

CHAPTER VII.

He consults William Martin—'Here goes, in the name of God!'—
The Horse-Bazaar—The Movement Progresses—Billy Martin—
William's Oratory—William's gentler Breathings—The Recon-
cilement.

THAT was a joyful day to honest William Martin, on which, early in April 1838, he received a message from Father Mathew, requesting his presence that evening at the house in Cove Street. William, as he afterwards assured his friends, 'had a presentiment of what was about to happen,' and for that day he carried his sixty-eight years as jauntily as if they had been only thirty. At the appointed moment he was at the door, which was open for his reception; and there, at the threshold, stood his friend Theobald Mathew ready to receive him, his handsome countenance radiant with kindness and good nature. 'Welcome, Mr. Martin; welcome, my dear friend. It is very kind of you to come to me at so short a notice, and so punctually too.' 'I was right glad to come to thee, Theobald Mathew, for I expected that thou had good news for me.' 'Well, Mr. Martin, I have sent for you to assist me in forming a temperance society in this neighbourhood.' 'I knew it!' said William; 'something seemed to tell me that thou would'st do it at last.' 'My dear sir, it was not a matter to be undertaken lightly, and I feel that there are many difficulties in the way.' 'There are difficulties in everything we do,' remarked William; 'but thou knowest we must conquer them.' 'Very true, my dear friend, we must try and do so. You remember

that, a considerable time ago, you spoke to me on the subject at the House of Industry.' 'I remember it well, and that I often spoke to thee about it, and told thee that thou were the only man that could help us.' 'At that time,' continued Father Mathew, 'I could not see my way clearly to take up the question; but I have thought much of it since then, and I think I do see my way now. I have been asked by several good men to take up the cause, and I feel I can no longer refuse. How are we to begin, Mr. Martin?' 'Easily enough,' said honest William. 'Appoint a place to hold the meeting, fix a day and hour,—and that's the way to begin.' 'Will Tuesday next, at seven o'clock, in my schoolroom, answer?' asked Father Mathew. 'It's the very thing,' said William, who added,—'This will be joyful news for our friends. Oh! Theobald Mathew, thou hast made me a happy man this night.' An affectionate pressure of the hand was the response.

This, indeed, was great news for the friends of temperance—for those who had struggled so long, and in vain, to arrest even the decent attention of the community, and who had seen such little result from their many years of earnest and disinterested labours. They rejoiced unfeignedly, and wisely considered that the cause was thenceforth destined to advance; though no one could have then imagined that it would ever have assumed the importance which it obtained in scarcely more than a year from that date. People do not anticipate miraculous revolutions; and what was to happen was of this class.

When it became generally known through the city that Father Mathew had taken this important step, some applauded him, and said that it was in keeping with his other good works; but a much larger number ridiculed the notion of his joining the 'fanatics.' Those who were inclined to take a lenient view of his folly, said he had lost his usual good sense, or attributed his conduct partly to a momentary impulse, and

partly to his natural unwillingness to say 'no' to any application. 'And then, those temperance fellows have been so pestering and bothering the poor man, that he could not resist their importunities.' To say the truth, many of his friends were deeply disgusted at what they regarded as an unaccountable freak, or, at the best, an instance of pitiable weakness.

The meeting was not a very large one, whatever its future influence upon the country and upon its people. Of course, the veterans were there to witness the triumph of their courage and fidelity. Several of the personal followers of Father Mathew were there also. But of those in whose behalf he had consented to place himself in a position from which his natural modesty shrank, there was a small attendance. It mattered little, however, what the attendance was, whether small or great; it was the work to be then undertaken which was of importance. The place of meeting was auspicious and appropriate. It was the schoolroom in which, for nearly twenty years, since when it had been established by the good priest who now placed himself at the head of another movement for the good of the people, many hundreds, nay thousands, of the children of the poor had been taught, trained, and fed within its walls, and prepared, by knowledge and by industry, for the better discharge of their duties in life.

Father Mathew took the chair, and opened the proceedings in a short address. He briefly described the object for which he had called his friends together, and referred to the frequent applications that had been made to him by gentlemen who differed from him in religion, but who were known and respected for their worth and benevolence.

