathew was a most agreeable companion; for, what is a thing very rare to be met with, he combined the two opposite qualities of being a first-rate listener and a first-rate raconteur. His powers as a listener were rather severely but successfully tested on one occasion, when he obtained unmerited credit for the display of other qualities which had no possible opportunity for their exercise. Among the guests

whom he entertained that day was a thorough-paced bore from a neighbouring town, who not only talked of himself, his affairs, his opinions, his views of things in particular and things in general, his wisdom, his sagacity, his extraordinary depth of penetration, &c., but took good care that no one else should as much as edge in a word. A mill, with a fine head of water, and the machinery in full motion, could scarcely vie with this sublime bore, who, though he contrived to do his duty manfully at dinner, and with the 'materials' afterwards, never stopped the flow of his discourse for a single minute. He literally held Father Mathew by the ear for the whole of that evening. But his host was in one of his grandest listening moods. He looked full at his loquacious guest, with eyes beaming with benevolence, nodding from time to time 'like a mandarin,' occasionally ejaculating 'Ah!' in a tone of surprise or sympathy, and, on very rare occasions, affording breathing time to the speaker by such expressions as 'Dear me, sir!' 'How very strange!' 'It is quite wonderful, my dear sir!' This was the extent of Father Mathew's share in that evening's conversation. And yet, when the unwearied bore bade good night to his host, and got out into the street, he clutched the arm of the disgusted friend, who had introduced him and brought him to dine, saying, 'My dear fellow, I had no idea that Mr. Mathew was so agreeable a man. I assure you, I have been most pleasingly disappointed in him. So full of anecdote! So charming a companion! Such sound common sense! Really I do n't know when I spent so delightful an evening.'

Now a bore of this kind was a positive relief to Father Mathew, who rejoiced when he could have some one with him who relieved him of the trouble of talking. But few could enter more usefully and profitably into conversation than he could, when he pleased, or who narrated striking events or described circumstances of personal occurrence with better effect.

Though leading a life of extraordinary activity, and absorbed in the duties of his ministry, he still found time for reading other than strictly professional works. He was generally acquainted with the literature of the day, and could criticise with acuteness the merits of a popular work, pointing out, with unflinching accuracy, its good or evil tendency, its fallacies or its truths. To books of travel he was much inclined; but where the traveller penetrated some new country, explored virgin forests, or described the habits, customs, modes of life, and superstitions of a wild race, Father Mathew was captivated by his pages. For natural history he had the greatest partiality, as it enabled him better to understand the benignity of Providence, its care for all created things, and the wonderful adaptation of the animal creation to the sphere in which it was destined to exist. Whatever, in the wonders or the beauties of creation, spoke of the glory, the greatness, or the beneficence of the Supreme Being, filled the heart of Father Mathew with thankfulness and praise. He was likewise deeply interested in biographical works, especially when their subject was the life of a man eminent for his public virtue, the devotion of his talents or energies to the good of his country, the elevation of his race, or the redemption from bondage of some down-trodden branch of the great human family. 'Plutarch's Lives,' which contain so many instances of heroic virtue and lofty deeds, had a peculiar charm for a nature such as his, which, while compassionate towards human weakness, soared above everything low, or mean, or little. When he did not read himself, he contrived to have one of his young friends to read for him; and after a good dinner, and a pleasant chat, which placed the most timid at his ease, the request was made: 'Perhaps, my dear, you would be good enough to read some pages of an interesting book for me?'—which request, it need scarcely be added, was irresistible as a royal command. Thus there were two persons benefited by the reading, the listener and the reader.

