A TALE OF TO-DAY,

BY ROBERT BUCHANAN,

Author of "The Shadow of the Sword," "God and the Man," "Stormy Waters," &c.

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And what's to me a ring o' gold That proves the written law? A ring of airn's around my heart That sadly breaks in twa!

CHAPTER I AND H -Mr and Mrs O'Mara, both of them artists, occurry rooms in Peter street, Westminster, with their infant child. Dorn. The husband is somewhat of a thenathrift and late to boot, but the wife manages to keep the wolf from the door as well as she can by miniature painting. Maddenoil by misfortune, O'Mara descends to heating at cards, but is detected at his friends' chambers. and leaves in disgrace. As he arrives home he hears the roice of his wife and that of a strange man.

CHAPTERS III AND IV.-Mr Bream, the clergyman, who lakes the greatest interest in Gillian, is the gentleman on i visit to her on her husband's return. He insists on being for banker, and lends her £10 for the purpose of providing medicine and change of air for herself and little one. O'Mara hears the convergation, and after Mr Bream's departure he asks for the money from her. She refuses, and a struggle ensues. She falls and cuts her temple. O'Mara takes the money from her elenched hand and decomps. Mrs O'Mara is taken to St. Thomas's Hospital, and recovers to hear that she is an heiress to £20,000 left her

by an uncle. CHAPTERS V AND VI - Mr Bream, taking another Caracy in Essex, meets a Mrs Dartmouth, a distinguished parishioner, and recognises in her his acquaintance of seven years ago. She is acquainted with Sir George Venubles, the squire of the manor. Mr Bream and Mrs Dartmouth commure notes as to the events that have of soil. Abother her authing of

her raically him Bream that Mrs Dartmon hard. Mr Bream is near M: a man evidently in the last . out to be the brother-in-law v. Barbara Leigh, one of the servants at Crouchtord Count accents that his wife, her with another man, named Y them both and have a fatal found his wife in a hospital wife, who dies in his arms. the betrayer of his happine.

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EZRA STOKES. CHAPTER IX,dlord of the Pig and

MR ETRA STOKES, the Whistle, one of the two ment in the village of (In these parts. Crouchi

was slow to accept new people, and Stokes had a namber of its community only for the last two years. He was a dry and withered man of late middle age. whose skin had been burned to an equal blackish brown by stronger suns than that which shone on Essex. He was guarled and warped and knotted all over like a wind-blown tree-with a halting leg, a wry neck, a humped shoulder, a peculiarly ghastly squint, s

teeth, no two of which stood at the same angle, and a twisted nose with three distinct bridges. His antecedents were dark; except that he had been a traveiler, and had as, despite the time-honoured proverb to the contrary, rolling stones sometimes do, gathered some financial moss in his wanderings, nothing was known of him by his neighbours. He had dropped down into the little place from-Heaven knows where, and had taken the lease of the Pig and Whist'e, paying solid cash for the privilege, and lived

reputably in the village, owing no man anything.

crooked mouth, furnished with huge discoloured

There was a certain likeness between his home and bluself, both had been newer and smarter once upon a time, but the battering which makes a man ugly makes a house picturesque, and such stray connoisseurs of the beautiful as came to Crouchford found the Pig and Whistle a prettier spectacle than its landlord. It was a tumble-down, weather-stained roadside house of two stories, with bulging walls shored up by heavy haults of timber. Its low browed door was covered with a Leavy lintel of oak beams, and fureished with two settles, where, on fine nights, Mr Stokes might be seen reading the newspaper or drinking affably with his matic customers. The latter voted him maring good company, for he could, when he chose, talk of moving adventures by flood and field, in places whose names sounded strange and barbaric in rustic ears, and had besides a sly, hard humour, which cometimes took a practical form.