These gentlemen (he continued) are good enough to say that I could be useful in promoting the great virtue of temperance, and arresting the spread of drunkenness. I am quite alive to the evils which this vice brings with it, especially to the humbler classes, who are naturally most exposed to its temptation, and liable to yield to its seductive influences. I have always endeavoured, as a minister of

religion, to discourage drunkenness, not with the success I desired, it is true; but I yielded to no one in my wish to see our working classes sober and self-respecting. I could not refuse to listen to the many appeals made to me. Your respected friend Mr. Martin has often asked me to do what I am about to do this night—and Mr. Olden, whom you well know, has told me that 'the mission was from God, and that I should not reject it.' My dear friends, I much fear that your kind partiality has made you overlook my many defects, and attribute to me merits which I am very far from possessing; but if, through any humble instrumentality of mine, I can do good to my fellow creatures, and give glory to God, I feel I am bound, as a minister of the Gospel, to throw all personal considerations aside, and try and give a helping hand to gentlemen who have afforded me so excellent an example. Indeed, if only one poor soul could be rescued from destruction by what we are now attempting, it would be giving glory to God, and well worth all the trouble we could take. No person in health has any need of intoxicating drinks. My dear friends, you don't require them, nor do I require them—neither do I take them. Many of you here have proved that they can be done without, for you are strong in health, and in the possession of all your faculties. After much reflection on the subject, I have come to the conviction that there is no necessity for them for any one in good health; and I advise you all to follow my example. I will be the first to sign my name in the book which is on the table, and I hope we shall soon have it full.

Father Mathew then approached the table, and, taking the pen, said, in a voice heard by all, and remembered by many to this day—'Here goes, *in the name of God!*' and signed as follows,—'Rev. Theobald Mathew, C. C., Cove Street, No. 1.'

It is not possible to describe the exultation of William Martin, and the deep satisfaction felt by others; it is sufficient to say that sixty names were enrolled that night, including the names of some who, now much advanced in life, are still faithful to the promise of that memorable evening—the 10th of April 1838.

From that moment Father Mathew became public property. His time was thenceforward no longer his own, and his house was soon to lose its accustomed privacy. Day by day, there grew upon him an amount of labour, labour of body and of

mind, such as perhaps no other man ever went through, and which, could he at all have anticipated it when he wrote that signature in the book, might have appalled even his self-sacrificing spirit. Now indeed his twenty-five years of devotion to the service of his fellow-citizens proved of infinite value to him. His reputation, for every virtue which could adorn a man or a priest, had long been established in the hearts of the mass of the population, with whom his name had become a household word, the type of goodness, and charity, and compassionateness. No man had ever more successfully prepared the way for his own work, or so securely laid the foundations—broad, deep, wide, and solid—of his own future fame, as he had done during those five and twenty years. In his confessional, in his pulpit, in the squalid garret, in the haunts of fever, by the bedside of the sinner, in the wards of the cholera hospital, in his munificent charities, in his unostentatious benevolence, in his acts of untold kindness and generosity—in *his whole life*—lay the secret of his marvellous success—of the miraculous progress of the movement of which he had now become the leader. He may have been, and indeed was, derided by many, though only for a short time; but no one was foolish or wicked enough to question either the sincerity of his conviction, or the purity of his motives. Theobald Mathew's character was beyond the reach of calumny. In the reverence of the people for that character was based the foundation of the temperance cause in Cork—in Ireland—in Scotland and England—in America. No other man could have done the work; he did it, because he was the right man to do it.

At the next meeting, to which the public were invited through placards, the signatures were very much increased; for once it was generally known that Father Mathew had 'a society of his own,' the interest of the working classes was attracted towards it. Soon the crowds became so great, that fears were entertained of the security of the loft of the old

store, in which the meetings were held on two nights in the week, and also on Sunday, after 'last Mass.' Curiosity, no doubt, attracted numbers to these meetings. They desired to ascertain for themselves what Father Mathew *really* said, and if it were possible that he recommended people to give up drink of every kind, and that he adopted the motto of 'Billy Martin'—not to 'touch, taste, or handle,' what William unflatteringly designated as 'poison' and 'brewer's wash.' To their great amazement, they found that their faithful and beloved friend, the friend of the poor and the needy, whose every effort had been devoted to the service of the people, did advise them, in simple and affectionate language, to avoid a certain cause of danger, and to prefer solid comforts, to a false and fleeting gratification. He told them some of the facts of his experience, which facts now assumed a more startling significance to his own mind; and, depicting in forcible but unexaggerated language the misery and ruin, the sorrow and disgrace, which drink brought upon society, especially on those who lived by the sweat of their brow and the labour of their hands, he exhorted them to think of their own interests, their children's welfare, their happiness in this world and in the next, and, with the courage of a truly Christian people, to free themselves from the bondage of a degrading habit. Coming from any one, such advice was good; but urged by Father Mathew, it was irresistible. Thus more was done by him in a few weeks for temperance in Cork than had been accomplished in twice that number of years before.

