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STVDII
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THE WEB OF AN OLD

WEAVER



GIVEN IN BY

J. KEIGHLEY SNOWDEN

AUTHOR OF "TALES OF THE YORKSHIRE WOLDS"

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TO MY FATHER

Here is a piece of work whereof the Weaver, deeming it nothing out of the common, is well content that you should judge! But I suppose you will be as much surprised as interested by it, because this kind of plain stuff is not now woven.

Besides, you know the Old Weaver, and cannot help but wonder how I got him to work; for he will hardly forego his fireside ease or his out-door musings to serve God (in any orthodox fashion), being, of all men I have had to do with, the most tenacious of his ways.

I must give you that story some late evening. This, his own, may better please you meantime. It is in the mother-tongue, the same rude Northern English tongue that sounds in the right version of "Chevy Chase;" and if he is nothing lyrical (gallantly goes the blood to that great ballad!), at any rate

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this history may put you in mind of how they "manned it:"

For Wetharryngton my harte was wo
That ever he slayne shulde be;
For when his leggis were hewen in to,
Yet he kneled and fought on his kne.

J. K. S.

[NP]

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[1]

THE WEB OF AN OLD WEAVER.

THE UNDERTAKING

If this tale be printed, I must stand on a right footing with any that read it. Whatever skill may have come of writing other folk's letters and my own, or reading in winter time when I could, or listening to better scholars when they came into this part, such I have, but no more; and it is so small, that I have been nigh on three years planning and pampering before I could frame to make a start. However, the more I planned, the more I saw that the tale had to be telled. Another thing falls to be said: I am Writing this one way, that is, as plainly as I can— for I make nought of haffing and shaffling tales, that keep part back, and sound to me no different fro lies— but it is to be printed another way, and that is, after it has been

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trimmed and pruned by one in the kittle way of doing such work. But for this, I would not have ventured as far as the length of a pen, for all that he said, or any other.¹

There will be some to say that I ought to have kept the swarth on queer matters, and most of all on the matter that nigh drew a rope round my own neck; but if I be not ashamed to set down my part in them, all others but one being gathered to their account, I cannot see that any beside this one has a say in it.

As for what folk may think of Cragside, I have no patience to talk. At that time such things were done lightly that if men did them now they would be clapped in the hole; but if men had been taken then for 't, everybody had cried shame. We have fallen into quieter ways of doing, whether in jest or in earnest. Partly we drink less ale, and partly we walk about with fuller bellies, not fearing want. But there were good men at the worst of it, nay, some better men than I can see now, anywhere in this parish. Now then, if I gloss over all that was evil, I shall blur what was good, for the one hangs upon the other like sunshine upon rain. Ye will see nought but a dull

¹I have done little more than to simplify some passages of dialect, so that these shall present no difficulty to readers unfamiliar with Yorkshire.—J. K. S.

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day. I shall not be able to show the lofty brightness of Binnie Driver's mind, a man I would any day give my life for, if he were living now; nor shall I make you understand what a fair and gladsome treasure my poor wench was to me, all through my darkest days— even when I gave myself up for a done man. But what is the use of prating? I cannot write so, and I will not.

If any be not satisfied, I will be candid with them. They cannot but think it a strange and impudent thing for a plain man like me, John o' Jackie' Lad, to set up for a writer. But here is what fairly set me thinking on it.

I was in a certain house on baking day, where the wife gave a pinch of dough to her little lass to play with. I said nought; but I came away, for I could not thoil to see good dough wasted. I thought then that in these days folk hardly know they are living.— When I was a little lad I found a penny once. There were seven of us lads in

the family, and we took daily turns at scraping the porridge pan. I went to my father and told him about this penny, and said I would give it him if I might scrape the pan three times running. And that way I would have wared (spent) it. We had nought but "porridge and stop" then, and sometimes we had not that. I can tell of my mother fainting one morning, when she had served

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us all round and left herself none; and that morning I had scraped the pan. Now till I saw that little lass making a doll out of good dough, I had felt to have no stomach for this business, for it looked to me like vanity; but I saw then that it is man's work.

Else I am sixty and five years old, and I cannot care to sit long at a time, or shape a tale as well as I might have done when younger.

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CHAPTER I.

A PATTERN-PIECE.

About that time when I found my penny, I used to go a deal with a little wench that lived next house to our folk. We should be ten or twelve years old; and we strayed and played together as childer will do, before they get old enough to be swamous (shy). If I tell all, I was always in a manner jealous of her, and liked her partly for her rosy, round cheeks, and the golden shine in her flying hair; nay, sometimes we reckoned to be wed, and acted it out as well as we knew, laughing over it and keeping very secret-like; but there was no right sweet hearting, nought but childish pastime, as you may understand. We were a little matter akin, too— as we very near all are in Crag-side, if a man will trace it back.

We gat together of a summer night, or a Saturday and Sunday, and wandered where we listed, groping for fish in the becks, scrambling up and down the

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gritstone crags, or getting stuff to eat— pignuts, sour docks, haegs and epps (berries of hawthorn and rose), as well as wild fruit that comes to the table. Childer eat all these nowadays, but they do it more for sport and less for need nor we did. I have known us eat the grass itself; and sweet and pleasant it is to taste. Sometimes there were others with us, but always you might seeus two. If we could, I believe we should have spent every day together; but I was not free to do as I would in the daytime, being put to work in Binnie Driver's weaving shop when I left school at nine years old.

Now for all I have lived with a wife near forty years, and had more than my share, as I judge, of this world's joys, there is no time that comes so oft into my thoughts, and troubles them so little, as that time of gaumless happiness. Being hungry is a matter that leaves no fret on a lad's mind after he has filled his belly; and it just appears to me that childhood was like a clear sunrise.

But I am almost tied to show one thing that chanced to me and this wee mate of mine— whose right name was Lizzie Ayre— though as to surnames we never deal much in them. It happened by an accident; and it was like a warning, that I had not the sense to heed.

We had wandered rather too far that day, and been

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lost for a time. It came night, or near it, afore we could shape our way rightly, and she cried a deal, being overdone. However, we got as far as into Hardaker Park, and that is near home; wherefore we might have fared through and saved a lacing (thrashing) if it had not lighted otherwise. For as we came along hand in hand, making our hearts gay against a fearsome darkness, she broke away and ran far fro me, screaming. I did not race her, thinking at first she had done 't for a marlake; but when I heard her give one scream after another I knew she was affrighted. We were in the very depth of a gloomy part. They say yet that the coach-and-six rides across it, carrying headless folk, and there are that will not pass through it alone. When there is wind you can hear strange noises among the trees; and if the wind draw off suddenly, as oft it will do, there comes a fearful whispering up fro the beck, that prattles away deepish down betwixt him that listens and a lofty wood on the hillside over anent.

I thought myself brave that I did not run after her, but I do believe my legs shook over much for running, through being eager-like to see what had flaed her; and when once I had turned back to see her, I was fain to be away fro the place. She gave me a start, besides, standing to wait for me at the first gate, for it was too dark to make out the gray shape of her as soon

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as it was seen, and I fancied it tall by Lizzie. But I was most flaed of all to feel her hold fast to me, shaking pitifully as if she would never stop.

"What did ye see?" I asked.

She said, "A gurt white thing," and "It held up it' arms;" so there was no road for us that way. Of course, lad-like, I scoffed at it, and showed her a face bolder nor my spirit; but nought that I said could move her to venture with me again, and albeit this jaeged¹ against my pride, I was well content to bide there till somebody should pass.

It was in this way that we came to spend a night out of doors, and see a thing that was not fit for children's watching. For with long waiting we fell peep; and the next I know, it was coming light. We had gone in beneath a lime-kiln, where there had been no burning since lime was burnt for the Manor House: I can just tell of looking out towards where the path is, and seeing a mist spread over the level ground between us and the beck, about up to a man's middle. It was hardly to be made out in such a darkness, and I marvelled at the snod even line of it, so low, and never shifting. I judge I fell asleep looking at it. My little mate had been sound long enough then, curled up with her pretty head on one bare arm; and if I had but known it, she was the rarer marvel. I can

¹A cart-brake is said to "jaeg" against the wheel.

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see the dew-mist there any calm night in summer, but not her.

For ought I knew when my een opened in the gray morning, somebody was tewing (striving) with a pack of awkward beasts. I fancied I had heard a shout; and there was trampling, and sodden knocks given with heavy sticks, and curses with them, that burst out like as they came fro men hard hodden (pressed). But I was no sooner listening nor a man cried out with pain, and another, his voice grinding in his throaver, made answer to him:

“D— tha, lig still!” he said.

At that I was up like a shot, and I could thank God heartily if I had never known the like of such cruel work as I then saw agate. There would be fifteen or twenty of them, fighting like wild men, and some on the ground that I took for dead. Such vengeful slogging blows you would think no manner of men could take and live.

I cannot frame to tell all, for it was sharp work, and when one or another shouted or stumbled, and I looked to see what was done, I missed part. But there was one man, thick set up, that fought two or three, and bested them. It was he that first spake, I judge; he fought near one that was down, not twenty yards fro the lime-kiln. He strake seldom, but fended and dodged. Yet after a time he ended in a

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gradely fashion— stooped to take a knock on his shoulders, and then felled the man that dealt it, with a round up-slanting stroke on the neck, rather quick nor heavy; so at this he that was left standing gave him one half-hearted blow below the shoulder and ran for it, but was overtaen afore he could fairly get away, and fell his length near my feet.