Mr Bream, rapidly covering all the ground—social and geographical—of Crouchford with his usual energy, knew every soul in the parish in a week, and among them, the landlord of the Pig and Whistle. Their acquaintance made quick progress. There were not many people of sufficient native shrewdoess or acquired experience in Crouchford greatly to interest a man of culture, except with the interest, grown commonplace to Mr Bream, of individual traits of characters, or of auch special worries and troubles, bodily and spiritual, as it was his duty to attend to.

A man who had travelled, and would talk more or less istelligeatly of what he had seen, was an acquaintance to be cultivated in a village of whose inhabitants not one per cent, had ever wandered twenty miles from the church spire. Then, the Pig and Whistle was the sit iog place of the local parliament, where the ancients and young men of the place came together to unbend in social dissipation after the labours of the day, and he who would know men should meet them at such moments. Cronchford came to think well of its new curate.

In the first week of his sojourn amongst them, the annual cricket match with the neighbouring village of Hilton had been played, and for the first time in five years had resulted in a victory for Cronchford, mainly through his batting and bowling. That alone would have conquered the affections of the villagers, but when, after the match, Mr Bream stood the two eleveus a supper at the Pig and Whistle, and after due justice had been done to beef and ale, sang "Tom Bowling" from his place at the head of the table, Crouchford, old and young, male and female, swore by him.

The access of popularity rather disturbed the mind of Mr Herbert, who belonged to an altogether different type of clergyman, and whose aristocratic instincts were not so tempered by his Christianity as to permit him so large a familiarity with the humbler members of his flock.

A week or two after Bream's arrival his vicar was sheeked to see his curate at the door of Stokes's hostelry, holding forth to the assembled yokels, with a glass of beer in his hand, and obviously, to judge by the broad grins of his audience, not on a doctrinal subject. When the two cleries next came together the senior took the curate to task about this undue familiarity.

"Understand me, Bream," he said, "I would not Willingly be taken for one of those--ah -- false shepherds, who think that the delivery of a weekly sermen and the discharge of bare parochial work completes a pastor's work. By no means. I have indeavoured ducing my whole time here to -ah-to institute a friendly feeling between myself and every member of the church congregation. But there are ah-limits, Bresm."

"So you think I have overstepped the limits, sir?" "Distinctly!" said Mr Herbert, with emphasis. "To preserve authority among the -ah-vulgar, a gentleman, and above all, a priest, should keep a certain alociness—a certain dignity. How can that dignity be preserved by a clergyman who drinks-ah -heer?"-Mr Herbert got out the vulgar monosyllable with semething of an effort—" with a crowd of tustics before a common alchouse?"

"Stokes's beer is really very good, sir," said Bream, gravely. It rever entered into Mr Herbert's head that any.

body, especially his curate, could dare to chaff him, and he put aside the irrelevent remark with a wave of his hand, "Let me ask you, Mr Herbert," said Bream, "if

you ever happened to overhear those follows talking when they were unaware of your presence?"

"Very possibly. 1-ah-don't exactly remember any particular occasion, but it has probably occurred." "It has occurred once or twice to me since I have been here," said Bream, "and I have noticed that on such occasions their whole conversation is one tissue of dirt and profanity. Well, sir, when I am with them I have seldom heard a word which might not be

used from the pulpit. Last night, just after you had passed, one man, Ned Roberts, from the Pear Tree Farm, began to swear. I told him he had no right to use that language in my presence, but-ha was drunk -he went on swearing, and Stokes turned him out

and sent him home. Now surely, sir, if my presence among them obliges them to talk and think decently for an hour or so a day, that is so much gained, and the fact that it does so is surely proof enough that my familiarity with them has not bred contempt either of me or of my office."

"There is something in what you say, Bream," said Mr Herbert. "Still," he continued, returning to his Original position, "there are limits. Don't overstep them. As for that fellow Stokes, I don't like him. During the four years he has lived here he has not ores intered the church door. He has given me more fromble about—ah—tithes than any three people in

the place. I don't think he led a reputable life before he came here." "He is a fairly intelligent man, sir, and he has a good deal of influence among the labourers. As to

what his life has been it is hard to say. He has travelled a good deal, though in what capacity I don't know. He is willing enough to talk of what he has seen, but he never talks about himself."