Father Mathew had extraordinary success as a peace-maker. To restore peace in distracted families was the very thing which he most delighted to do, as well from the natural prompting of his disposition as from a sense of religious obligation. His visits under such circumstances were those of an angel. It was impossible to resist the tenderness of his pleading or the earnestness of his importunity; and many a husband and wife had reason to bless his timely interference; and so also had many a parent, to whom the wayward child was restored, in duty and affection, by his persuasive counsels. Generally, he was sent for in cases of the kind; but were he not sent for in a case which had come to his knowledge, he would contrive to make a visit at the right moment; and not even the haughtiest or most self-willed could quarrel with Father Mathew, or feel humiliated by his good offices. 'I declare, sir,' said a gentleman to his friend, one day in the public street, as Father Mathew left them, 'I believe that man has some extraordinary power about him. I had not the best feeling towards him, on account of something that annoyed me; but, sir, I do assure you, the moment he grasped me by the hand, there was an end to my anger. I can't say what it is; but if we lived in another age, I should be inclined to say there was magic in it.' 'Would that we had more of such magic and such magicians in these days,' was the answer of his friend.

To be a peace-maker was one thing, but to be a match-maker was quite another. To overtures of every kind which had match-making for their object, he lent a deaf ear. He had no objection to see his young friends happy—quite the contrary; but with the young people themselves, their parents, and their friends, Father Mathew left such matters. Nor were tempting offers wanting, offers which might well shake the firmness of most men. It is a positive fact that one gentleman offered him so much as a thousand pounds, if he brought about a marriage with a lady on whom the

gentleman had fixed his—intentions. The offer was declined with good temper.

Father Mathew was made the repository of many a tale of sorrow or of shame, the slightest betrayal of which would have brought misery or dishonour to many a home; but he was also made the recipient of absurd confidences, and his advice was gravely asked respecting matters which, to say the least, were not altogether within his province. An instance of the latter kind may be mentioned. Father Mathew often told it himself, and never without a laugh at its oddity. A very old and poor woman called on him one day, and desired particularly to speak with him in private. Her countenance denoted much mental perturbation, and a sigh or two gave warning of the afflicting nature of the coming disclosure. 'Well, my dear,' said Father Mathew, 'you seem disturbed; what is the matter?' 'Oh, then, your reverence, it's my "habit" that's troubling me, and I came to ask your reverence what would you advise me to do with it?' 'Your "habit," my dear?' 'Yes, indeed, your reverence, the "habit"—it wo'n't let me rest easy with thinking what I'm to do with it.' 'Why, my good woman, what is the matter with your "habit," and what can I possibly do for you?' 'Well, your reverence, here's the way it is,—I have the "habit" for a long time, for, you know, one must always be prepared, and shure we do'n't know the moment when our hour may come; and, your reverence, I tried it on the other night, and'—(here a sob choked her utterance)—'and—and—your reverence—it's too short!' This sad announcement was followed by another burst of emotion. 'But, my dear, what?'—'Oh, your reverence, I hadn't a wink of sleep for the whole night with thinking of it—and the disgrace of it!' The matter was becoming serious, and poor Father Mathew was quite bewildered. What could he do for her, unless give her money to purchase a new 'habit?' But no; it was not money, but advice, she required—not a new 'habit,' but to

know what to do with the 'habit' to which she had been accustomed, and which she associated with the happy ending of her life. A bright idea struck him, which, with as much gravity as he could summon to his aid, he imparted to his anxious applicant, who seemed to hang in suspense on his very look. 'Well, my dear, that being the case, I recommend you to put *frouces* to it.' It was a beautiful idea, and it brought peace and consolation with it. The old lady grasped at it with avidity, and gratefully thanked his reverence for his suggestion, and declared she would go home that moment, and carry it into immediate execution. She left her adviser with a benediction, and an assurance that she was now happy in her mind. The reader will best judge of the nature of the suggested addition, when it is stated that the habit referred to was a kind of shroud, in which devout people, belonging to certain lay orders, or religious societies, were laid out or 'waked' in when dead.

Doing good everywhere, consulted by rich and applied to by poor, promoting every useful or charitable object, possessing the respect and confidence of all creeds and classes in his adopted city,—such was Father Mathew, when called upon to assume a new position, and to undertake duties which, while disturbing the entire course of his priestly life, drew him from the even tenor of his missionary career, to new scenes, new acquaintances, a new field of action, new labours, and new anxieties.

