

THE JIM-JIMS.

BY L. B.

"Have you ever had the Jim-Jims, my young friend?—The *Jim-Jims*?" he repeated, in reply to my questioning look.

John Brinsley was seated in his rooms, reading the price-current in the evening paper. I had dropped in upon him to inquire what were the prospects, not of our common country, but of cheese. He was preparing himself for the delivery of an elaborate opinion when he suddenly started from his chair and, grasping me by the arm, cried: "For Heaven's sake, tell me, was that a fly?"

I supposed he meant to inquire whether I had bought a few tons of cheese "just for a fly"—speculators will understand the phrase—or whether I intended to add another branch to my business, and replied accordingly.

"I mean, *was* that—*is* that—a fly?" he cried, making a wild sweep at a blue-bottle whose wings just then brushed his nose.

"Of course it is," I returned. "What did you think it was—a guinea-hen or a turkey-buzzard?"

He seated himself, and began stirring the fire thoughtfully.

Mr. John Brinsley, let me explain, is a well-to-do and rather portly commission merchant, whose acquaintance I had lately made. Naturally a very sensible fellow, he had the advantage or disadvantage on starting in life of a collegiate education, graduating either as a bacchanalian or a baccalaureate—I do not exactly remember which. Of his former habits I knew nothing, but he was then one of the stanchest teetotalers going, refusing even that delicious phase of the grape—Tokay, to which I always yield myself a ready victim.

Suddenly he wheeled round in his chair and propounded the queries with which this article begins. I replied in the negative—that I had never had the Jim-Jims, and did not even know what they were.

"Eh? No?" he said, squaring himself in his seat. "Well, I sincerely hope you never will. As it is, let me tell you something about them."

I listened; there is no stopping John Brinsley when he once gets talking; and he went on as follows:

For about thirty years of my life I was addicted to—to—permit me a periphrasis—the use of stimulants. Never a hard drinker in the common acceptation of that term, I was still what may be called a steady drinker. I drank, as people vote in the less respectable localities, early and often. In short, I would as soon have thought of going through the day without breathing as without bibbing. My nose may have acquired a slightly coppery color in consequence, yet no one ever saw me under the influence of liquor, and

the charge of intemperance was never brought against me. Shutters and gutters were alike strange to me.

Right here let me ask how the sin of drunkenness is to be estimated and measured? Is it the quantity drunk or the effect produced which we are to consider when sitting in judgment upon a man's habits and character? For while one man can drink all day without manifesting any symptom of inebriation, another, who should undertake or be persuaded to undergo a similar course of discipline, would probably find himself carried home in a most ignominious way upon an uncomfortable and hastily improvised litter, long before the sun was at its zenith; those who witnessed the informal procession would undoubtedly blazon the horizontal hero as a drunkard of the most eminent type; and solemn tracts with startling titles would be showered upon him in lieu of the ivy-leaves wherewith the brows of Bacchus of old were bound. All this while the other man, who carried off his more frequent indulgences with an air of unconscious grace, standing up under his potations like a three-decker to only a moderate breeze, would very likely be lauded for his temperate habits, and held up as a model of sobriety to his less fortunate neighbor. But whether the iniquity of imbibition is to be measured by the amount drunk or by the capacity of the drinker to withstand the subtle spell which bewilders the brain and confuses the powers of locomotion, I can not undertake to determine, nor will I now discuss; but one thing is certain, a fourth part of the liquor which I every day consumed without fear and without reproach would have sent half of my acquaintances reeling to their beds, and won for them, in a very short time, most unenviable reputations.

It was only some six months since that I experienced any ill effects of my habit. Gout gradually set in, which was by no means pleasant to a man fond of dancing. Besides, I developed an apoplectic tendency, which acquaintances remarked upon; like the elder Mr. Weller, I swelled visibly; sudden rushes of blood to my head rendered me at times nearly blind. Often on entering or leaving a room I was obliged to put out my hands and grope my way—and blindman's-buff is an amusement for which I never had any partiality. Consulting my physician—not a hydropathist, understand—he at once ordered me to "cease the use of stimulants"—the technical way of saying "Stop drinking." I remonstrated; but he was peremptory. I said: "Not too suddenly;" but he replied: "At once!" To my mild urging that it would be best to "taper off," he made answer that a taper was burning at my vitals, and that spirits were the oils which fed the flame. He said: "Snuff it out at once; cut off the fuel!"

To my representations that I could not live he replied that I might as well die one way as another; that if I continued to drink, my death was certain; that if I stopped, there was a chance for me. And he clapped a stop on further objections by refusing to treat my case at all unless I abandoned drinking before coming under his hands. Ale was worse than whisky, because more bulky; wine more dangerous than any thing else, because so insidious and seductive.

He had been the physician of myself and of my father's family—I have no family of my own—since first the family was founded, and there was none other in the city to whose hands I could commit myself with confidence. So I yielded to his ultimatum, converted my demijohns into yet more fragmentary divisions, and became a water-drinker on the spot.

The first day of my new experience I suffered; slightly, but still I suffered—nor was I strong. My hand was shaky in the morning; and I said to myself: "This comes of temperance." Through the day I felt singularly strange; my voice was tremulous; I planted my foot upon the pavement in an uncertain way, and had a general impression that I had lost something. At my regular dinner-hour I was appetiteless. I retired to bed wretched. My dreams were unpleasant; and the next morning I awoke with an uncomfortable sense of unrefreshedness. My hands were hot, and my face, though pale, was burning. In making my toilet several attempts were necessary to enable me to part my hair in a line any thing like an approach to straightness; for my hand, in its manipulations of the comb, dotted up and down like a dairy-maid's in printing butter. As for breakfast, I was conscious of no fast to break. Mechanically, however, I appeared at the table. But toast, tea, muffins, eggs had lost their power of fascination. Hot and tempting though they were, I looked upon them coldly. So tremulous and uncertain was my hand that in attempting to drink my tea I nearly poured it into my ear. While being shaved, subsequently, I found it next to impossible to sit still. Several times in my nervous starts the barber gashed my face and chin.

A blank, horrible day seemed before me. Time, like a leaden weight, hung upon my soul. To some simple business calculation which the cashier of our house tried to present to me, I found it impossible to listen. The figures were before my eyes, and I attempted to grasp them. They danced and jostled each other like puppets at a booth—the nines wagging their heads at me mockingly, and the sevens curling up tails in derision. The cashier, noticing my bewildered air and look, attempted to explain; his tones fell upon my ear