



## MATT THE MINER; OR, A FELLOW WORKMAN'S INFLUENCE.

A TRUE STORY. (*Concluded.*)

The large room, as it was called, of the "Miner's Arms," was arranged with a dais at one end on which were chairs and a table, the other part of the room was fitted up with long narrow tables and forms, on the latter of which were seated a large number of miners in their every-day clothes. Two waiters were in the room busy in supplying the men with beer and spirits.

The meeting had proceeded quietly for some time, the speakers flushed with drink, making very rash and wild statements, which had been loudly cheered by the audience, when suddenly one of the speakers essaying to sit down after his speech, missed the chair falling heavily on to the floor. At this there was a general laugh and for a time order could not be restored, when something like quietude was obtained Matthew Booth walked up to the platform and essayed to speak, instantly the hubbub began again, but standing firmly and respectfully at the table Matt awaited an opportunity to begin.

Those who had already spoken and the more drunken of the audience objected strongly to his speaking but cries of "Fairplay let us hear both sides" rang out from all parts of the room. The ringleaders of the discontented section tried hard to eject Matt from the room, hustling

him from the platform, and down the room, but those anxious for fair play, or not so overborne by the spirit of striking, determined that Matt, who was very popular with them should speak, and by force enabled him to regain the platform. Gale and his followers savage and sullen, ultimately gave way, and Mat began.

"Fellow workmen. It is not as a master's man I came to-night to speak to you, but as one of yourselves, knowing which is the right side and determined to do all in my power to prevent these lazy drunken men from making you strike. What can you gain by striking? Nothing! What do you lose by striking? Everything! Which of you have a good house of furniture, a wife and children whom you love, will you strike, and see your furniture sold for bread, your wife and children naked and starving, yourselves ragged and hungry; Let me tell you fellow miners, that the only ones benefitted by your striking will be such men as have brought you here, who will feast on the hard earned money you have saved."

There was a slight attempt at interrupting the speaker but the noise was soon hushed and Matt proceeded.

"They've told you that the master's are making fortunes out of you, and are grinding you down whilst they live in luxury. Is it so? Look for yourself, don't you see collieries closing everywhere, rather than keep them open at a loss! Are you all to be led by these agitators that you would lose your bread rather than earn what the masters' can afford to pay? I will tell you what will make your wages higher, and enable you to pay your way, and that is, forswear the public-house, and give up the tobaccoists."

Short though his speech had been, Matt had made an impression upon his hearers, and rallying round him as many supporters as he could he left the building, and together with those who had left with him, he proceeded back to the colliers cottages. Selecting a dozen of the most likely men from the number, he asked them to go home with him, telling the others that the next night he should expect to see them. Inside the kitchen of his own house, which was rather over stocked with the new-comers, was found a plentiful repast of bread and cheese and coffee. For thoughtful Matt had determined to do all in his power to prevent the strike and this little meeting was a part of his programme.

After full justice had been done to the supper, the table was cleared away, and another meeting began. Here Matt made another speech, telling those present that he had chosen them as the most trustworthy, to form a committee for a workman's club. Explaining that one of the colliery cottages was empty, and that it might be obtained for the purposes of a club, as he had already ascertained, he went on to say that he hoped by banishing ardent spirits and beer, and by providing games and papers, to make a quiet resort for the collier after his day's work. A long discussion followed in which it was decided that Mr Deepden the manager of the colliery, should be asked to be president and his deputy Mr. Black vice-president. This having been arranged and the various officers elected, the meeting closed, Matt arranging to furnish all the minor details on the next day.

The colliers worked as usual on the next day and nothing respecting the strike was mentioned, the instigators of the movement determining to let a little time elapse before another meeting, for twelve days had to pass before the drop was imposed upon them. Going down that night to their homes, they all saw with astonishment a notice on the before empty house, intimating that "All the colliers and their wives are invited to tea at 7 o'clock to witness the opening of the Workman's Club." It had leaked out that a club was to be formed, but none but Matt and a very few others knew of the opening being so soon.