## CHAPTER VI.

The House of Industry and its Inmates—The Pioneers of the Cause—  
William Martin's Appeal—Grave Deliberation—Father Mathew  
crosses the Rubicon.

FATHER MATHEW had been for some years one of the governors of the House of Industry—The Cork Workhouse of those days—in which the poor waifs and strays of society, the wretched and the broken-down, the victims of their own folly, or of the calamities, accidents, and vicissitudes of life, found a miserable home. To a man of his nature, such an assemblage of destitute and helpless human beings was a cause of the truest sympathy, as of constant enquiry and consideration. He possessed the key to open harder hearts and unlock closer breasts than theirs: and many a tale of folly and of sin was whispered in his ear, in accents of self-reproach, by the miserable inmates of that house. The dilapidated drunkard excited his compassion, but the orphan child of the drunkard made his heart bleed with sorrow. While he saw, in that last of asylums, many a victim of the changing fashions of the day, of manufacturing industry turned into a new channel, of sickness or decrepitude, he likewise saw in its dismal wards the dupes of their own besotted folly, the slaves of a passion that seemed to be as uncontrollable as it was fatal in its consequences. Here, in this wretched abode, was the worldly ruin which, from the pulpit and in the confessional, he had so often depicted as one of the results of this destructive vice; and in the hospitals, in the jail, in the lunatic asylum, as in the haunts of infamy,

he witnessed other phases of the same terrible infatuation. On the Board of Governors, with Father Mathew, was one who, himself a convert to the doctrine of total abstinence, never failed to direct his attention to a case more remarkable in its distressing features than another, with the observation—'Strong drink is the cause of this.' And having excited the compassionate sympathy of his hearer, he would add, 'Oh, Theobald Mathew! if thou would only give thy aid, much good could be done in this city.'

Long before Father Mathew had the slightest idea of taking any part in the temperance movement, William Martin had made up his mind that Theobald Mathew was, of all others, the man best suited to render it successful. For some eight or ten years previous to the now recognised commencement of the movement in Ireland, attempts of various kinds had been made in Cork to diminish, if possible, the evils of intemperance, and bring the working classes of that city to believe in the virtue of sobriety. Among those who were the early and the most prominent labourers in the then unpromising field, were the Rev. Nicholas Dunscombe, Richard Dowden, and William Martin. The first was a Protestant clergyman; the second was a distinguished member of the local Unitarian body, remarkable for his broad philanthropy, and his advanced opinions on all questions of social progress and reform; and the third was the honest and earnest Quaker who afterwards gloried in the title of 'Grandfather of the Temperance Cause.' These men, and a few others of inferior note, worked resolutely and bravely, but with comparatively little success. They had not the ear, and therefore found it impossible to reach the heart, of the local community. They were, in the first place, of a different religious persuasion to that of the great bulk of the population, and, in the second place, they preached a doctrine which excited the wonder of some, but the ridicule of more. A few believed, and became converts, and the tiny rivulet swelled



in the course of time to larger dimensions ; but it never flowed with the strength and volume of a stream. Mr. Dunscombe was earnest, and spoke with all the force of sincerity, but, comparatively, in vain—with no result adequate to his zeal and his persistent advocacy. Richard Dowden employed every art of the practised orator to enforce his views, or to obtain even a single convert. He now tried what fun, and humour, and comical description could do, and, if that failed, he had recourse to eloquent denunciation and passionate appeal ; still the numbers in his society might have been easily counted. William Martin gave his testimony, and essayed his powers of persuasion ; but laughter and derision were for years the only apparent result of his well-meant efforts. Now and then, others, including some excellent members of the Society of Friends, spoke in persuasive accents, and made affectionate appeals to audiences more or less incredulous and unsympathising, which were generally drawn together more from curiosity, or perhaps a hope of witnessing 'some fun,' than from any other motive. Tea-parties were occasionally held, and these celebrations attracted many young people, who came rather in search of amusement than with the desire of being instructed or improved. What the pioneers of the movement could do, they did ; but notwithstanding the earnestness, the sincerity, and the single-mindedness of its advocates, the doctrine was unpalatable, or it was ridiculed as absurd, or condemned as fanatical, and its practice was regarded, almost generally, as a kind of eccentricity very nearly bordering on madness. 'Now, moderation—if these people only stopped there—is all well in its way, and is commendable rather than otherwise, for we ought to be moderate in the use of the gifts of God ; but total abstinence !—why *that* is the dream of a madman, and a downright flying in the face of Providence.' This is how those who condescended to 'argue' the question delivered themselves of their indignant feelings. There was, besides,