“Now tha’rt my man!” cried this other then, but at sight of us childer left him untouched, and darted back into the thick of it.

Other two gripped one another by the edge of the beck, and went down out of sight together, splashing among stones. They all seemed as keen as dogs, yet specially one man, that went dancing among them doing nought that I could see but shout "Hooy, lads! Nah then! At him!" and such-like little barks. But one or two were bleeding cruelly while they fought, though at first I did not make it out, because in that dull light blood had no right colour, and their faces were not plain to be seen.

Now, who they were, all but one, I knew less than what they fought for. But I could guess that, rarely, for the man that had fallen first was a keeper, well known to me by sight. Crag-side lads would go farther away for *their* rabbits—that is, if they went in a strong gang, to take them by force, and not by sly tricks, an odd one here and there. By their talk,

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I think this lot must have come over the moor, fro somewhere Haworth way. I was too young to tell fairly. They fought well, how it be; though it seems to me they were new to it, or they would have said less and kept together. But I do not reckon to be exactly skilled in such matters.

What has ofttest come back into my mind is a fearful shout that one of them gave when he gat a crack he did not look for. He held his head betwixt his hands and stooped down to run, making a din almost like a pig makes. Now, there was no sense in striking a man that way. He was fighting with another, and the butcher that did it never showed himself but slashed at him fro behind. And that was the way of this battle, all through.

However, it ended then, but for a blow or two. Whether they were sickened, or they gat a startle at hearing Lizzie scream, I cannot tell; but the keeper's men began to draw off, and he had to follow them sharply. The others did not chase them far, but ran back to their mates that were lamed, and carried one away that seemed to be deeply stunned. Two walked with some helping. They went in a gradely hurry, but still they were careful to take all their caps and things, and some stopped at the beck to redd theirselves up a bit. They had need to be cunning. They left a man on the ground, belonging to the

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keeper's lot, and knew not if he were dead or alive.

“This here's gotten fettled,” one said when they were gathering up; and three or four came round him" and looked.

“He's not bleedin',” says another; “hedn't we best cut him?” But they decided to leave him to his own mates, and in a twinkling I saw the last of them, looking back as they slipped away among the trees.

I know not what was done with this man, or even if we stopped to see. I judge we ran home as fast as we could; but I never gat to tell my father ought about it till a day or two after. He met us coming home, and gave me as bad a lacing as ever I had fro him; and that is saying somewhat. However, when he heard one of my brothers talking he questioned me, and gat us all together, and telled us strictly we must keep it quiet or the constable would be after me.

And I think we all did so. I can tell of Lizzie's mother calling (scolding) me for filling her head with rubbish, and I dare not say a word against it. I endured a deal. It was laid to my fancy, and other lads called me “powcher” for sport. My father was a fearful stern man. He said little to us, but when he spake we knew we had to do.

The hardest thing that came of this adventure was,

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that I was kept in from rambling with Lizzie. They did not even let us go seeking bull heads (miller's thumbs) in the beck, where it runs through the Scar, only a field's length away; and the Scar is a place —where childer never tire— a wide, bushy, sunken spot left all rough after lime-getting, but mainly grown over, except where the winter floods have stripped it on either side. You can hear all manner of birds there, and sometimes you may see the flash of a king-fisher darting through sun to shade. There were parts where we used to roll down, and parts that were ill to climb; and we had made a nest among alder-bushes. But after this we had to bide on the roadside, just where we could be seen.

Now, that was the only time my father taught us to be secret, and had he known how it made me into a liar after a fashion, he would have rued. Yet it is so, that I can never think of it but a tenderness kindles for him in my heart.

Howbeit he went near, another way, to make me a liar right out, afore this bother was ended. One day Lizzie was missing again, and they came to our house to ask after her. Somebody had said he saw her and me go down the road together. Well, I had

missed her sooner than any, and sought her as far as I dare; so when my father turned round on me, and said, "Hev ye been down t' road, John?" I

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answered him, "Ea, father." Then he wanted to know where I had left her, and I said I had not seen her.

"Go into t' back roun," he said; and I knew what that meant. I went with my heart in my mouth. But I was mistaen about what he aimed to punish me for; for when he came in, with a glooming face and the strap in his hand, he let me see that he did not believe me. Like enough I had spoken timidly.

He sat down and drew me to him. "John," he said, "ye've telled a lie. Aw willn't see ony lad o' mine grow up to be a liar, if aw can hinder't."

I looked at him and wondered.

"Aw want thee and me to be on t' same side at Judgment Day, my lad. Aw care not to go to Heaven if thou be left i' outer darkness, John. If it be wrang to say so, God forgi'e me!" I wanted to speak, but he held up his hand. I can just see his strong face now, white-looking, and the water in his eyes. "Come, my lad," he said, after a bit, "put away deceit. There's nowght to be shamed on i' contradictin' a lie."

As soon as I began to show him how it was, he "strake at me, and I thought he would never stop. *Now witta tell?*" he kept saying; "Aw'll *mak* tha tell." But a sort of numbness came over me, and I shut my mouth till he had done. He left off on a

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sudden at last and turned away, and I heard him sob.

"Father," I said then, "I knawn't what ye're lacing me for."

At that he strade out of the room and locked the door, but in a while he spake through to me: "John! dost hear me? . . . When tha knocks, aw s' know tha'rt ready to say wheer tha left Lizzie. "I worn't wi' her, father," said I; and he cried, "Oh!" and flang out of the house like a man distracted.

That put me to the rack; for I was fearfully troubled to think he should judge so ill of me, and I knew that nought would alter his opinion. It seems a foolish thing to tell of, but when I looked out of the window, and saw the black crags up on the moor rig, I cried at nought but sight of them. But that passed quickly; and what I mainly recollect is standing just where he had left me, hearkening at a strange small humming there seemed to be in that empty room. It made me flaed of being alone. I have heard it since when over full with trouble, my ears singing; but that time I was partly fain when my father came back— I should think an hour at after.

He knew that I had never knocked, for my mother sat in the living-room. Still, he talked to me pratly (quietly) again, and then, instead of lashing me, he

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made me kneel down with him while he prayed. He spake so that I fairly did cry; and it came upon me to do as he wanted. But when he rase up, some way, it was like as I could not open my mouth.

He looked at me awhile, his face darkening. At last he said, "Doff thi coit off;" I did so. "Go on," he said; and I took my waistcoat off. "Now thi shirt." So I was stripped naked to the waist; then he took up the strap and laid hold on my shackle (wrist).

I said, "Father, if ye kill me I can say no other. Ye'll find it out at after."

Just as he lifted the strap we heard Lizzie's mother shout into the house: "Shoo's been asleep i' t' hayloft all t' time." And afore I could say ought he nipped me up in his arms. "Praise God!" he shouted, two or three times, and burst out a-roaring over me.

So when I had donned my clothes I went out and put my arm around her neck.

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CHAPTER II.

WEASEL.

Though I will not do so, it appears as if I could take more pleasure in telling all such young doings, without meaning, or care, or any piecing-up, nor in jumping out into the quick and strong flood of happenings that came after. It is a simple riddle, why

childer are the happiest. Things fall out as they light, to a child, and it is all one. A man must strive with them; and if they be over strong for him, as they can for any man, it will be counted against him. Still it is a right man's pride to fight, whether he win or lose, or make a drawn battle on't.

Now from ten years old till I was bearded I lived with my uncle Zephaniah, at Burnley, in Lancashire, for we were over many at home, and he had none; and of that time I need to say little. It has nought to do with my tale. I learned to weave then. I found out that Cragside had about its share of the hard times, or happen a bit to boot; and after seeing all

[18] manner of mischief done by men that were hard driven, and as you may say, "leet gien" (thoughtless), I gat to see that Cragside folk were a gradely, lawabiding sort, all but some few that had a spark of wildness—and some that liked ale fearful well.

Yet, if I had not been sent away to Burnley, this had never been written. At home there had no occasion been to think of pen and ink, and my bit of schooling had dried off like one morning's dew; but, as it was, I had to frame now and then to put a letter in trim for my mother, when I sent her ought; and after a time, three of us that were mates made it up to go to a night school, a thing that was new to me.

I was sent for home when my father died; and this trouble fell in a strange and sudden way, that I have never heard the true marrow of; he was a strong man one day and a dead one the next. I could make little of it when I gat the letter, and it was like as if, being so much amazed by it, I did not right feel it in myself, but only kept saying every minute, "What will my mother do?" It utterly passed my wit to fancy how she could suffer that— such a thunderclap, and nought to be done that could mend it. For I had her in my mind as clear as when I parted from her, gentle and serious-looking, a bit timid with my father, as we all were, but fearful proud of him, and with

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a right full merry laugh sometimes, that I think of when I hear a throstle sing; and I pondered over her till I sweated with dread and perplexity. Nor I cannot tell a step of the road home, what fashion of day it was, or whether I walked or ran, or whether I came over moor or meadow-land; nought but just the seeing of her again when I landed.