It became therefore indispensable that a suitable place should be found, which would be capable of accommodating the thousands who flocked to the preaching of the new doctrine. Fortunately, it was found in the Horse Bazaar, a great covered space, in which, for years after, more than 4,000 persons were frequently assembled. It was quite convenient to, and within a few yards of, Father Mathew's house in Cove Street, and was placed unreservedly at his disposal by one of his

sincerest friends and most devoted followers, Mrs. O'Connor. It was in this vast and dimly-lighted building that temperance was rocked and nursed, and that the sturdy infant grew strong and robust and bold, until eventually it attracted public attention to what it was doing. At first, Father Mathew did not speak at any length, and preferred that the speaking should fall to the share of others; and the walls of the Bazaar rang night after night with fervid and impassioned oratory such as, whatever some may think to the contrary, a theme of the kind is calculated to elicit and inspire. Nor was there any lack of really clever speakers now surrounding Father Mathew. He had nearly all the old practised advocates, who had the usual arguments at their fingers' ends; but he had likewise men of ability and enthusiasm, who flung into their advocacy all the ardour of their youth, and who, with the versatility and vivacity common to their country, enlivened their addresses by humorous descriptions and witty and amusing sallies. The speaking had the charm of variety and contrast. Following after the homely good sense and oftentimes unconsciously comical oratory of 'Billy Martin,' as people would persist in calling him, there flashed a brilliant speech from Frank Walsh, a barrister of local celebrity, one of the best popular orators of the day, and a man beloved for the genial kindness of his disposition. Frank Walsh was an invaluable aid to Father Mathew, and was one of the first to make attractive the meetings of the Bazaar. He could elicit the tear by his pathos, and delight his audience by his playful fancy and happy mimicry. Then some honest artisan, conquering his bashfulness, narrated his experience, sometimes with homely simplicity, but as often with genuine humour. Then there was the Secretary, James M'Kenna, who had known the two sides of the question from personal experience, and whose speeches frequently partook of the character of rhapsodies, rather startling to the ear of the critic, but to which the evident sincerity of the speaker imparted the genuine ring. There were

others; but it is not necessary that their names should be mentioned. Suffice it to say, that scarcely in any community could any cause have been better supplied with advocates, or a leader sustained by more zealous and devoted lieutenants.

The movement rolled on majestically. The hundreds rapidly swelled into thousands, and the thousands were, before the year was at an end, to become hundreds of thousands. Thus, in three months from the day that Father Mathew signed the book 'in the name of God,' the number on the roll was 25,000; in five months, it was 131,000; and in less than nine months—from April to December of the year 1838—it was 156,000. So the temperance reformation went on, swelling like the tide, till it rushed with the force of a torrent, and eventually assumed, so to speak, the dimensions of an ocean. No wonder that 'Billy Martin' should occasionally, in the exuberance of his delight, depart from the decorous placidity of the Friend. As this worthy man had much to do with inducing Father Mathew to join the movement, or rather to create and lead it, the present may be a fitting time to give the reader an idea of what 'the Grandfather of the cause' was like.

At the first time of his adopting temperance notions, which were decidedly repugnant to his social and convivial habits, he was far advanced in life; and when he signed his name on the 10th of April 1838, he was within two years of the patriarchal age of seventy. But he was as strong as an elephant, and as active as a horse—the two animals he invariably introduced into what may be termed his sensation speeches. Broad, sturdy, and vigorous, he had gone into the cause with all the earnestness, honesty, and obstinacy of his nature. Honest and upright in his dealings, he was just the man to 'stand no nonsense,' and to despise half measures from the bottom of his soul. William was a philanthropist, and abhorred slavery and oppression of every kind. He was a negro emancipationist, and an enemy to capital punishment;

but to no cause did he devote a tith of the ardour and energy that he did to temperance. He had given up whisky-punch and wine and porter himself; and why should n't every-one do the same? He made the sacrifice,—if it were a sacrifice,—and he should like to know why every other person in the world should not do likewise?