a kind of lurking suspicion that there was some concealed object, something lurking in the back-ground, in this desire on the part of Protestants 'to entangle Catholics in their societies.' This suspicion, utterly without foundation, was still not devoid of a certain influence in closing the ears of the working classes against well-meant advice and disinterested advocacy. So that, while a few laboured zealously and perseveringly to preach the cause, they advanced but slowly and painfully, as it were inch by inch, and made little headway against the tide of popular indifference or popular mistrust. In vain a reformed veteran, whom excess had brought to the verge of the grave, to decrepitude and misery, appealed to his then vigorous upright form, and his comfortable dress and decent position, to convince his hearers of the benefit which *he* had received from a total avoidance of the cause of his former ruin and disgrace. With as little profit did a respectable mechanic refer to his years of folly and tribulation, and contrast them with his present security and independence. The advocates were listened to, and applauded, but rarely was their example imitated. The right man was wanted for the cause, and he was soon to come.

'Oh, Theobald Mathew, if *thou* would but take the cause in hand !' was the constant appeal of William Martin to the benevolence of the most popular and influential priest of the day. These appeals were not addressed to a dull ear or an insensible heart. '*Thou* could do such good to these poor creatures,' were words which haunted the memory and stirred the conscience of Father Mathew. For some time he made no sign which could indicate that he was seriously considering the proposal to undertake the leadership of the movement. But never was a grave proposal more anxiously considered in all its bearings. Seriously and solemnly did Theobald Mathew commune with himself in the solitude of his chamber, and fervently and humbly did he pray to God to vouchsafe him light and guidance.

Father Mathew was now in his 47th year, and possessed an extensive and profound experience of his fellow men. In every phase of life and grade of society, and under every circumstance common to a large community, that experience had been gained. In the mansions of the rich, in the garrets of the poor, amongst those endowed with the wealth of the world, and those to whom a week's sickness brought with it the horrors of actual want, he had witnessed the working of a vicious and, unhappily, a too-pervading habit. He had seen the happiness of the brightest home wrecked by the weakness of a father, by the folly of a husband, or by the deeper and more terrible misery caused by the infatuation of the mother and the wife—ruin and dishonour brought upon young men who had entered upon life with buoyant hopes, and the most brilliant prospects of success. He had beheld the prosperous merchant, the successful trader, the energetic manufacturer, sink gradually into bankruptcy and decay. With even greater sorrow, he had seen the light of genius, extinguished in hopeless gloom, and splendid talents flung recklessly away, as if they were not the special gifts of God to a chosen few. To use his own expressive words, he had seen the stars of heaven fall, and the cedars of Lebanon laid low. In the prison, the mad-house, the hospital, the workhouse, he recognised the victims of this absorbing passion. Poverty and disease, debasement and crime, he in a great measure attributed to its baneful influence. He admired and was proud of the intelligence of the artisans of his city, but he deplored their recklessness and their improvidence. He knew many, many families, that ought to be independent, and even in the enjoyment of comforts, plunged in a state of chronic misery, and frequently indebted for a single meal to the accommodation of the pawn-office—children in rags and squalor, with coarse words upon their young lips—wives despairing and broken-hearted—husbands debauched or brutal.