"I should say," said Mr Herbert, "that he probably has good reason for his reticence," an uucharitable remark which Bream attributed to the tithes dispute.

It fell out, however, that this same Stokes was to be intimately associated with the development of the ore remance which was going forward in that sleepy and world forgotten village, and it so fell out in this wise. Mr Bream, calling at the Pig and Whistle one evening, found Stokes holding forth to his ring of customers regarding a tremendous landslip in the State of Arizona, which had happened a few years back, in a district with which he had been familiar both before and after the catastrophe. His hearers listened open-mouthed, save one sour-faced veteran, who, at the conclusion of the tale, snorted with disdainful laughter, before burying his visage in a widemouthed earthen mug.

"What be laughin" at, George?" asked a crony. "Why at all you fools swallerin' the like of that," said the ancient.

"Don't you believe it?" asked Stokes. "Do you believe it, as has been a telling of it?" asked the ancient, sourly. "You comes here, and asks Chris'en men i' their sense to b'lieve a rig-

marole like that." "Well, but George, what is it as ee don't b'lieve?" asked the crony. "I don't believe one word of it," said George,

sturdily. "You're wrong there then," said Mr Bream.

"Things of that sort do occur, and as for the details of this story, I remember reading some of them in the English papers at the time." "There," said Stokes, triumphantly. "That's

what comes o' telling a story to a gentleman as knows something. And if you want any more proof than Mr Bream's word, why ye shall have it." So saying he left the meeting for a moment, and

presently returned with a big volume in his arms, which turned out to be a collection of literary and pictorial scraps from English, Colonial, and American newspapers. "There," he said, bumping the volume down before the dissenting George, open at a large picture— "that's the place as it was after the landslip-as it is

now for all I know. I've eat my meals and slep' in that hut in the corner scores o' times, when it was a quarter of a mile higher up the mountain. "Well," said the combatant George, unable to stand against the phalanx of testimony, but retreating like a valiant general, with his face to the fee, "I don't

know as it's much use to talk o' places when that kind o thing's like to happen. I'm glad as I can go to my bed i' Crouchford without being afraid of finding Hilton atop o' men when I wakes i' the murnin'. should look on a visitation o' that sort I' th' light of a judgment." "Ah! surely," chorused the others, with the

exception of Stokes, who was surveying the ancient with a visage of humorous disdain, and Mr Bream, who was turning the leaves of the book. "Have you been in all these places, Stokes?" asked

Mr Bream, glancing from page to page, filled with scraps of journalism from most of the English speaking countries and settlements on the face of the globe. "Why, no, sir," said Stokes. "Not all, but I've been in a good many of 'em, I was always fond of reading, and I cut them things out, here and there, and kept 'em, and when I came here, I pasted 'em icto that book. They comes in useful sometimes, when a set o' mouldy old yokels, as has never been a mile from the town pump, calls me a liar." George wisely declined to accept this challenge to a

renewal of hostilities. Suddenly the assembly was startled by a stifled exclamation from Mr Bream, and saw him staring like one amazed at a page of the book. "Stokes!" he said, rising with the volume in his

hand, and speaking in a quick, uneven voice, "give me a word in private, will you? There is something here which interests me." Stokes limped his way into the described parlour,

and Mr Bream followed, bearing the book, which he laid open on the table. The innkeeper offered him a chair, he took no notice of the act, but after looking round to see that they were really alone, and the door closed, laid his finger on a cutting. "Read that," he said, "and tell me if it's true."