The blinds were up, and when I saw it my heart turned over with a sudden hope. But as soon as I pushed the door open I was cast down; for a shrunken little body, gray-haired and stiff, was bending to fettle the fire, and I knew not who she could be, but fancied I had missed the house. She looked round, and it was my mother! Ten years had that much altered her. Natheless her sweet and peaceful face was hardly different, and it never did change, in my eyes, during all the years that followed.

It was a queer meeting. She looked at me strangelike as I went up to her, and then, in a sudden fluster, "John!" she said; "Nay, my lad! I didn't know tha"— and turned away as she spake, covering her face for a fit of sobbing. So I put my arm about her shoulders, and made her sit down; and stood gaumless by her, not able to say a word to comfort her, but my heart louping. Ye see, I was like a stranger in my own home. But just as the bitter feeling of it took hold on me, she jumped up and nipped the brush

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off the hob: she had put it down when she saw me, and it was blazing. She gave a bit of a laugh, even in her trouble, and at that I gathered her in my arms. So after a while she managed to tell me what had startled her.

"I thought I saw thy father," she said. "Eh, John, tha looks just as he did, when he wor thy age." And then she fell to crying again, but in a quieter way, as if it eased her; and as for me, my breath came thick and fast, and I looked down through a mist on her gray hairs, and thanked God I was left to her.

Now the way of his illness, as she telled while she gat me somewhat to eat, was this. He had taken cold at his job, gaffering navvies making a road; so she brewed him pennyroyal tea, and he supped it at bedtime, and sweated heavily. Nought could have been done for him better nor that. Pennyroyal is well named, for it is common and yet of a sovereign virtue. But next day he felt full himself again, and like as he must go back to his work, though she did all she could to keep him at home one day, knowing it to be

an herb that softens the skin overmuch for cold weather. Yet nobody has heard the like of what came over him. It was a bitter air when he went out, and it came on to blow hard. Just after the forenoon drinking they brought him home with no use of his legs. The doctor said the cold had struck into his

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backbone. It paralyzed him fro his legs upward, and no skill could stir it, so she had to see him die in a fullness of strength, fighting for his breath. Yet there were some to come and blame her for letting him go out that day, a thing she could never forgive herself as long as she lived— for all she knew, and they might have known, that none could baulk him of his will.

I must put it down to my mother's trouble, but to forgetfulness in others, that they did not send for me till after the burying, when they began to talk of what should be done for her. It was a hard thing for me— to have nought left but to go up and see his new grave. But I held my tongue afore my mother then and after.

While I was eating the meal she spread for me a quick foot sounded on the doorstones, and Binnie Driver came in. He looked at me sharply, as I thought, but spake only to my mother at first. He had keen blue eyes, set deep under a bushy brow; and I had always partly feared him, as a lad, though less for his look than for the sudden crack of his voice, when he came on us unawares in wrongdoing. If ought in his face had daunted me, it had been his thin mouth, fearful firm set and always clean shaven. But now I listened hopefully, for if I was to work in Cragside it must be with him.

"Well, Ailse, lass," he said, shutting the door, but

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not coming forward, "ye're gathering in your chickens under your wings like. This'll be John."

"What, yo' knaw him, then;" cries my mother.

"I knaw t' mak' of him" he said. "Ay, ay, he'll sup some porridge, I s' warrant. They've none stinted him i' Lancashire, nawther."

"So she laughed, and set a chair for him, but he said, Nay, nay, I mun be off. He can come to t' weaving-shop when he's stalled o' them fatty cakes. There's nowght for him, but we's see; we's see. Happen he's none so keen."

I telled him then I had a good job at Burnley, but I had liefer work at Cragside, if work there was.

"Witta spend it i' drink, John," he said, "or gie't to thy mother like a good lad?" and he spake so sharply that I knew not fairly how to answer him. But my mother answered for me, eager and proud like", and flushed all over her face as she praised me.

"Well, well; we s' see," he said again. "Good-day to yo', Ailse. God bless yo'!" and popped out as quickly as he had come in.

"Eh, my lad, tha mun niver go back to Burnley," said my mother when he was gone. "Tha'rt— tha'rt all I hev i' t' world now, John."

There were tears in her eyes, and I marvelled to hear her make so light of the others. But they were

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all wed, with childer of their own, and, indeed, I never had any thought but to fend for her myself.

"All reight, mother," I said, "if we can manage."

"Eh, but tha mun be gradely behaved wi' Binnie," she said. "He's fearful set agean drinking. And nowght but reight, too. There's five ale-shops i' this little spot, and that's four too mony. They mak' a deal o' mischief. A deal, they do." It was too many. In all that end of Kildwick Parish you could not number up five hundred folk. Besides, there were two or three farms nought but whisht-shops; and it passes me to know where money came fro to keep all these agate.

However, at that time it troubled me little. "Drinking's nowght mich i' my way," I said, and went on with my eating.

"Tha knaws, there's two maks o' these Drivers," she telled me— "better mak an' war mak. Better mak's fearful strict, an' t' war mak's just as wild." And on that text, being excited like, she gave me a chapter of motherly good advice against betting, and gambling, and pigeon-flying, and other such idleness. I was fain to hear her talk of

somewhat else nor her trouble; but I did not need it. As for that, I was whetted to a keenness by the scanty look of our living-room, far by my uncle Zephaniah's—a deal table and a kist of drawers, with a two-or-three old

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chairs. I grieved for my father when I saw it; mark you, a man that tewed hard, and wasted nought.

As you may judge, what with one thing and another, I started out to see Binnie Driver in an anxious mind. But now I had my first fair look at Cragside and my spirits rose. All that I saw suited me, as if I had feared to see it different. I be thought me of Lizzie, after having passed their house without heeding it. For years I had never called her to mind. Faces I knew showed at the windows; and I laughed inwardly to see how folk tried to scholar me, and could not. It is one sign of youth to forget trouble.

In this better mood I saw a laughable thing. It will show both our poverty and our homely ways of doing, so I shall tell it as it happened. There was walking up the road in front of me, with a butter basket on his arm, a big, slammocky man that I kenned weel, a farmer at Far Close called Kester o' Nic's; and just as I drew level with him a smaller man came nimbly across and spake to him. This man I knew by the lively cock of his head as he thrust it out, half sideways, to ask the other a question. And I waited to watch, for by that and by the farmer's sulky way of stopping I smelled mischief.

"Hest ony winter-silver, Kester?" said he; and the farmer grunted out "No," and made to walk on.

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Now this winter-silver was a bit of a charity, that Kester paid out as he thought fit; and it seems there were odd ones that said he always kept some. A thrifty and close-fisted man gets an ill name easily.

The smaller man walked with him, keeping his head in front. "Hest 'livered it all like?" he asked him. " 'Cos there's Bell o' Kize's here and her little uns, wi' nowght to

eyt i' t' house; and shoo wants some."

"Aw knaw nowght about that," says Kester, looking up at the chimneys.

"Not thee," says the other. "*But there'll be some for her.*"

Kester o' Nic's talked in his big, blustering voice. "Nah, Weasel, aw want nowght to do wi' thee," he said. "Tha's no call to mell (meddle). 'Way wi' tha to Skipton."

I knew not what he could mean by that, unless it were some law matter; but Weasel paid no heed to it.

"Why, but, aw s' pawse (kick) tha weel," he said, confidential-like.

Kester looked up and down, and put his hand slowly into his pocket. Then on a sudden he gave a growl: "Here's eighteen pence for tha:" he said "Aw hev no more."

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Weasel took it. "Aw s' hev hawf-a-crown," he said; "oraw'll pawse tha fro here to Far Cloise."

So he backed a bit, with his mouth open. "Nay, Weasel," he said, "it's finished."

In a crack his basket was kicked wrong side up, and some butter fell out on the road. Weasel gatheredup three or four shapeless pounds.

"Aw'll leave tha be this time, Kester," he said then. "Aw'm noan so hard as some... Nay, thy butter's all reight. Aw'll watch it till tha comes wi' that shillin'." And he went back into Bell o' Kize's. Now he was a Driver, "o' t' war mak;" but at after I proved him a good one."

When I gat to talk with Binnie, I saw that he had it in mind to do a thing for me, a lad he hardly knew, that was more nor could be looked for. I should have thought it much had he given me a bit of weaving now and then. Instead of that, he let me know that he wanted somebody to take hold while he went seeking work, and to do at other times what else there was about the shop. I knew all about weaving— such plain work as we did then— and my bit of learning put me in the way of keeping books. You cannot call it a manager's job, for I just did what he telled me to do; nor an overlooker's, for at handloom weaving every man knew his own know, and needed little help; but it bettered tewing with picking

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stick and batten, and he gave me nine shillings a week.

I went that night up to the Bar Chapel burying ground, to see where they had put my father. The spot was good to tell. It is grown over now, and there are few that know it, but then there was fresh earth turned, and the planks left about. I felt I could just have liked to see him afore he died. I thought a good deal of him, but like as I had never known him fairly. It seems he talked about me when he had my mother by herself. He would be uneasy, I judge; for I had no occasion to let ten years go by and never show my face. Thirty miles is none far. He had never said ought to show what he felt, and if my mother spake of it he used to tell her never to heed, I was a steady lad. But then and after it was a bitter thing for me to think on; and that first time over his grave, knowing nought one way or another what his mind had been, I repented, and took his death for a punishment; while at last I cried out, as if he could hear me— "Father, I'll do reight. I'll do as ye'd ha' done."

