

**WILFRED HEDLEY: OR,
HOW TEETOTALISM
CAME TO ELLENSMERE**

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Wilfred Hedley: Or, How Teetotalism Came to Ellensmere by S. J. Fitzgerald

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S. J. FITZGERALD

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HOW TEETOTALISM CAME TO ELLENSMERE.

BY

S. J. FITZGERALD,

AUTHOR OF

"THE LANCASTERS AND THEIR FRIENDS," "COALS AND COLLIERIES,"
"MASTER AND MAN," "EQUALLY YOKED," ETC.

"Say not thou—that the former days were better than these."
KING SOLOMON.

LONDON:

T. WOOLMER, 2, CASTLE ST., CITY ROAD, E.C.,

AND 66, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1884.

255. e. 8.



WILFRED HEDLEY:

OR,

How Teetotalism Came to Ellensmere.

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CHAPTER I.

"BEHOLD, A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW."

*"'Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours,
And ask them what report they bore to heaven."*

—YOUNG.

THE time of which I write is retrospective, when Teetotalism was like an infant of days, struggling for existence—so far back, indeed, that few, and they no longer young, are left to tell the story of the battle, or rejoice in the victory it has won. The majority of those who bore the burden and heat of the day rest from their labour, having at the command of the Master laid down the sword, taken up the crown, and joined those who, before the fuller light of TOTAL ABSTINENCE came to be received by men, had striven hard to crush the power of intemperance by example and precept, out of whose system issued

the now matured and widely embraced principle of teetotalism; the many that are gone, as well as the few who remain, being held in loving remembrance as the heroes of a well-fought field. Amongst the survivors, none is better known than good Joseph Livesey, who has on this day, the 5th of March, 1883, entered into his ninetieth year—"a grand old man."

One bright evening in July, a year after the time when they who yet bear the distinctive title of "The Seven Men of Preston" had, like "the solitary monk who shook the world," startled their friends and neighbours into a new and novel train of thought; two men were seen to take possession of a grassy knoll known as the Lady's Seat, not many yards distant from a blacksmith's shop, situate in the township of Ellensmere, where, all the day through, sparks flew from the anvil, under the vigorous blows of the hammers wielded by two sturdy sons of Vulcan known as "Will and Bob." This smith's shop was the gossip place of that particular part of the town; and now that the working day was nearly over, a number of men and boys drew near to the place; some sat on the ground, some on the bars of iron under the windows, others under the shelter where the horses were shod, or leaned idly about the walls discussing the crops and the harvest prospects generally; while one of their number, evidently a man of some note amongst them, took a three weeks old newspaper from his jacket pocket and prepared to give his companions what he called "a bit o' Parliament news."

The etiquette of the locality demanded that the clang of the forge should cease, and time be given

to the smiths to wash the grime from their faces and hands; which they did in a stone trough on the opposite side of the way, placed there for the purpose of receiving the overflow from a clear spring that bubbled and sparkled in a green field a few yards further away, before the reading commenced. The owner of the paper had "found the place," set his spectacles astride his nose, given his preliminary cough, and was "ready to begin." Bob was polishing his honest brown face with the rough jack-towel just passed to him by his fellow-workman, when one of the expectant group caught sight of the men who had just taken possession of the Lady's Seat.

"Hillo! what does that mean?" said he, as the lesser of the strange men unfurled a small blue silken flag, with the words "TEMPÉRANCE BANNER" printed thereon in letters of gold.

"What can it mean?" said several at once.

The politician folded up his paper, took his spectacles from his nose, and placed both back in his pocket, for he found that he was alone. Those who but a minute before had been anxious to hear the paper read, attracted by the glittering flag, had hastened to the foot of the grassy eminence from which it floated. The people of Ellensmere, like the people of ancient Athens, spent a good deal of their time in hearing or telling anything new. It was therefore no marvel that the reader followed his intended audience to learn "what was up."

A mile from the Lady's Seat was a large brewery. The owner, whose name was Swindells, supplied most of the public-houses in and around the town with the beer they required for sale. In the oppo-

site direction, but on the same river bank, stood the Mordaunt Mills, owned and worked by Mr. Hargrave, corn merchant and miller. Both these establishments employed a large number of workmen and clerks. The homes of many of them were in Ellensmere itself. To reach these homes the men must pass the Lady's Seat. I have said it was the time when labour ceased, and the toilers were turning homeward, when, like the loungers about the smith's shop, several were attracted by the blue flag.

Various were the conjectures of the inhabitants of this quiet spot as to what these men wanted coming to Ellensmere. What could they want?

"I hope they are conjurors," said a big lad of sixteen. "I dare say they have got their things in that black bag. I wish they would begin their tricks, I do."

"I think they are quack doctors," quoth another.

"So do I," cried a friend. "They can't be cheap Jacks, 'cause they have no cart of goods."

"They are nothing of that sort," remarked an older man. "Conjurors and cheap Jacks don't sing and pray like that man shapes. Why," he added, "he can pray like a bishop; but he isn't one, not even a passon, or else he would have a big white henkecher on his neck like our vicar."

"Why, they are Methodises, that's what they are," said the politician, "and very good sort of people they are. They do like this; pray for people, and preach to 'em; but I never saw 'em carry a flag before, though I have heard 'em sing beautiful in other places. O, bless you, there's lots of 'em about."

So discoursing, some passed on, others remained to listen to the prayer being fervently offered by one of the strangers, as well as to the song in praise of cold water that was given by the other when the prayer was over. The singer had a sweet voice and pleasant manner that held the attention of several, in particular that of a thoughtful-looking, handsome man of about twenty-four, named Wilfred Hedley. This gentleman was the confidential clerk of Mr. Swindells, the great brewer; he was also one of the best singers in the choir at the parish church. It was a pretty light air, not new, though the words were, to which Wilfred Hedley now listened with a pleased face as he wished they had that capital tenor in the choir; but that laudable desire was forgotten for the time at least as he listened to what followed. When the song was ended, the singer remarked:

"I think we ought to tell you who we are, and why we are here."

"That is just what I have been thinking," cried the stout smith named Bob. "So tell us, will you?"

"With pleasure," returned the singer good-humouredly. "I am a working-man like yourself, a mechanic, as my hands declare. My name is John Davis. My good friend here"—touching the arm of his companion, who still held the blue flag—"is also a working-man; his name is Peter Vicars, and we are both Manchester men. We were drunkards; God has mercifully shown us the sin, and saved us from the drunkard's fate. We are better in health, position, and pocket than ever we were during such time as we were slaves to drink. Knowing this, we feel it