Stokes, after staring at him, read the paragraph. It was to this effect:

"News comes from Yuam, New Mexico, that Bluffer Hawkins, the well-known desperado of that district, has at last handed in his checks. Our readers will remember that it is little over a month since Hankins, accompanied by a solitary confederate, stopped the mail coach just outside Yuam, and executed a daring and successful robbery on the presengers. On Tuesday night, one of the victims of the raid gave information to Police-Lieutenant McCormick that Hawkins and his companion had entered the town, and were drinking in the Magnolia Saloon. That officer, with his energetic promptness, betook himself to the place, accompanied by three of his subordinates. Immediately on his entrance, Hawkins and his companion drew their revolvers. In the first exchange of shots McCormick and one of his followers fell, fatally wounded, and there is little doubt but that Hawkins and his companion would have escaped but for the public spirited conduct of Mr Uriah Cleary, the proprietor of the saloon, who materially aided the officers of the law by firing at Hawkins from behind. His bullet passed through the desperado's neck, and a lucky shot from one of McCormick's party settled his companion. The identity of the latter was established at the police station, where, life being discovered to be extinct, an examination of his body resulted in the discovery of several old letters, addressed to Philip O'Mara, at an address in London. McCormick's gallant conduct has excited universal admiration, and a subscription has been liberal'y started on behalf of his widow and

children." It seemed to Mr Bream's excited fancy that Stokes took an unconscionably long time to read this short paragraph. When at last he raised his head, his twisted face was as impassive as a stone wall. As for his eyes, there was never anything to be learned from them, not even in the direction in which they were looking. He said nothing, but waited for the clergyman to speak again.

"Is that true?" asked Mr Bream again. "It's given here as a piece of news," Stokes answered.

"I don't see why it shouldn't be." "Were you ever in that place? Did you know

either of those men?" Stokes's crooked eyes came together, as if taking counsel of each other. "I knew them both," he answered, after a moment's

"Were you at this place, Yuam, when the affray happened?" "No, I was in New York; that's where I saw the

report. It's cut out of the "New York Sentinel," June 5, 18-." He pointed to the date, written in his own rude characters, below the paragraph. "You knew O'Mara?"

"Not by that name; Mordaunt was what he called

"How do you know then that this was the man?" "Because I was with him in a bar in St. Louis; a man came up to him and called him O'Mara. Mordaunt stuck the man out as he'd made a mistake. He was an Englishman, so was Mordaunt."

"Could you describe him?" "Tallish chap; good looking; very swell way of speaking. Used a lot of crack jaw words. Played the fiddle and the pianner beautiful."

"Will you lend me this book for an hour or two, Stokes? Say till to morrow morning?" "Certainly, Sir," said Stokes, closing the volume and handing it to him, "keep it as long as you like,

"I knew the unforturate man," said Mr Bream; "he has relatives in England who know nothing of his death. I will ask you, Stokes, to be so good as to say nothing of our conversation. It is a painful story and I don't want it talked about."

"I'm mum, sir," said Stokes, "there's nobody here, at all events, as I'm likely to talk to about it." "True," said Mr Bream.

He left the house with the book under his arm. "Be said he was going home when he came in," said Stokes, to himself, as he watched the curate's rapidly lessening figure along the village street. "That ain't his way home. He seemed knocked all acook by it. He asks me not to talk about it. What's in the wind now, I wonder?"

CHAPTER X .-- AFTER SEVEN YEARS.

BREAM, with Stokee's book of scraps hugged under his arm and seeming to communicate an electric tingle to his whole frame, strode along the village street into the lane beyond, walking at his rapidest rate until he came in sight of the red brick chimneys of Crouchford Court. He slackened his pace there. to recover his breath, and wipe away the thick perspiration which his rapid walking had brought to his face. He was in such a condition of nervous tremor, as few men of his splendid physical condition soldom know, and it required a strong effort to quiet the

trembling of his hands, and to compose his features to their usual calm.

Barbara answered his ring, and replied to his inquiry that Mrs Dartmouth was at home. She le l him to the breakfast-room, and left him to announce his arrival, returning with the message that her mi:tress would see him directly.

"How is your brother-in-law progressing?" he asked her.

"He's mending, sir, slowly. Doctor says as he ought to be all right again in a week or two. My lady is going to find him work on the farm, when he's well enough to take it."