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CHAPTER III:
ELIZABETH

Now, on the second Sunday after I landed home, in the afternoon, I saw the grandest sight my een ever settled on; and that was a wench. But on this, planning what to say of her, I have been fit to bray my head against a wall and write no more, for I can see well that I shall never make you understand what manner of living perfect wonder she seemed to me, in her beauty and gentleness. To tell the colour of her hair, and cheeks, and eyes, is nought towards it; for after I had seen her I knew not either one or another, she had so dazzled me— and yet I kneeled down to her in my heart, with a kind of gladsome worship.

I had gone to the chapel with my mother, and we sat just below the pulpit, on one side, by my eldest brother Amos and his wife. I could see all that came in at the great door, and I partly watched, for the pleasure of looking at old faces. For even at a

solemn time like that, with all of them as they entered giving

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glance at where we sat in our mourning, I felt a manner of comfort in being among my neighbours and knowing them again. The quiet sound of their feet on the stone floor, and on the creaking stairs under the gallery, was a gradely thing to hear as well. It settled, and the preacher came out, and went up into the pulpit and knee led him down. It was Abram Smith. I knew that he had been a near friend of my father's, and I felt a tightening at my heart, thinking of my mother that sat so still beside me. But I steeled myself, and looked about; and it fell to be so, that this young lass was then coming gently toward us. It is a strange thing to tell, but at the first sight of her I turned my face away sharply to master a sudden piercing of sorrow. Yet I was fain, for she had looked at us pitifully. Nay, the marvel of her fresh loveliness made the blood throb in my ears.

When we sang I heard behind me a sweet and steady voice, low among the others like a linnets at dusk, and I knew it to be hers, though I dared not look. It had such a soft lightness, flowing on the air like a quiet ripple on a still river; and I could but listen. There may have been five or six verses, yet the hymn was done, to my thinking, fearful soon, and I was almost left standing.

Now, since my father died I had been inclined to religious matters, but my head was clean turned for

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that time, and I do not think I rightly heard a word of what the prayer was. She was fair in front of me when I kneeled, and I could not keep my een off her. I had to be continually peeping at the bit of smooth cheek and neck, for all I felt a make of shame over it. I would cover my face for a minute and try, but then I should take another peep, and admire her small pink ear— a daintier I never saw— or the neat way her hair was done, in marvellous small plaits bunched up very snod, or the pretty bit of white lace on her jacket neck. It was a stolen delight, she knew nought of my impudence; but I was never one that could stare a wench out of countenance, as some will do. However, as we

rase up, she did catch me looking, and veiled her eyes so quickly that I was daunted.

I had forgotten where I was and what was agate; but by that simple trick of modesty she brought me back to a knowledge of it, and shame burned red in my face. This was the funeral service (I doubt I have not said so), and my thoughts should have been fixed.

Now I can hear that in some parts they have not our way of doing at such times, yet it is a way that seems to me but natural and kindly. The pulpit was donned with crape, and among the choir you could see nought but black or white. The women singers had white falls. Part way through the service they

[31] sang some anthem; in these days it is mostly "Vital Spark." All the hymns were picked to suit too. Such a service, and chiefly the preaching, aye sets the mourners weeping afresh, but they know all else share their sorrow, and the thought of it in after days is a comfort. Yet I think the service over my father was more ill to bear than it should have been for my mother.

Till then she had held up. Twice or thrice of an evening I had seen her sit by the fire and fret, but so quiet-like that I had only known of it when she wiped her face with her apron; and I think it had done her good if ought. But at the chapel it was otherwise. All around us, when Abram Smith was talking, I could hear folk sobbing, and Amos' wife was bitterly wrought upon; but my mother sat like somebody dead, only that her fingers were never still on her knees. He spake of my father as a man after God's own heart; it was for that, he said, that God took him. There was not one that could testify against him, and none that was able to tell his good deeds, for none had been worthy to loose his shoe-latchet. "Us," he said, "that lived nearest to him, and knew him best, are most tongue-tied. 'The Lord our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord.' " And on this text he exhorted us heavily, not sparing.

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After a time he began to speak of my father as he was, and to tell us things he had done, and call to mind his ways of dealing with folk. You could think him talking quietly by the fireside instead of preaching. He stopped short once and wiped his forehead, and could not frame to go on.

"You mun bear with me, friends," he said. "He were a mak o' mate of mine... We cannot always do just as we wod." And he seemed to stiffen himself up. Binnie Driver spake out sharp from his pew in the gallery close by: "Praise the Lord, brother!"

"Ay, day and night, day and night, Binnie," he answered. "For what he's been. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.' I'd summat more I wanted to say. ... Nay, it's goane. But you all knew him. I knew him weel; weel. Let us pray."

When he had prayed he preached a time longer; but I have never seen a man so hard hodden as he was. I believe he compassed a gradely finish; but I cannot tell much about it, for when he was agate my mother made a strange, sleepy noise, and slipped down backwards off the bench.

It gave me a sudden and desperate scare; while other folk came round to do what they could I stood as useless as any sheep. I saw that wench with the bonny face bring a mug of water, and push in among

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them; but I did nought to help her. Folk spake to me and I took no heed of what they said. All I did was done after she had come round a bit: I just stooped and took her in my arms, and went into the vestry. It seems to me that she weighed no more than a little child; and eh! I pitied her then, for she wept as if she could not draw her breath.

Some followed us in, and with them my wonderwench, and at last, when she spake, I knew her. It was just Lizzie. At that a spark of happiness burned in me, to see my mother lean on her as she seemed to do; and my heart yearned for them both. I looked at her sweet and troubled face, so freshly pure and delicate that it put me in mind of nought but a summer dawn, and I felt a joy as if I were sure of her.

She slipped away before I found ought to say, as soon as my mother began to talk of going home; but in my foolishness I was content. I knew not but we should still

be mates, and while I walked beside my mother, saying nought, I was secretly planning. Nay, I write what isn't just true. It was more dreaming than planning. I saw things in a fond way, fancying her and me together again in the lanes and by the beck side, and wondering.

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CHAPTER IV.

BINNIE DRIVER

Two or three days at after this, being early at my work, I was picking out some bobbins from a skep in the pay-shop, when Weasel put his head in between the door and the jamb with a jumble of rackety song:

"Buffalie girl comes out at night...

And Bingo was his name, O!"

— he sang; and so came in and sat him down. It would be half past four of an October morning, some time yet afore day.

"Tha'rt a soon getter-up," he said, "for t' size on tha;" and, afore I could answer, "Wowh!" he cried, and dived behind a pile of empty beams. "What's ta doing here? Aw'll break thee thy neck!"

When he came out he had a dead rabbit by the hind legs, and he strake its head against his clog-toe. Then he looked at me for all the world like a little lad in mischief. "It's never a tame un, is't?" says he.

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I did nought but laugh at him.

"What? tha'rt fearful brazzened ower 't," he said, reckoning to be dismayed. "They put 'em i' t' hoil (in gaol) for tame and wild alike, tha knaws. Here, slip't i' thi pocket."

"Nay," said I, when Is aw his drift, "I want it none."

He squinted at me sideways with a keen look that he had, and grunted. However, he said nought, but went to the door, where he stood whistling. I judged I had offended

him. So in a bit I said:

"Weasel, dost ever raise t' devil now?"

He had used to flae us when we were lads with reckoning to raise Beelzebub in an old hay-loft. He gat behind a sheet of paper with a candle, and made shadows and a strange voice talking; and being the eldest among us, and a rare hand at gas-acting, he did seem very near to do it.

He thought I was aiming at his bit of a conjuring trick with this rabbit. "Well," he answered sharp, "tha'd no 'casion to know wheer it com' fro."

I saw he had been too clever for me; and I saw, too, that he had meant it kindly. At this time I had spoken to him but twice or thrice since coming home, just to pass a word in a morning when he knocked the weavers up.

"But aw see tha'rt ower proud," he said.

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"Ay?" said I, and at that he turned on me.

"Aw can mak nowght on tha, wi' thi Lancashire ways!" he snapped. "Tha'rt big eniff to hev sense, how't be!... Witta tak it?" And he made to throw it at me. So I laughed and held out my hand.

"Aw knawn't what aw gie't to thee for," he said, when he had tossed it in. "There's plenty ud be fain on't."

"No, nor Idunnot," I answered him.

He made a stride toward me. "Wha, but aw'll tell tha," he said. "It's none for t' gradely mak on tha, nor nowght else 'at there is about tha."

I telled him that so long as he followed his fancy I should be content; and he had no other thanks, but went off directly to do his knocking up. But he oft brought me a rabbit or a trout at after that, and I thought it no wrong to take them, for all I knew they were getten unlawfully. Nor did any that shared his catchings, I do believe; and that is talking more or less for all Cragside, except it be not Binnie Driver himself; for at one time or another there was sure to be sickness in a house, and if Weasel heard of it he would drop in with some of what he called his medicine.

Now you know how I came to be thick with Weasel. He led a strange life. It

passes me to tell how he gat a living at all. He had woven part, but

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he said it was horse-work, he would sooner be "out o' t' door;" and that meant in some wild spot, where nobody else ever went, because he "liked plenty of room," he reckoned. But he never lacked, that I know of. There would be folk glad to see him, I dare say, for he was good company; and he would get a meal here and a meal there. Then, if there was farm work doing, he would very like help a bit, in a neighbourly way. And he had knowledge of horses and cattle, and what best to do with them in time of sickness. I think, too, that he went to Colne market, and picked a bit up there and them that he wakened of a morning gave him two pence a-piece every week. So, one way or another, he addled his ale-brass, and stood his corner. As for poaching, that brought him little, as you may judge. He followed it for sport and devilment; and law could not hinder him.