For years, William had been accustomed to decorate his shop-window with flaring placards and startling pictures, which silently though forcibly advocated his darling cause. Whatever came from the temperance printing-press which most strikingly illustrated the folly, the ruin, or the disgrace of drunkenness, or depicted in the most glowing colours the advantages which followed in the path of sobriety, found a place in this picture-gallery of his. No caricature of the 'miserable drunkard' was too broad for his taste; it was impossible that the colours could be laid on too thick or too dark for William's satisfaction. Besides, as he said, the public were to be frightened if they could not be argued out of the folly and wickedness of their drinking habits; and the ladies too, he added, should be shown 'what came of their drinking their couple of glasses of their nice port and their beautiful sherry.' There were pictures to suit every understanding. Those who could not be won by examples of domestic felicity, in which a lady in pink, with a very small child sitting on the carpet at her feet, and a gentleman in a blue coat and yellow trowsers, reading by a lamp, pleasingly figured, were appealed to through their grosser sense—the concupiscence of the eye—by the representation of a prodigious plum-pudding, bristling with huge almonds, or of a mammoth round of beef; while those who were insensible to persuasion, and should be dealt with sternly, were aroused to a sense of their danger by an internal scene, in which a gentleman was represented in the act of administering a second and evidently a superfluous blow to his wife, with a poker of gigantic demensions; or a street scene, in which the

'groggerly' and the brewery and distillery were represented as being under the direct superintendence, and indeed active management, of Satan and a host of hoofed and horned satellites. The mass of the community at that time regarded total abstinence as the wildest of wild dreams, and the most foolish of absurdities; and, in their eyes, he who preached it was either a fool, a knave, a dupe, or an impostor. But William did not care a button as to what people said or thought of him; he resolved that if they would not listen to the truth, they should see it. Therefore everything novel and astounding found an honoured place in his shop-window; and when a crowd gathered and gaped, great was his rejoicing thereat.

He delighted in all the catch-words of temperance oratory, and repeated with undiminished relish certain couplets and scraps which enriched the harangues of the ordinary temperance platforms—such as

Drink of the fountain bubbling free;
'T was good for Samson, and 't is good for thee.

Though a Friend, and a lover of peace, William was a fierce zealot in temperance. Indeed I am thoroughly convinced that he would have cheerfully gone to the stake—of course, after first sturdily fighting against it—in defence of his principles; and it is much to be feared that he would not have dealt over mercifully with the 'groggeries,' which were the objects of his special detestation—had he them in his power. He preached total abstinence on many occasions with an energy and vehemence startling to unaccustomed ears. His speech was at times rather a war-whoop than an appeal to the reasoning faculties. In this respect he was a remarkable contrast to those members of the Society of Friends who had joined at an early period. Bland and gentle in manner, and persuasive in advocacy, they, when compared with William, were as the softest whispering of the gentlest zephyr to the

swell and roar of the storm. Nor was William Martin always in the stormy mood: he could be humorous and playful, and relished fun amazingly, as well as indulged in it, to the vast delight of his audience—especially after the company had enjoyed a more than usually satisfactory tea.

The writer well remembers the amazement depicted on the countenances of two American Friends, whom Father Mathew had brought with him to a 'soirée,' while listening to a speech from William. He was in majestic force this night, and seemed evidently determined to afford his transatlantic brethren a lively idea of how things were done in Ireland. He revelled in comical pictures and droll incidents, and he wound up with his favourite queries, which clinched the argument, and left his imaginary opponent trampled beneath his sturdy feet. Imagine this broad-shouldered vigorous old man of seventy roaring out the following questions and answers, his voice swelling in volume and his vehemence culminating to a force quite prodigious at the final and crushing assertion—'What does the Race-horse drink?—Water! What does the Elephant drink?—Water!! What does the Lion drink?—Water!!! It is good for Man, Beast, and Bird!!!!' As he houted out the last word, which he usually pronounced as if it were spelt with a 'u' instead of an 'i,' he was carried away by his energy, and literally roared and stamped—the American friends looking on in indescribable amazement, perhaps either dreading apoplexy for the impassioned orator, or the sudden giving way of the floor, which, no doubt, William sorely tried. Father Mathew thoroughly relished his friend William's exhibitions of 'earnestness and sincerity,' as he rather mildly designated these grand outbursts. The following, which was accurately reported at the time—it was spoken in 1843—will afford a favourable specimen of William Martin's gentler breathings:—

'Well, my friends, how things are changed!—thanks to your good President. I remember the time when I was the

scoff and scorn of all Cork.' Here an old lady, from the root and vegetable market, with a deep lace frill to her snowy cap, which was ornamented with a broad ribbon of the most brilliant hue, remarked, in a consolatory tone—'Do n't mind what they did, Mr. Martin, darling—'t is you had the sense, and they had n't. God bless you! you knew what was good for poor craytures, and 't is finely you are this blessed night, sure enough.' When the good humoured laughter which this sally provoked had subsided, the speaker continued his address—'Tis a great change for the better. But I knew how it would be. When that meeting was held on the 10th of April, 1838, and your respected President undertook the task, I felt as if a load was taken off my shoulders, and put upon Theobald Mathew's.' Mr. Martin, finding his audience to be in the most amiable mood, thus pleasantly relaxed:—