"He seems to have something on his mind," said Bream. "His illuess is much more mental thau physical. Whatever it is, he refuses to talk of it." "He's told me, sir," said Barbara. With a reticence natural under the circumstances, she said no more than that he was grieving for her sister, his wife, who had died a year ago. Mrs Dartmouth entering at that moment released her from further question, and she left the room.

Bream found himself in a situation which most of us have known at some time or other, the possessor of a piece of news he knew must be welcome, yet requiring considerable delicacy in the fashion of its conveyance. To gain time, he opened with some stereotyped commonplace, and Mrs Dartmouth answering on the same lines, found himself floundering dismally, and feeling it more and more difficult with every passing moment to disclose the real object of his visit. His uneasiness was too pronounced to miss Mrs Dartmouth's observation.

"You seem agitated, Mr Bream. No bad news, I hope, of your parishioners?"

"Oh none! Things are going splendidly." He stopped short, and then, taking his courage à deux mains, plunged at the communication he had to make. "I have learned a thing this afternoon, which closely concerns you," he said. "It concerns you so closely, it is of such vital importance, that I scarcely know how to approach it. I am afraid that it will be something of a shock to you."

She went a shade paler than usual, but it was with perfect quiet that she bade him proceed.

"You will remember that on my first meeting with you how we speke of-of your husband." She went paler still, and her breathing quickened. "I have news of him." There was so unmistakeable a look of fear and horror in her face that he hurried on, blurting out his communication crudely, almost brutally. "You are free. He will never trouble you again."

Mrs Dartmouth gave a gasp, and her bosom laboured under the hand with which she tried to still it. He laid the book open at the paragraph he had read half-an-hour before,

"Read for yourself," he said.

She took the book, and remained stating at it blankly for a minute or two. When at last she bent her eyes upon the lines, they so danced and gyrated before them that she could not read. Even when she had found the passage she sat staring at the page as if the words meant nothing to her. Presently the tears began to run down her blanched cheeks, and she gave a gasping sob or two. Bream feared an attack of hysterics. "I will leave you," he said, "and send Barbara."

"No, no!" she said. "Stay!"

She tried hard to fight down the attack, and succeeded, but the tears were still running when the door opened, and a head of golden curls peeped round it. Dora sped to her mother, and climbing upon her knee, began to cry in affectionate and ignorant sympathy. Mrs Dartmouth strained her in her arms, hushing and soothing her with broken ejaculations of comfort. The tears still ran, but the emotion which called them forth was changed. She kissed and caressed the child with a passionate affection, which frightened her almost as much as her mother's white face and choking sobs had done before. "Oh, mamma, what is it?" cried Dora, bewildered

and frightened by the rapid changes of emotion readable in her mother's face and manner. "What is the matter?"

"I will tell you, darling, some day, perhaps; not now-you would not understand. See, I am quite happy now; I am not going to cry any more," Sae wiped the tears from her own face and from that of the child. "Run away, dear; Mr Bream and I have things to talk of." "And you are sure—sure—that you won't ory any

more?" asked Dora. "No, darling, my orylng is over now," answered Gillian. She kissed the child again, whispering, "Go!" in her oar, and Dora went obediently, with a lingering backward glance. Bream had retired to a window looking on the garden, and had left child and mother together. He remained there, giving Gillian the time to conquer herself before resuming her talk

with him. "Let us get into the open air," she said, "I am stifling here."

They passed into the garden together, and for a space there was silence between them. They crossed the lawn, and a hay field where the grass was almost ready for the scythe, and entered a long stretch of spinney, bounded by the public road. Still no word was spoken, as they walked slowly through alternate spaces of green gloom and golden sunlight.

"Mr Bream," said Gillian at last, "I feel like a criminal. The man was my husband, I almost loved him once, when our married life was new. He was the father of my child; I awore before the altar to love and honour him, swore as a Christian woman, knowing the meaning of that solemn vow. And now. that I know that he is dead—I cannot help it—my only feeling is joy."