"Weasel," I said to him one time, "tha'rt fearful leet-gien (wanton). How is't 'at tha doesn't get a job and settle down, like?"

He answered, "Fun and fancy."

"Why, but," I said, "I couldn't do so."

"Oh?" says he, as if he were puzzled. "Now what licks me is to see fowk tewing so hard. It does! What hae they for't when all's done? Aw s' be buried, now, just as snug as another. Ay, and more content nor some, lad."

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I knew not then how to answer him.

"See yo' what a trouble owd Jim hed— Jim o' t' Fowd Top."

"What trouble was that?"

"Wha, he hed so mich brass, he gat as he couldn't part wi't when he wor deein'. It fair strained him to think o' leavin't. He hed it under t' bed, and he couldn't lig still on it, no more nor on nettles. Did nowght but pawse t' blanket off. Tha knaws, they used to go in tul him and cover him up, and then go back and threap about this brass one wi'

another. So at last he fittered out o' t' bed, and crawled to t' chamber door. 'Heigh!' he shrieks. 'Aw can hear yo' fratchin'. But ye'll git noan on't! Nut a hawp'ny! Aw s' hev a hoil made i' t' coffin, ' he said, 'and when they tak me ower Kil'wick Brig aw s' thraw't i't river Aire.' "

"But there's no danger o' thee getting rich, Weasel," I said.

"Nor nobody else i' these days," said he. "Aw tell tha it's not worth tewing! Wha, some o' these owd doubled-up weyvers'll want their awn shap o' coffin. They'll niver be straightened out i' this world! But they'll not get nowght different; no, not if they spring t' lid off."

He always had his own way of looking at things. But though he did not brag of it, he had a great deal more "spending-brass" nor I could handle. Even

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with his rabbits my mother found it hard to piece a living for us both out of my wage; but he could go offer to the "Angel" nor any man I knew. I cannot say that I ever saw the sign of drink upon him; but I judge he had a strongish head for't.

I saw him next Saturday night among a kitchenful, and they were primed (mellow). You may be sure that he was cock of *that* walk.

The way I came to see him so was that Binnie Driver sent me for him. Binnie stood at his door over anent the "Angel" as I went past, and called me. There was a great din of shouts and laughing, and I saw that he was looking across with a gloomy face.

"John," he said, "just go into that wasp nest, lad, and fotch me t' queen out. Dost think tha can ventur?"

"What, Molly?" said I, judging he meant the landlady: but he shook his head.

"Nay," he said, "Weasel. Tell him I want him."

I could make a fair guess at what his aim was, and I thought that mine was a deal the simpler job. When I went up the lobby Weasel was singing some make of sporting song. His singing was good to know by the way he clipped his words, and a laughable twang that he gave it; and there I saw him on a table, among pots and long pipes, jerking his arms up like a play actor, with a lot of them sitting round the langsettle,

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smiling at him with their mouths open, or else wagging their heads and falling asleep. There were part weavers, and part lime-burners, and a farmer or two out of the parish; such a crowd that, what with a big fire and tobacco-smoke, the kitchen was like an ill oven. I could hardly get to look, for folk standing in the door-hole; but he saw me directly, and as soon as he did he faced me, and set all his pantomime at me— till they began on the chorus, and then he had more nor he could do to keep them together. They sang all speeds, and finished one after another like a string of ducks going in at a barn door. However, they shouted "Bravo!" "Goo' lad, thee!" and "Weel sung, by gow!" and hammered on the table right vengefully; so I judge he was suited. And being funny side out, he looked hard with a troubled face at the slumberous farmer that ended last, and daintily kicked his hat off afore he jumped down.

"Come in, come in, lad!" he shouted to me, through the laughing and the talkin. "Niver be back'ard i' coming forrad!"

"Tha'rt wanted," I said; and when he drew near I told him who wanted him.

There came a sudden keenness into his face. "What's he want at this time o' neeght?" he said.

"Nay," I answered him, "tha knaws as mich o' that as I do."

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So he studied a bit, and I thought he would come without more to-do; but not so. He had another marlake to play. He heard something that was said, and looked across to that corner of the langsettle nearest the fire.

"Seest-a that lump o' bull-beef? " says he.

This was the name he found for Sammy o' Ruth Ann's, Cragside constable at that time. Sammy sat snoring, with his head fallen on one shoulder; and they were tickling his nostrils with straws.

"He thinks he's courting strang." (They used to say that he aimed to be landlord.) "Comes ivery neeght, and roasts hissen i' that corner. Egow! aw'll finnd him some horns!"

So he darted into the bar and came out with a great piece of paper, and shaped it round Sammy's hat. Then he took a blazing coal out of the grate and set it afire. A madder trick I think I never saw. Still it was laughable, and Sammy began to waken up at hearing the shout of merriment, so he should have been able to fend for himself. But he crowned all when he just nodded his head, and said in his wise way, "Varra gooid song." "Varra gooid song." Next minute he put up his hand, and jumped like a shot ratten. His hat went under the table.

"Gaw-yon!" he shouts, and rubs his bald head. "What foil's done this? Gie me up that billycock!"

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But I think he terrified some when he buttoned his coat and made for leaving. "Ye'll suffer for't," he said; "aw'll see 'at ye do. Ay, laugh. Go on; laugh! Him 'at laughs last laughs longest. There'll be a summons for thee, Ben Tossit. Tha knaws what for. And thee, Ebenezer, tha can shut thy trap quick, lad. All t' lot o' ye! Aw'll learn ye!"

Just as he turned away, and we made room for him, Weasel spake across the kitchen.

"Wha, tha's no 'casion to freat," he said gently, much as a man might talk to a child. "There's but o—ne guilty, tha knaws; and he seemed to think it just an innocent marlake, Sammy."

"Niver thee heed!" said Sammy. "There's laws ageanpowching an' all. Put that i' thy ale!"

"Ay, for seur!" he approved, coming to the door as Sammy made off. "But tha maks nowght on 'em."

Some followed, looking to see more sport; but that was the end of it, and at after, while we talked with Binnie Driver, we heard no more din.

Binnie made us come in and sit. I was for drawing back, but he said, "Nay, I want thee as weel, John. What, ye're mates!"

When we were planted, Weasel looks up at him with at winkle: "Now!" he says. Binnie said nought just then, but reached down his tobacco-jar. "Nay,

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aw hae some," said Weasel, and filled his pipe fro his own bit of paper. So Binnie lit a spill for him.

"I'm fain thou'rt sober," he said, as he did it.

"Oh!" says Weasel, cheerfully.

"Ay, fain I am. For I mean tha to sign t' pledge, and drink no more."

"Oh, dost-a?"

Now that was the first time we had heard this word "pledge," to mean what it does; but Weasel was too sly to show ignorance.

"I'm bound to see less drinking i' Cragside," Binnie said: "and I cannot do but begin wi' my own kith and kin. There's too mich; and thou'rt bell-wether on 'em."

"Oh, am aw?" says Weasel, sharply. "Aw'll tell tha what: tha'd do better to talk to Sammy o' Ruth Ann's. Now then, aw'll send him in to tha. Egad, he's just i' fettle."

If he had been a gun-snap quicker, he might have been out of the door and off. But, "Sit tha down!" cries Binnie, pointing him back to the chair. "I'm talking to thee this time. Hae done wi' thy tricks and behave like a man."

Weasel walked up to him slowly, with a face different fro any I had seen him show, and for a minute they looked at one another. Then he spake, fearful quickly.

"Like *thy* man, tha means," he said. "Dost-a-n't?"

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But aw'm to be no man's man, lad. And when tha wants me agean, for some more o' thi hard words and domineerin' ways, tha can whistle."

Then I saw what manner of man Binnie Driver was. He went as white as a clout; but not with fear. "Nay," he said, and there was a deep bitterness in his voice; "I'll pray God to show me a better way o' dealing wi' tha." So he turned away.

Weasel stood where he was while the clock ticked twice or thrice, and then he strade back to the chair, slang himself down in it, and tossed his cap upon to the kist of drawers. But Binnie, when he sat down, leaned forward with his head in his hands. After a minute ortwo so,

"Nowthen," said Weasel, "what hest-a agean drinkin'?"

Then he looked up; and his face showed he had been weeping, like a woman. He looked first at one of us and then at the other; and in a bit he answered:

"To-day I stood i' th' weyving-shed when they'd all gone home, and I saw 'at but for a two-or-three they'd finished their pieces, and fettled 'em off. I pay 'em o' Wednesdays, as ye both know. How much o' what they gat last Wednesday is there left, think yo'? and which on 'em has ought saved? Now, it's worth knowin'; for when they come to me for work o' Monday, there'll be none.