I will just tell you an anecdote, to show you how foolish a poor fellow may become when he has a little drop in. There was a man named John Turner, who thought that he should go to the public-house, and take a pint of porter; he had 2s. 6d. in his pocket, besides the price of two pints. Well, John Turner went in, and called for one pint, and then he called for another, and at last poor John Turner fell asleep. Now there were some 'purty boys' in the tap-room at the time, and they got a cork and burned it over the candle, and smeared poor John's face, until he became like a black. Well, one said that he ought to cut off one of John's whiskers; and when that one was off, they did n't think it was fair but to cut off the other, until John Turner was clipped as bare as a fighting cock. 'Let us look at his pockets,' said they; and they looked in, and saw 2s. 6d., and they took it out. After that they got a looking-glass, and put it opposite to him, and then they shook him to waken him. John opened his eyes, and rubbed them, and took a peep in the glass. 'O dear! is this me?' said John—'no it can't: it must be some other man. I was a fair man, and I had whiskers on me—and this fellow is black, and has n't a hair on his face. Oh dear! oh dear!' said poor John, 'who am I at all? Well, if it is me,' said John, 'I'll soon find out, for I had 2s. 6d. in my pocket: and if I have n't it, I can't be John Turner.' He put his hand in his pocket, and there was

no 2s. 6d. to be found—so he said that he could n't be John Turner. He then thought that if anyone should know him, it should be his wife; so he rolled and staggered to the door, and he rapped, and he says—'Is it here one John Turner lives?' 'It is,' says his wife, who opened the door. 'Am I John Turner?—look at me, and tell me am I John Turner?' 'You are not John,' says the wife. 'John had a nice fair face, and had fine whiskers—and you have none; and John, my John, used to walk steadily, and hold himself up like a man—but you are staggering about like a drunken fool, and you are nearly doubled up.' 'Oh dear! oh dear! then who am I?' said John Turner. 'No matter who you are,' said the wife—'you are in want of a lodging, and you must be taken in.' So she let him in; and I suppose when he awoke in the morning he found out that he was poor John Turner himself. It is said there is 'nourishment' in strong drinks, but I say it is in the *eating* that the nourishment is to be found. When I eat, I find, as the lady said who took the port wine, that it is doing me good down to my very toes. Here I am in my seventy-second year, and I am strong and healthy without their 'nourishment.' Oh, take the pure bubbling stream—

Drink from the bubbling fountain free,
'T was Sampson's drink, 't is good for thee.

William sat down on this occasion, as he did on most others, amid a storm of applause. The same old lady with the grand cap rushed over to him, and seizing his hand, exclaimed, 'God bless you,' Mr. Martin—'t is you're the splendid man of your age. Faith 't is n't every young fellow that's like you—strong an' hearty you are this day, my old buck! God spare you to us for another twenty year, at any rate.' William was affected, but somewhat embarrassed, by the old lady's enthusiasm, which was fully shared in by her female friends in his neighbourhood.

A little incident in which William Martin was concerned, will afford an interesting idea of the character of the man whom he sincerely admired. William could, when he so liked, and that was not rarely, be as obstinate as a mule. Father Mathew was quick, hot, and, at times, obstinate also. In fact, he had so long, not to say influenced, but even ruled, others, that he was—at intervals, and rarely, to be sure—

impatient of contradiction. William was rough and resolute; his friend warm and somewhat self-willed. Some question arose respecting which the two friends had a difference of opinion, and neither would yield to the other; and so they fell out—William leaving the house in high dudgeon. Scarcely had the broad back of the sturdy Quaker been lost sight of at the corner of the street, when poor Father Mathew's anger vanished like smoke, and gave place to the keenest compunction. He was most unhappy at the notion of his having wounded the feelings of his good old friend, and would have followed him and implored his forgiveness, if he believed it would have been of any use. William was grieved in his own way, and became several degrees more gruff in consequence. A kind friend interposed, and explanations and assurances of mutual regard and esteem followed. Father Mathew quickly availed himself of the opportunity afforded to him, and proceeding to the place of business of honest William, flung himself upon his neck, and, kissing him on the cheek, humbly implored his pardon. That was another proud day for William Martin, between whom and Father Mathew no cloud, small even as a man's hand, ever again interposed.