

OPIUMISED.

'Aha,' remarked my friend with a sniff, as we walked up Wakefield-street from the Auckland wharf where I had been to welcome him from 'Frisco, 'Aha,' 'there is one of John's favourite vices. I have smoked opium.'

'And still continue to do so?'
'No, thank God; my experience with the drug was short and decisive, but sharp while it lasted. The opium habit,' added Dawson (I call my friend by this name; it will do as well as another) 'is like a quicksand—once in its grasp, escape is almost impossible. Or, it may better be compared to the poisoned shirt of Nessus.'

'You managed to extricate yourself, it appears.'
'But not without a struggle. I feel the effects of the drug even to this day, although it is many years since curiosity induced me to "hit" the first pipe—as a yielding to this seductive habit is slangily called by the recognised "fiends." I'm not a De Quincey, but I will tell you as definitely and clearly as I can my feelings while under the influence of the drug. I had become acquainted with a gambler, a high-toned, expert member of the fancy. I noticed that he often left the place where he dealt, and when he returned, say in half an hour, his manner had undergone a change; he was more careful, and manipulated the cards with greater steadiness and ease. One day I asked him the plain question:

"Wilson"—that was his name—"why do you call on a substitute and quit the table so often?"
'"Opium, my boy," he readily answered. "I can do nothing without it; steadies the nerves, you know. Deprive me of my periodical pipe, and I'm like a fiddle without strings. Ever try a whiff?"

"No."
'"Then you'd better take my advice, and continue to let it alone."
'But my curiosity was aroused by his caution. After

accompanying Wilson to his favourite opium joint several times, I finally concluded to realize the sensations, whatever they might be, derived from smoking the drug. I "hit" my first pipe, as the phrase goes, about 4 o'clock one afternoon, and even now, as I talk to you, there is an involuntary shudder running through my body as the remembrance of the terribly sickening sensation I then felt comes back to me. Yuh! it was a foretaste of what hell is supposed to be. It was hard work, in the beginning, to get the pipe stem properly adjusted to my mouth, and the method of smoking is different from that in using tobacco. Like most beginners, I smoked too much at the start, but hardly felt the power of the drug till I rose from the bunk on which I had lain. Then I became comparatively helpless and staggered like a drunken man, zigzagging toward a water pitcher, from which I drank a cupful or more. Nausea followed, so intense that the same feeling arising from *mal-de-mer* is mild in comparison, and when I reached my wooden couch again my lower limbs gave way and I fell prone, helpless and insensible. Wilson found and brought me to myself. By his help I reached my room in the hotel, where I again fell into a sleep, disturbed by restlessness and horrid dreams. I would awake shrieking and with the idea some one was in the room seeking my life. I swore I would not touch the wretched stuff again, but the time came when I gave way to the craving. I pulled away steadily for about three minutes, and that time I got a glimpse of the opium devotee's paradise, about which so much is written and spoken. With my body and limbs completely relaxed, I dropped into a state of delightful dreamy half-sleep, languidly knowing all that was going on about me, but caring for nothing. I was above and beyond all worldly considerations, all responsibilities. Then there came a change. Restlessness supervened, and this dream of delight was rounded by horrible mental images resembling the harpies that Dore pictures in his illustrations of Dante's *Inferno*. Then I came back in a dazed way to real life again, drank the strong tea, as I had been advised, and went home with all my nerves united in a general protest. I was terribly ill, and suffered fearful pains. Wilson came and offered me an opium pill as the only cure, but I threw the thing away and cried that I would never touch it, and I never have.

JABEZ BALFOUR AND HIS SENTENCE.

MR WILSON, in the *Investors' Review*, is not satisfied with the result of the Balfour trials. He thinks that Balfour has got too much and the others too little; but it is Mr Wilson's habit never to be contented no matter what happens. He says:—

'A popular craving for revenge upon Balfour has been gratified; and in gloating over this the public will forget altogether that Balfour's crimes were as common almost as company balance sheets; that he and his associates have their counterparts all over the country; that frauds of a similar nature are as common in certain regions of finance as hemlock in hedges. The more we think over this aspect of these sentences, the more we feel that something like a miscarriage of justice has occurred. Three classes of individuals required a sharp lesson, a rousing warning. First, there is the company shareholder. He requires to have beaten into his head, as with a club, the all-important fact that the dominant tendency of company finance in our day is to steal capital, on one pretence or another, in order to pay dividends.'