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"This afternoon in I saw that lass o' Joanna's sittin' on her doorstones wi' t' babby. She's akin to all three on us. I thought she looked fearful badly after her liggin-in, and I telled her she did wrang to sit ther i' t' cowl. I can tell of a time, not so lang sin', when she were bonny and hearty— a reight cheerful lass. Now, what think yo' she said? It made no matter, she said; she wished she were dead, and t' barn wi' her. I shall wager ye left her man i' Molly's there, wi' no other show o' guilt on his face nor a sweaty flush o' liquor. But to-day ther' nawther pap nor blue milk for his little un ... Now, there's no sense i' sich doings."

"No, there's nut," Weasel agreed; "ye s'ould talk tul him."

"Ay, but what for me astead o' thee? It's no more o' my business nor thine. I say nowght about his being' a mate o' thine, for we're all mates i' Crag-side, or s'ould be. But there 'tis. Hest-a ever reckoned up how many o' them chaps have ought to be proud on at home? Thou hesn't? Why, but, is there one?"

Weasel looked at him like a man puzzled, and sharply rubbed his hand round his head. "Gaw-y'-on!" he said. "Tha talks like as aw'd summat to do wi't"

"Dost-a care nowght about it, then? Thou'rt none sich a flint, Weasel. I know tha better. There's no wrang wi' thee but being leet-gien."

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"Oh, dost think so?" he laughed; and winked at me to let me see that he knew

better. But at bottom he was shamed, and could not hide it.

"I do," said Binnie, bringing his kneif down on the chair arm.

"Why then, I s'know wheer to come for a character! ... An' what's ta aimin' at, like?"

"Why, there 'tis!" cries Binnie. "Thou'lt haffle and jest while fowk pine to death!"

"Go pratly," Weasel said then. "Who is pinin' to death?"

Binnie rase up out of his chair and walked about the floor. "I tell tha I can see no other end," he said. "I knawn't what's to be done! I've travelled this week haws ower Yorkshire, beggin' for warps as if I sought charity. I s'ould ha' done better to cower i' t' house and save what bit o' money I hed to ware." He stopped walking about, and stood looking at the fire while he talked on. "Yo' mud as weel seek wark in a burying-grund. Trade's dead. Fowk's rogued and swindled wi' these false companies while they willn't loose their brass for honest men. John!" He turned to me of a sudden, and lowered his voice. "Did ta see ony drillin' i' Lancashire?"

I telled him, "Nay, not drilling." "Why, but there'll be some," he said. "There cannot miss. Happen not now but soo in. They com'

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near it at Leeds a day or two sin'. And Peterloo blood guiltiness, as sure as we're livin' men. ... God help this Cragside! My brass is done. I've seen it comin'; and I do not know one 'at hes a penny-piece in a stocking."

It was like hearing a doom said. I felt a stiffening go down my back, and then my thoughts went racketting like the shed whenall's agate. But Weasel sat square in his chair anent me, looking steadily across with no change in his face.

"And tha's done thy bit, Binnie," he said. "We know that weel. But niver say dee, lad. ... What, there's stuff to eyt, and plenty."

"I tell tha we're not like to last a month," said Binnie Driver, "unless there be a miracle done by God All-mighty. And I've prayed for't day and night, night and day, but the heavens are as brass. If it be His will to chastise this froward generation, wilt *thou* hinder? When He smote us wi' t' black plague, and fowk darn't go nigh their dead to

bury 'em, could *thou* do owght?"

Weasel was stretched out, gaping at the rafters. "Why, but *aw* know we can last for six months," he said.

Binnie pondered sternly a while afore he spake again. Then he said nought but this, in to himself, solemn like: " 'And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart' "

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Whether or not Weasel scholared his meaning, he gat on his feet and walked over for his cap. I judge he was stalled (bored), and this second time Binnie did not bid him stop.

"Nowthen, aw'll tell tha what," he said, talking with his hand on the sneck. "Tha taks too mich o' thy shouthers, Binnie. Now, tha does....What, it's none o' thy faut!"

Binnie, with his back toward him, gave no answer.

"And for signin' papers, tha knows, it's nowght i' my way. Aw willn't be bund so. Tha's hed thy say: be content, lad. ... Well?" But Binnie held his tongue, and Weasel said no more, but pulled his cap on his een and went.

I signed. To me it seemed a little thing either way, for I cared nought for ale; yet I never did a better thing in all my life after. Weasel could not take a telling. However, if he had been as tame a character as I am, there'd been no songs written about his doings, as came to pass thereafter; and I must have been tamer yet. It is a fond trick to blame a man for his nature.

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CHAPTER V.

POACHING AND BETTER LUCK.

I have heard it said that "love laughs at locksmiths;" but I think love laughs at all else. As for locksmiths, Elijah Bamford— a man I should be fain to see in the next world— tells in his book a tale of a Lancashire lad that "com' a-courting i' th' owd way: if th' door worn't oppen, he pawsed it oppen." I was not so rampageous, but I thought full as little of what stood between us, and I judge my way was full a sold. I went to it as

bees go to the flowers, for the beauty and sweetness of them, without thinking why or wherefore; and all that Binnie Driver had said hindered me no more nor the wind. I doubted none his prophesyings, but they seemed neither here nor there in it. I notice that lads and lasses have the same way of doing now. They must be together; and then some day, when they've made sure of one another, the silly wench comes creeping up to me, and leans over the back of my chair to cuddle her silly grandfather— and behold!

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they want to get wed and they cannot. I do believe there'll be lads following lasses on Judgment Day.

Yet so it was, that at first I did not venture beyond sly looks, and I think the more I dreamed about her and the bolder my mind grew, the more I was fainthearted when I might be with her. I could fall to musing any minute, and my head would swim with fancies; but come nigh her, and I was tongue-tied. Still, it always seemed a grand thing to get a peep, and, for an hour or two at after, I could have jumped over a house. I can tell of looking in through their window one night, and seeing her smoothing (ironing). My breath went at the sight of her; and eh! but she was bonny. It was just the golden gleam in her brown hair that I saw first, and then, as she turned her head, following the work, a little space of her sober brow; and syne and suddenly all her fair, untroubled face, the beauty of it shining like an angel's in the bit of candle-light. I carry that picture yet; and thank God for it.

We had but a week's laking (play) at this time; and, for all I judged that it was bringing my mother nigh the bottom of her meal-poke, I did not fret till it was nearly passed. Then I saw that it had been time wasted: all my planning had been nought. I had behaved like some gaumless lad waiting with his

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mouth open under an apple-tree; and he feels none the better for feasting his een.

It was strangely ordered that my happiness and my shame should grow on one stoven (stock, or stem), so the manner of it must be shown. It sprang out of nought but

this gaumless way. Spending my time so, I slept ill; and on the Friday night of that week, when I knew that I had to go back to the shed next day to make ready for Monday, I slept not at all. After an hour or two tossing, I thought I would go up to the Crag and range the moor a bit; so I donned my clothes and crept out, in the dead time of the night.

When I stood on the doorstones and looked up, tranquillity settled on me— with the first deep breath of that keen air. There was a broad skyful of diamonds, and under it, all was covered with a gray garment of hoar-frost— all but the Crag, that made a strong, black fence, notched and jagged, up against a glittering emptiness beyond it. Now, a man can look at a marvel like that till he add one cubit to his stature.

I heard a bit of a cough, lower down, across the road, and then somebody said quietly, "Now then; come on." I thought at once what would be agate, and wondered if Weasel were in it. It was Weasel just. When he had waited a minute or two he walked

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a piece out into the road, and then I scholared him. So I went over to him, and he greeted me in his sly way.

"What, tha s'ouldn't leeht a candle to don thysen," he said.

"How's that?" said I, just to draw him on.

"There's nowght'll wakken Sammy sooiner!" he said; and I think that was as much as to say that he could not be wakened: "Wheer's ta for?"

I said.

"Wha' tha'll gitnowght," say she. "Tha'ddo better to come wi' me."

Now he knew well that I had been thinking of no such matter, and when I started to walk down the road with him he was quiet awhile. I judge he had to alter his plans.

"Tha s'ould ha' been wi' us yesterneecht," he said at last. "Egow! We wanted a two-or-three more, to be reight. ...Hest iver *seen* one o' these strang jobs?"

I can see, now, that he tried to show me what manner of danger there was in poaching, so that I should be fairly warned; and I soon found out that he meant to do little this night, and that little cunningly. But it seemed to me then, lad-like, that he made light of me, and pride pricked me on. What, I could grow a beard! So to his last

question I answered that I had seen one strong job, when I was but a lad

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and he stopped to hear about it afore we struck into fields. But whether because he made me talk pratty, whispering-like, or because it called to mind a desperate rough affair that I had forgotten, I was loth to go with him after telling the tale; and all that night a cracking twig or a puff of wind among strewn leaves was enough to set my heart racing.

We must have talked a full hour. He asked endless questions, and mainly about him that fought so shrewdly, besting three; and whether there was a great man, one-eyed, that fought on the same side. For he gat a fancy that this must have been Jack Lightfoot, out of Nidderdale. "It 're fearful like his way o' feightin'," he said; and this other, half blind, if I could have spoken of such a man, he had known for Poss, Jack Lightfoot's brother. They had lived a time in Haworth parish, he knew. And, at after, this guess went round. But I cannot think it likely, for Jack Lightfoot being now, as I hear, but a year or two past fourscore, I judge he could not be then as old as the man I saw. Besides, there is no occasion to look as far as Nidderdale for good fighters, even though we know that Jack was one of the best (and one, too, that kept his hands free of any crime). There were some that could fight a bit, born and bred in Haworth parish!