All this, and more, had pressed upon his mind, filling him with sorrow and dismay, not imagining how a remedy was to be had for an evil of such magnitude, so deeply-rooted and so widely-spread. Was there not Religion?—why could it not prove of avail in this instance? Surely, it had accomplished greater miracles—why not this? But the difficulty—and no man knew it better than Father Mathew—was how to bring the influence of religion to bear upon the habitual and confirmed drunkard. The drunkard was not the one to attend to the ministrations of his clergyman; he frequently failed to comply with one of the most obvious duties of the Christian—namely, to go to his place of worship on the Sunday. If he occasionally made resolutions of amendment, he neglected to fortify those resolutions with the graces of religion. His fatal habit was a bar between him and the religious influence. He fought against it, derided it, or kept it at a distance; and if he yielded to it at last, it was, perhaps on his bed of damp straw, to which drink had brought him, or on a pallet in the hospital, to which an accident or injury received in some savage conflict had consigned him. Then indeed he *promised* amendment for the future; but Father Mathew knew, alas! too well, how, once out of danger, such promises, extorted by fear, were broken in health—broken as easily as strong men break bands of straw—or, like the impress of the foot on the sand, were washed away by the next wave.

What *could* he do?—Father Mathew asked himself in the solitude of his midnight musing—what could he do for the people he so truly loved? how could he benefit the poor, in whose sorrows, sufferings, and poverty he recognised the image of his Redeemer? Was there really a remedy in this pledge of total abstinence, this total avoidance of the cause of the evils he deplored? Would it, could it be ever adopted—that is, generally, or to any extent? Were not the habits, customs, feelings, and associations of the Irish people

opposed to this total renunciation of a long-accustomed indulgence? Were all the social enjoyments to be given up? Was *moderation*, that which he had practised during his entire life, and which he had so often seen enhance the delights of friendly intercourse—was this to be condemned as an evil? Was wine to be banished from the table, and anathematised as an unmitigated mischief? Did not hundreds of his own personal friends, his most esteemed and honoured friends, men of blameless lives,—good and religious and charitable,—did not they use it and enjoy it, and in moderation too? Was he to tell them that *they* were doing wrong?

Then, there were vast interests which would be imperilled by the change from a habit which was so universal. Enormous capital was invested in breweries and distilleries. Thousands of families were living in independence by this trade, discharging all the duties of citizenship, educating and providing for their own children, and not neglecting the children of the poor; contributing to the charities, supporting every useful institution, and freely responding to every appeal on behalf of religion. Were there not fully five hundred retailers of drink in his own city, almost every one of whom he knew, and from many of whom he had obtained liberal assistance in his good works? and were their families to be thrown on the world, and by his hand, too?

Then again, would the attempt succeed, as he was told it would if *he* would only aid it? Was not the opposing power too great to be overcome? The personal interests of those engaged in the trade—the habits and customs of society—the weakness of man's nature,—were not these fatal obstacles to the success of so desperate an attempt? Was it prudent, was it wise, was it honest, to undertake so tremendous a task, when, in all human probability, the result would be none other than failure? Besides, there were the friends whom he would pain, the friendships which it might sever, the injury which it would inflict. Nay, his own flesh and

blood—the brothers of his youth—their young children, whom he loved with such yearning fondness—the husband of his sister,—these would be among the victims of his mission, were that mission to be successful! Was he also to abandon the darling object of his life, that noblest ambition of the Minister of Religion, the completion of a temple to the worship of the Deity?

Such were the thoughts that passed through the perplexed mind of the good priest, as he remembered the frequent appeal, 'Oh! Theobald Mathew, if *thou* would only give thy aid to the cause, what good thou wouldst do for these poor creatures!' and passed in review the dangers and obstacles which he would have to encounter, could he bring himself to take so formidable a step. Vanity had no seductions in a moment and in an issue like this. The responsibility was too awful, the risk too terrible, the consequences of success too grave, the shame of failure too bitter. In prayer, on his knees before his God, he sought for guidance from on high; and if, after long and anxious deliberation, and frequent mental struggles, he became at last convinced that the cause was one in which, for the sake of his people, he ought boldly and unreservedly embark, and if he decided on placing himself at the head of the movement, may we not believe that he received the guidance which he so reverently sought?

He did not decide until after long and anxious deliberation; but once having decided, he acted promptly, as a man whose mind was thoroughly made up. Like Cæsar, he had crossed the Rubicon.