The second class which required punishing was the directors. But there is a third class about which he is still more exercised, and these are the accountants. He grieves over Mr Theobald's sentence as inadequate:—

'What we desire to see is a code of laws framed by the governing bodies of the various accountant societies, by which the hands and backbones of their members will be strengthened to resist the fraudulent intentions of Boards of directors,—always anxious to make things smooth with the shareholders, even when not actively criminal in purpose. The shareholding public, we know by sad experience, never tries to help itself till too late. It is for an honourable body of public auditors to protect the ignorant and the weak by refusing to tell lies in balance-sheets, or anywhere else; and if some good result in this direction is not accomplished by the Liberator trials, they might just as well not have taken place. The mere satisfaction of the passion for revenge does no good to anybody.'

A WARNING TO ATHLETES.

STR B. W. RICHARDSON, dealing with this subject in the *Young Man*, says:—'Athleticism means competition of a physical kind; the dangers of it lie in the trials so often made of one body testing its powers against another. If all were of the same cast the trial might be fair and to a considerable extent free from risk, because the overstrain even of the weaker might be small, and skill might win. The risk comes in from the efforts made by organs of different qualities, qualities not understood by their owners, and liable to the most serious misunderstandings by them. The heart is usually the first sufferer. Its work is great; it suffers from the direct task put upon it, and it suffers from impulses which are in their way mental in character. In all cases the heart, which is a muscle, wants to be in accord with all the other muscles of the body that are taken into requisition, as well as with the nervous action which excites them into motion. If, in order to supply the muscles that have to be competitively worked with sufficient blood, it must itself overwork, then it becomes damaged in structure and in function. It becomes too large and powerful; it is one organ assisting many, working for all that are demanded immediately, as well as for other organs which have to be kept regularly in play and in repair. Its openings or floodgates become distended. Its valves go out of gear with the parts they have to defend; its muscular structure is overdeveloped, like the muscles of the blacksmith's arm or the dancer's leg; and, in time, it is worn out relatively, or it is too strong for its duty toward the delicate parts it supplies; or it wears out too rapidly, and becomes too weak. I have witnessed all these changes and the damages that follow them, and I cannot too earnestly call attention to them. Even the most skillful and most commanding athletics are not safe. The young athletic does not make an old one. The watch is overwound. If we put an indiarubber band around letter or parcels it holds well at first, and it holds long if it be kept on with no more than moderate firmness. In like manner, the elastic and rebounding tissues of our organs, and specially of our minute channels of circulation, keep strong, and will do so, if they are not too long and too often subjected to tension and pressure. If they are, like the rubber, they give way and rupture and lose their sustaining power. Then we see the athletic engine, the body, destroyed for athletic work, often before its prime. It should last in fine play, say, twenty years; it begins to fail in fifteen, and it is practically dead in twenty. The man is considered to be too old, and must make way for the younger aspirant. If good physical exercise could, therefore, be kept free of competition, it would be far better for the world at large.

ARTEMUS WARD REDIVIVUS.

The following extract from a paper written by Artemus Ward, that inimitable American wit, before the outbreak of the Civil War, may be applied, word for word, to the crisis in the States, which was produced by President Cleveland's unfortunate interference in the Venezuela affair. 'Baldinsvillins: Heretofore, as I have numerously observed, I have abstained from having any sentiments or principles, my pollertics, like my religion, bein' of a exceedin' accommodatin' character. But the fact can't be no longer disigged that a Krysis is onto us, & I feel it's my dooty to accept your invite for one consecutive nite only. I spose the inflammatory individooals who assisted in projudging this Krysis know what good she will do, but I ain't 'shamed to state that I don't; scarcely. But the Krysis is here. She's bin hear for several days, & Goodness nose how long she'll stay. But I venter to assert that she's rippin' things. She' knockt trade into a cockt-up hat and chanced Bizniss of all kinds tighter nor I ever chanced any of my livin' wild Beests. Altho I can't exactly see what good this Krysis can do, I can very quick say what the original caws of her is.'



MY JEANNE.

Has she need of monarch's wand?
Proudest peers in all the land
Bow to that wee, jewelled hand!
She's a queen—my Jeanne!

Has she lack of leal allies?
Every zealous minion flies
At the bidding of her eyes!
She's a queen—my Jeanne!

Royal maiden, yours alone
Is the sovereignty I own;
Take my poor heart for a throne!
Be my queen—my Jeanne!

CATHARINE YOUNG GLEN.