But this night there was no such matter, and I

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might now jump forward to the gradelier tale of what followed, but for seeming to hide my own doings. We dived into Hardaker Park, and passed through it, keeping down by the beck side, where it was darkest, so as we could see ought that moved on the banks above us, against the sky. I marvelled that Weasel took this way; if I had not known it aforetime we might have been heard, through kicking roots and stones, or shaking branches, for such noises are good to hear at night, even where there is a slopping rush of water. But, except at odd spots here and there, he seemed to know there would be none to overlook us, and, following him close, I mainly found grass margin to tread on; so we stirred nought but a fougart (polecat), that scuttered in under a wall. I knew not

what it was till the stink of it drave me off, when Weasel thrust in his stick after it; but of all stinks I have never felt a fouler. It was nought but his mischief to meddle with it, just because I was with him.

A piece below Hardaker Park he planted five or six snares—wire slip-nooses, pegged into the ground—and we cowered on some stones under a bank. Now, we're reight, here," he said. "Owd Ned'll be droughen in his armchair; and we s'ould git a nice two-or-three Egow! It ud be a fine marlake to wakken him up, and show 'em tul him. He's t' dog i' t' manger if man ever wor."

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However, another fancy took him, and we went awalking while his rabbits tied theirselves up— for a rabbit never draws back out of a snare, as a cat or a dog might do, but will pull against it till she be strangled; and this is nearly the whole secret of nets and snares. But a man must know just where to set them, or they will take nought.

Ye may say that I was not keen for sport, or I should have wanted to bide. I will own it. I was as unlike to Weasel as a mastiff dog is to a terrier. He seemed to smell out every living thing we passed; if there was a sound no bigger than a mouse makes in the grass, he knew what stirred, and his een were as sharp as a houlat's. I know not how he gat his byname, but it fitted him, as bark fits a tree. Nay, I have been with many a one that saw less by daylight than he made out by starlight; and after that first time till the last I would have gone with him anywhere with a quiet mind. There are some that know his way of life for thirty years and more, and marvel that he was never taken; but these were never with him. And partly he was well liked by the farmers; for they knew that his gang left no gates open, nor ever knocked a wall down they did not big again— if left alone to do so.

He walked up on to Glusburn Moor to see some rocks, where there was a badger, and waited till it

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came shambling to its hole at daylight; for Weasel wanted to see what way it took, so as

to know where best to put a trap. Daylight it was not fairly, but just in the sleepy chill when the stars go pale and the crows come flying low; and yet there was light enough for Weasel to see somewhat that angered him. As we came over the crown of the hill he stopped, like a sheep-dog listening for the whistle.

"Dabbish it!" he said. "There's some'dy i' that pastur."

The dawning was not over anent us, to dim our een as we looked, but away to one hand; yet I could but just make out where Old Ned's house would be, a darker spot in the gloom. For it lay in a blue dullness that spread all down the hither side of the valley, and part way across up the long rise toward Cragside.

"What, Ned's?" I said.

"Ay; and he's noane gittin' mushrums."

That was safe to say in October, but I could see nought, horse, cow, nor man. Down the hill we polled, ding dong; and whenever a rabbit popped across the lane Weasel sware, and I laughed. But as we gat near, "Come thee no farther," he said, "but walk praty on, o' t' top side. This here's a kittle job, now."

"Nay, I'll never duff," said I, lad-like.

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"Do as aw tell tha," he answered me. "Aw'd liefer be by mysel'." So he went over a wall corner and left me, where a foot-road at the back of Ned's starts out of the lane.

Well, I was none suited. I thought he treated me over much like a younker. But when I had watched him slip into Ned's plantation I was forced to do as he'd bidden me, so as to meet him again; and a piece along, I sat down to wait on a bit of high ground that looks both along the foot-road and down into the beck. And there I pearked, hearkening a throstle sing, till the far Crag yonder changed fro red to gray, and the hoar-frost was nigh melted. But if I had sat there a blue month there'd have been nought to grumble at; for what did I spy among the brambles by the beck side but my wonder-wench, gathering blackberries!

I walked straight toward her, as bold as a robin, hough my heart thumped at my ribs like a fire-bell sounding. I think I must have taen courage at seeing her out in a

plain cotton gown, with a little blue check handkerchief pinned under her chin, such as other wenches used to don.

Ah, but she was good to tell from all others. Such another dainty figure as I saw, stretching up to some high clusters that grew on a bank, was not to be found in England; no, nor in this world, I do believe;

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and the freshness of her beauty, with morning sunlight on her face, is above words. But when I gat near I could do nought, forsooth, but stand gazing, speechless, with a kind of joyful stir at the secret heart of me, till she looked sideways and saw me there— and gat, I think, a fright. For "John!" she cried, and flushed up scarlet, and then went pale about the mouth: "Nay, John!"— yet all with a bonny smile of welcome.

"Are ye getting any?" said I; — *heard* myself say it, but knew not till I had spoken.

She showed me her basket, and looked slyly up. "We used to eat 'em all," she said. "Take some."

At first, instead of being put at my ease, I felt such a flash of delight at hearing her speak merrily of our young days together, and because she proffered a gift to me, that I could not hold my hand from shaking when I put it into her basket; and besides, I seemed to breathe in a giddiness from her, standing so close. Now, it is a strange thing, but when I knew that she had seen it— for at the next peep I took at her face she was marvellous shy and swamous— I felt no more shame for it, but a kind of pride.

"Mun I gather ye some?"

"I asked her. If ye like," she said; and so I paid her back. There was a rare crop that morning after the frost, and you may be sure I picked none but fine ripe ones.

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Partly, after the first handful, this was done to hear her praise them; and of a surety if she had not done so, sometimes with a word and always with a look of pleasure, I could not have gone so oft to her basket, ith every two or three I gat, or managed so well to

keep touching her hand when I dropped them in. But in that way I ventured too far, and gat my first lesson in good behaviour; for knowing nought at that time of what a keen understanding women have in such matters, for a shield to their virtue and dignity, I never thought she would see what I was doing. So she put me back with a pretence of being childer again.

"Now, this is my place, John. Gather ye in a spot of your awn."

To show her I was willing to do ought she wished, and to hide the bitterness of repining that darted through me, I left her utterly, and gathered into my cap. I cannot tell if other courters be as fond as I was; but just to be checked like that, with a gentle playfulness she liked to use, was as much to me as a banishment, and bit at my strength like hunger.

Yet it was not like hunger truly, for I suffered patiently; albeit this first time I fully thought she wanted to be quit of me altogether. I kept getting a peep at her as I moved about, but she was always gathering, with a sober look that I could not scholar.

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I saw Weasel go strolling by, whistling a tune and looking on in front for me, and I cared so little for poaching that I do believe I knew not what brought him there.

When my cap was filled she looked at me steadily, with such a clear and pleasant countenance that my heart glowed again in a moment. Her basket was heaped full, and we stood a minute saying nought. And then, before I knew, she had brought the tears across my sight with talking of my father— how they had all been stunned by his death, and loth and sorrowful to lose him: how she herself was sorry, for he had sometimes spoken kindly to her when things were amiss, and he was "such a grand, good man;" and how well my mother bare up, when everybody had thought it would go terrible hard with her. Now, if I know myself rightly, I had never fully and truly loved her till she spake to me then, like some angel out of heaven, laying her hand gently on my very heart. Exceeding wonderful and sacred to me was her tenderness; when I dared to look again upon her face, the pure een were shining with a dew of sorrow as she gazed across the meadows.

We walked home side by side; and I know not what we said, but that it was all

blythe and tranquil like the morning; or what I saw either, except her sweet face, that was but seldom shown to me complete,

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but constantly looked forward on the way she fared, and most of all when she smiled. There was one time when, walking so, I marked the rose in her cheek bloom bonnily; and, thinking on it at after, all at once I saw deep into the garden of modest thoughts, secret and sweet-scented, where it grew. I had but looked at the old lime-kiln as we passed by, where two timid childer had lain one summer night!

As we dallied up the syke, that winds in fro the roadside, Weasel stood in front of us; and his een fairly sparkled. "Now, this is a grand mornin'," he began. "What say yo'? Them 'at ligs i' bed knaws nowghto' what's to be seen. Do they?"

"That'll be what Owd Ned said," quo' I, and took him, as ye may say, in the wind.

"Now, cower quiet, John," he said, craftily. "Aw'm as fain as Owd Ned." And he held his coat open to show the pockets on either side, as full as they could hold.

I feared he would tell too much, and I made to walk on; for though I was nowise ashamed of having been with him, I did not want all to be known just then. But he had another rig to hoe.

"What, ye were fearful thrang (busy) as ye com' up," he said, walking on behind us; and at that there was a bonny face turning as red as the epps. "Aw

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niver saw nowght like it. If aw'd been a sheep tha'd ha' faun ower me, John."

"Eh, ye will be talking!" she cried (when I was tongue-tied), and she held out her basket to him. She aimed to stop his mouth, but he just looked at her blackberries, taking none.

"Ay, they're grand after t' frost," says he. "But they'll noan be for me."

"Ye're welcome," she said.

"Oh! like t' mouse to t' bite o' cheese— what?"

"Nay, ye can run free for me," she laughed.