"Very naturally," sald Bream. He made his tone purposely dry, almost careless, for there was such a deep emotion in her voice that he dreaded to increase it. "There is a point at which nature must assert itself, at which no vow, however sacred, no duty however great, can beat it down." "I was his wife," she said.

"A true one, I know," he answered, "and a loving one had he ever cared to have your love. Am I right?" "Ged knows you are," she said. "I am a clergyman," he said, "an unworthy one,

I know, but one who at least tries to do his duty. am speaking now guardedly and with a full sense of the spiritual import of what I say. Justice and commonserse absolve you. You gave this man duty and obedience. He trampled them underfoot. You offered him affection and respect. He flung them aside. You owe to his memory no more than the sorrow every Christian should feel for a wasted life, and hope that God may have pardoned his cruelty."

The steady beat of a horse's hoofs, which had been clearly audible since they entered the strip of woodland, had come nearer and nearer unmarked, and now in the suddendead stillness, which had followed Bream's solemn words, rang on their ears with a startling suddenness. They reached the further outskirts of the spinney, and saw Sir George Venables riding by. He was looking in their direction, but passed without seeing them. Bream stole a look at his companion, and saw the paller of her face drowned in a sudden wave of crimson. She turned, and struck into a narrow path through the undergrowth, so narrow that he could no longer walk abreast with her. To his mind, the blush and succeeding action were a confession. When a widesing of the path permitted him to regain her side, he saw that though the first brilliancy of the blush had faded, her face was affame with healthy colour, and there was a soft, dreamy look in her eyes. Becoming aware of his scrutiny, she blushed anew, and covered her confusion by holding out to him her hand with a bright, grateful smile.

"You seem to have been appointed by Providence as my special guardian angel," she said. "Now, how can I ever thank you?"

"Thank me? Why, what have you to thank me "For everything that makes a life worth living, she answered. "For new hope, for countless kind-

"You owe me literally nothing," said Bream. "It is I who should thank Providence for putting into my hands the opportunity of serving you. I did not make the opportunity. It came to me. I used it, that is

"You were always generous," she said; "but that only adds to the burden of my obligation." Venables was in his mind, and as they walked side

by side to the house, he strove to find some form of words in which he might hint, not too broadly, of his friend's hopes. The flush in her face, the tender dewiness of her eyes as the baronet had ridden by, at once opened his desire to speak, and seemed to intimate how little need of speech there was. He had parted with her before he found his opening. "That will be arranged without any interference

of mine," he said to himself, as he swung gaily back to the village. "She loves him, that is evident enough. I suppose Herbert will want to marry the n. I should have liked to do that, but I suppose I must be content with the position of best man. Poor old Venables, he has waited a long time. How sad ha looked as he passed. Well, his troubles are over no v. and her's too, thank God! They ought to be happy together. He's a splendid fellow, and she-she's an angel. They are worthy of each other, and the whole world doesn't hold a finer couple. By Jove! there he is. Hi! Sir George! I want to speak to you."

The baronet, who had suddenly hove into sight. cantering down a cross-road, pulled up at the summons, and waited until his friend came panting up to him. At his request, he dismounted, and they walked side by eide together down a deserted lane as Bream

told his story. Venables went red and pale by turns' but his broad, handsome face glowed like a sun with sudden joy as he turned it on his friend. He wrung his hand hard, pouring out incoherent words of thanks.

"I was right, then; I knew she cared for me." "Her face showed that as you rode by," said Bream.

"You never made a more opportune appearance. Where are you going?" he asked, as the baronet

awung himself into the saddle. "I'm going to make another," he answered; "to

strike while the iron is hot." "You're a brisk lover," said the curate, with a laugh. "Had you not better give her a bit of time,

ard wait a little?