Anxious to do some immediate good for the miners which should be at the same time lasting, so as far as possible to avert the impending strike, the good fellow had given up his work for that day, and had been busy in getting the cottage ready for the tea meeting and opening. He had got substantial subscriptions and promises to attend from the manager and his deputy, and with what he himself could afford to give and what he could obtain from his more energetic friends, he with his wife's aid, had arranged everything. Long before the hour of leaving the colliery, the house was ready, and the notice put out for all to see. There were many impelled by curiosity who determined to be present and as many more who decided to attend from a very different motive, and that was want of food, among these latter were George Gale, Thomas Wood, and a goodly number of those who had arranged the meeting of the night previous.

The time before seven soon slipped away, and men in dirty clothes and with dirtier faces, along with men with clean faces and neatly arranged clothing, with their wives came clustering to the gaily arranged cottage. Entering it among the first was George Gale who was warmly greeted by Matt, who knowing the character, only too well of George, determined to make the most of the occasion, leaving his place at the door to someone else, Matt took George, dirty as he was, all over the house, shewing him in the two rooms down stairs the arrangements for tea, and upstairs in the front room, a number of the daily and weekly papers, and periodicals arranged on two tables, and in the back room, various simple games to amuse those who could not read, of which class, there were unfortunately many. As they were going down the stairs again, George who had been very quiet said.

"Couldn't I get a wash Matt?"

"Certainly, come with me."

And taking the man out at the back, into the wash house he left him for a time whilst he performed the same office for another of the ring-leaders of the strike movement. After shewing the second man round the same result of a knowledge of his dirtiness was apparent, and a wish to cleanse himself before tea became was expressed. Matt well knew that neither of these men were in the habit of washing off their dirt at night, and in their desire to make themselves clean before appearing inside, he saw a good sign, and determining to make the most of it, got them to sit nearly at the head of the table during tea and made himself most attentive to them.

Tea progressed and the business of talking was left till the tables were cleared. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and spoke highly

of the promoters in getting up such an affair. After the tea the manager spoke to all present in a simple speech, how he looked with great hope to the success of the club which should always have his support, and before resuming his seat he called for a hearty cheer for Matt who had started the idea, this was given with great energy and after Matt had said a few words of welcome to them the meeting closed, not a word having been spoken about the strike. When the meeting broke up it is not to be supposed that the colliers went home, no, for an hour longer the papers and games were in great request, and many a man who had not been seen out of a public house of a night for a long time stopped in the club talking, and reading, and making resolutions to attend it regularly.

Matt, with his wife, without whom he did nothing, had thoroughly discussed the question as to how the club was to pay and had decided that the profits to be derived from the sale of food, and voluntary contributions would be amply sufficient. A night school was also to be established, with Matt's eldest son as teacher, and that for the present was to be free. Sunday schools were to be held and Mr. Deepden promised to be superintendent of them, whilst on wet Sunday evenings religious addresses were to be given in the cottage for the nearest place of worship was a good distance away.

It only remains to be said that Matt's efforts were successful, the Workman's Club prospered, no strike occurred, and the drop though imposed, was through a change in the market, soon taken off, and before long Luddesdown Colliery was known as having the most contented men, and best behaved, for miles around. The colliery proprietors knowing the value of the Club, not only let them have the cottage free but by grants of money soon elevated its usefulness. When last we went into it, was on a Sunday evening and George Gale dressed in a good suit of black clothes was explaining how he had become a teetotaler through the Club's establishment and now was one of its staunchest supporters. Many a wife now, once a gossip, and a slattern, prays nightly with her husband for courage and faith, to withstand in the future the temptations of the past. And invariably the prayers are closed with a blessing on him who has done so much for them, Matthew Booth who is as earnest as ever in the good work, and knows that his reward is where the servants of God find peace. His example is open to all workmen, let them but embrace the opportunity, and if they ask God's blessing upon it, he will sustain them through all, and bring them to his everlasting happiness, if but their efforts are made in His name.

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## WINDSOR CASTLE.

THIS grand old building is the favourite country residence of the British sovereigns. It is built on the top of a hill, overlooking the town of Windsor, and commanding a fine view of the River Thames. On this hill, William the Conqueror built a fortress, which was greatly enlarged