"Wait!" said Venables, fiercely. "You talk easily of waiting. I've waited six years already." He

leaned over and pressed his friend's band again. "God bless you, old fellow! I shall have news for you to-morrow." He struck his spurs in his great roadster, and was gone like a flash, Bream looking after him till he had

disappeared from eight. Five minutes at that pace carried him to Crouchford Court. He tied his foaming horse te the gate, and entered the garden. Gillian was there among her flowers; he strode towards her. She tried to keep back the great wave

of crimson, which flooded her from brow to throat, and to repress the trembling of her limbs, but he gave her no time to play the tricks of her sex. He had hold of both her hands in his strong grasp before she knew, and bent above her radiant. "Gillian!" he said, "I know your secret, now. I

know the barrier that parted us is down. Bream has told me all."

"Mr Bream tells other people's accrets very easily," she said, with an attempt at frigid dignity, made quite abortive by her beaming face and humid eyes, and by the electric tremor of her fingers. "I have waited for my happiness a long time,

Gillian," he said, with a sudden tremor in his voice. "Have I not found it at last?" "If I can make you happy, yes," she answered, with a sweet gravity, and yielded to the strong and

steady persuasion of the hands which drew her to his [To be Continued.]

[Begun January 10. Back numbers may be had.]

LETTERS FROM INDIA.

BY MR W. S. CAINE.

[Special Correspondent of the Pall Mail Gazette and of the BRISTOL MERCURY,]

ALLAHABAD, January 5, 1891.

I left Patna at daybreak on New Year's morning, travelling up to Benares in the same carriage as several pious Congressmen, who intended killing two birds with one stone by including a pilgrimage to the holy city in the same railway fare as the Congress. The train was full of pilgrims, and as we slowly crossed the magnificent steel bridge, 1200 yards long, the pride of the "Oudh and Rohilkhand," the carriage windows were crowded with eager faces to get a first glimpse of what is undoubtedly the most picturesque, as well as the holiest, city in all India. It lies on a levely sweep of the mighty Ganges, along the crest of a high bank rising 100ft above the water. Viowed from the bridge, it presents a panorama of palaces, temples, and morques, surmounted by domes, pinnacles and minarets, stretching for nearly three miles.

It is said there are three thousand Hindu temples. great and small, in Holy Benares. Most of these are ecattered along the bank of the river, intermingled with noble palaces built by Maharajahs and wealthy merchants, from which descend great flights of stone stairs, or ghats, broken into wide platforms, on which are built lovely shrines, bathing-houses, or canopies to shelter preaching fakirs. Long wooden piers project into the river for the use of bathers, and in the early morning these ghats present a scene of marvellous interest, alive with pilgrims from every part of India, in every variety of costume, some up to their waists in the river, others grouped under huge straw umbrellas, crowding round some holy ascetic, or listening to the eloquence of a learned Mahaut or preacher.

The whole of this mass of Hinduism is dominated by the sublime mosque, built by Aurangzeb, the Iconoclast, on the sight of the world-renowned temple of Krishna, which he swept away with every other temple in Benares. Scaring three hundred feet into the air, sheer from the water's edge, desolate and neplected, it is no longer suggestive of Mussulmau con nest, but rather a monument of that obsticate and indomitable Brahman faith, which has lived do va Buddha's precents, Aurangzeb iconoclasm, and the mild and gentle teaching of Christ. But I have not come to Benares this time to study Hindu religious observances, but to congratulate the Benares Total Abstinence Society on the new departure which has been made under their auspices, and which I hope may be destined to work a mighty reform among the drinking sections of Hindus throughout India.

TEMPERANCE AT BENARES.

Just two years ago, at a meeting in the Town hall, Benarcs, addressed by Mr Thomas Evans and myself, a Brahman Mahaut, or religious teacher, was present named Kesho Ram Roy, He was deeply impressed with the importance to India of the temperance reformation, and decided to devote his entire life to its advocacy. He at once introduced himself to the secretary, Mr Arthur Parker, of the London Mission, and unfolded the scheme which has proved so extraordinary a success. He proposed to appeal to the tribal and caste instincts of the Indian people, and induce the Pauchayats, or councils of the various castes, to consider and legislate upon the drinking habits of the people under their jurisdiction. The Benares T.A. Society took up the scheme with enthusiasm, and Mr Parker and the Mahaut decided that the first attack should be made upon the great Benares caste of Ahirs (cowkeepers). The head men were got together March 31st, 1889, and were appealed to with all the Mahaut's extraordinary eloquence. The discussion which followed was prolonged past midnight, and as dawn broke they decided to adopt a rule binding total abstinence upon all the members of the Ahir caste. So powerful a caste taking the lead, it was easy to get others to follow. On April 25th a caste of village tailors, about two hundred, were gathered in Pauchayat by the Mahaut, and abjured the use of liquor. May 21st, the blacksmiths, reckoned at about 10,000, followed the good example; May 23, a small caste of about 50 families, the Nyarias, came in; in June, the oil sellers; in July, the grainwasters; in August, the Bhars of four villages in the suburbs, and the Rawats; in September, the caste of Katiks in other villages were all brought by the Mahaut's eloquence to adopt total abstinence as a caste rule. Other castes were induced to forbid the use of liquor at marriages and funerals, and even Mussulman castes were brought under the influence of the Mahaut and his co-workers. The net result of all this has been to pledge 40,000 or 50,000 of the industrial classes of Benares to total abstinence. The Ahirs, in particular, were notable for their drinking propensities, and the consumption of liquor immediately fell. The Excise revenue for Benares during the twelve months ending March 31 last decreased 35,000 rupess, and a considerable number of liquor sellers, shortly after the action taken by the Ahirs, petitioned the magistrates for a reduction in the cost of their licences.

Here is a translation of the petition:— "Ob, Feeder of the Poor! May God preserve you. Since the last annual sale of licenses, your petitioners have suffered considerable less, on account of the ecarcity of grain. But the chief cause of our ruin is that all the Ahirs, whose number is 25,000, have entirely given up the use of liquor, from which our income has been greatly reduced. For these reasons we find it very difficult to pay up our instalments. But, in addition, the tailors have also given up the use of liquor. The potters, too, in whose marriage ceremonies large quantities of liquor were used, have resolved to abstain. Further, the blacksmiths are beginning to consult on the same subject. Consequently the sale of liquor is wholly stopped." The petition then prays for a reduction in the fixed

sum to be paid for their licenses. The Mahaut will not rest content till he has induced every caste in Benares to make a total abstinence rule, and the work absorbs his whole time and energy. His house has been robbed, and his life threatened over and over again by the budmashes of the liquor sellers, and big bribes have also been offered to him to give up his agitation; but he has stuck bravely to his work with a persistence that has compelled even the Abkari Commissioner of the N.W.P. to recognise it. and stamp it with approval. The example of Benares is being followed by other places, notably at Ahmadnagar and Bellary, where a wealthy merchant, Rao Bahadur Sabapathy Mudeliar, has induced tho weavers and other castes to make total abstinence rules, with much the same effect.

Keehub Ram Roy, Mahaut, is the son of a Munshi of the C.M.S. Mission college at Benares. He is fiftyfive years of age, a childless widower, supporting an aged mother and a brother's wife. He has had a good education, having spent eighteen years, from five years of age to twenty-three, in the schools and colleges of the C.M.S. For eight or nine years he was headmaster of successive day schools, and then entered the service of the East India Railway, reaching the position of station master. He is a high-caste orthodox Brahman, and in 1882, under strong religious convictions, became a Jogi Mahaut (a preacher joined to God), taking a public vow of asceticism and cousecration, devoting himself entirely to the public preaching of Hindu morality. He has lived since then upon his savings, sked out by coaching students in English, which he speaks fluently. He has now vowed his life to the Temperance cause, presching total abstinence for four hours daily in different parts of the bazaar to the thousands

of orthodox Hindus who flock to Beneres from 211