"Why, then," he said, "trap's full."

She turned to me with her face full of merriment. "Hear yo'!" she cried— "for conceit!"

But the brazen-face did nought but wink at her, and plague us worse; till Elizabeth was shamed past hiding it, and I had to tell him that he'd said plenty. Then he wanted some blackberries— and she let him take some. Now, to my thinking then, he made a deal too free with her, all ways. I know I wished him far, and bare him a grudge for it that comes into my mind yet if I ponder much. It was like his way with both man and beast, and there was no ill in it; but I could not thoil to see her treated lightly, and she not mine to fend from all such graceless impudence.

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CHAPTER VI.

WEAVING AND WORSE LUCK.

While I was thrang courting— and thought of little else— we drifted toward a famine. All the summer there had been shortness of work, and that winter, putting all together, we did not weave a month. I can see, when I look back at all there was to show it coming, that I was slow to gauge trouble, and little heedful of wiser kennings nor my own. Young heads are like to be so. It was not just that mine was full of love matters; it was a make of stupid blindness. Afore I left Lancashire, things were so bad with hand-loom weavers, both there and up and down Yorkshire, that they went about, as everybody knows, drawing the plugs out of these steam boilers; and nought could hinder it till they were faced with soldiers. Now, when I heard of what they had done, I had no idea but to see things altered. It never gat lodgment in my mind that any were pined (starved). Ay, and I can tell of hearing that 50, 000 were walking Manchester streets, that

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never thought to work again; but like as it had nought to do with me, because at that

time I had work agate.

And even when in Cragside we were fairly gripped, I could go among it and be meadless¹ and mindless — my mother had let me know that she had a bit of money saved.

I think what first showed me my own selfishness was a tale I heard, about one that wave for Binnie Driver. There was a deal of laughing over it, but I saw nought to laugh at. To tell it, I shall be tied to give him a name; but not his own, for some might think worse of him than needs. His wife wakened him in the night-time.

"Joe! Joe!" she was saying, when he came to his senses; for he was ill to rouse. "Eh, dear!"— and she struck him sharply with her elbow. So he asked her what ailed her, and she began to fret. "Aw cannot think how tha can sleep i' thy bed," she said, "when tha knaws 'at there's nowght to eyt i' t' house for none o' t' barns, and them pining to death. Aw cannot sleep a wink."

And he answered her, " Why, it's no use both on us keeping wakken. If tha can mend it, keep wakken:

¹A "meadless" or "medeless" man is one without the wit to order his work according to a set purpose; and the word has a somewhat wider sense when used contemptuously.— J. K. S.

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aw'm bahn (going) on again, for *aw* cannot mend it." Yet he was not a man that we called hard-hearted, nor a wastrel.

We had then been idle near a fortnight, after the few days' work that Binnie found for us that week-end— a dozen or two of buntings, that a man could weave at the rate of a piece a day; narrow widths, and but six picks to the quarter. There were some of us, I know, that had neither oatmeal nor bacon left, and few could lend. Of course, when it came to that, some grown folk that had childer did without; but it was not anew thing, and they were mostly like me, looking every day to see better luck. Now, this tale stuck in my head, and mingled with what I had heard Binnie Driver say; and I began to see things as they were, and as a man should do if he have left off being a child. I

wanted to know what these Chartists aimed at, that made so much turmoil, and what this Corn Law League was. I listened to all I could hear about Feargus O'Connor, the boldest talker of all that time, and a man they were striving hard to put to silence; and Cobden and Villiers, two noble champions that had first the wit to save us.

There was one among us that had some old numbers of the "Leeds Express," with young Robert Nicoll's manly writings; and when it gat known that I had a bit of scholarship, three or four would come

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with that paper, or some rhyme of Ebenezer Elliot's, or a tract of some make, to our house to hear me read. Nay, I have seen the living-room full at such times— and my mother fretting because she fancied they looked for a bite and a sup, and she could not feel that she had it to spare.

Of all that came, I was best satisfied to see old Abe o' Kit's, for the lass I had set my mind on was his daughter. I dare say there was a touch of pride in my schooling; but, let that be as it will, he was her father, and a man easy to like— slow-natured, cheerful, open, and of a steady judgment. Moreover, he was well-respected, for he had once run the shop that Binnie Driver ran, and had always manned it with a gentle hand; and when he gat behind-hand, and took to weaving for Binnie, folk were taen with his quiet pluck. Nobody saw him fret. I fany wanted to say that it was a pity, or ought of that, he let them talk. They gat nought out of him. "Aw can addle enough for t' little lass and mysen: wes' do," he said. And he was a famous good weaver yet, at three-score years. I shall wager that Binnie never found a pick more or a pick less in any part of his web, for all he had a magnifier to count with. Power-looms cannot do better work.

Weaving is a simpler job with power-looms, and an easier; that is all. But, bless me, with hand-looms it was horse-work. There are cotton weavers in Lancashire

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that think they are punished because they have to stand more nor eight hours in a day and see their work done for them. Why, we thought little in them days of tewing away,

week in and week out, for fourteen and fifteen hours, taking our meals where we sat. And even at that, a man that wave in his own house sometimes wrought all night to finish his piece, so as he could set off with it at daylight on his shoulder, a tramp of three or four miles over the moor. He brought back, happen, three or four shillings in his pocket, and another warp; and then took his bit of sleep by daylight.

"Horse-work," have I written? Horses are better done by. I ponder on it, and I hardly credit what I know to be true. It is not to tell how men lived so.

I oft think of a mischance that befell a weaver Barnsley way. He fell asleep in front of his fire, and dreamed that his warp was blazing; and in his sleep began raking the live coals out of the grate with his hands. This should have wakened him, but he was overdone, and dazed with his toil; and yet there he stood with his een wide open, riving at his warp as he judged, and crying out, so that his wife thought he had gone clean daft.¹

¹This lambent incident of the time is chronicled in "Annals of Yorkshire," vol.i., pp. 423-4. It occurred in Parkin's Row,

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Nay, I am tied to tell of a worse thing that befell under my own sight, if it be not as strange a thing. In December, I think, we did a fortnight's work handrunning, and the weavers, fancying there would be more when that was done, went at it right manfully. It was all good-paying stuff, but heavy to weave— a camlet cloth, needing weighted slay-boards. I gat a share of it, in place of one that was laid at home badly, and I know not that I ever devoured work with such a gluttony as I did that. After the first two days it seemed as if I could not tire. When we went to it of a morning, the smell of the shop made me keen; and all day the din of the looms clacking and bumping set me merry. They faced all one way, the length of a narrow chamber, and I could look along and see the others belting at it. But to my thinking we were never fairly agate till after dark, when we had lighted candles, and the shop was throng with great, dithering shadows. By that time we had done talking, and, no matter what weather it was, a steam ran down the windows.

Sometimes I should look up, and see Binnie standing to watch us, with his hands behind his back. He would have been away on his travels, belike, since morning; and, as he watched, his stern face would

Barnsley, in 1835. The narrative is now in the winter of 1842-3.— J.K. S.

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alter, till at last he turned away with a smile in his beard.

Now, if at another time you had scanned his weavers, wanting to pick out three men that looked fit for hard labour, you would have been deceived. It is odds you had passed them all over. They all looked white in the face, and round-shouldered, and spunkless; and there were one or two bandy-legged, or slammocky (of a slovenly gait), or otherwise ill-reared and ill-getten. And what some of them had on made them look no better; they might have gathered it off scarecrows. Abe o' Kit's was a gradely man, but you would have said he was past the age. Ay, it needs less skill to judge of men in these days. They look to be of another stoven.

Yet, barring Abe— for he was shaken by a fearful cough at that time, and it killed his sleep— if they had been fed, I would have matched them man for man against any I saw in Lancashire.

I had one thing to cheer me on. Every nooning Elizabeth, a ministering angel, came with a sup of something warm for her father; and I gat a smile when she passed near me. Poor wench! she was sadly troubled about him. She would aye be telling him strictly not to overdo himself; and like as she could scarce leave him for fear on't But he gat to see toward the end of the fortnight that he was

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making poorly out, far by some others, and he wave desperately.

He sat but two looms off me, and I could hear their talk. One day when she came, he was weaving after all else had stopped, and she stood by him a time. Then he looked up and rested, but he did not offer to take the can fro her.

"Set it down," he said. "Aw dunnot want owght just now, my lass."

"It's mutton broth, father," she telled him. "I thought it ud do ye good."

I could hear that she faltered. She was like to do so. She had planned an extravagance out of her care for him; and she would have been as far as Silsden, surely, for her bit of meat.

"Bless tha!" said Abe, "tha'rt a gooid lass to thy owd father." So he took a sup to please her, and then a fair long drink of it, and it made his bald head shine.

We were working again when she left him. I could not hold fro saying somewhat to lift her heart. "He's been weaving like a young un," I telled her. But yet I think she went away sorrowful; it seems that Abe had left part. Ina while at after, I saw a weaver that sat next beyond him supping out of his can. He was a youngish man, with a family, and he fared worst of any, so Abe had fallen into the way of giving him.

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Now that sup of broth was ordained to be the last of ought he should take fro him.

We had wrought on to the edge of dusk, when three or four stopped, one after another. I gave no heed at first, for it was full time to light up, and I judged they would be looking to their candles. But there was a bit of a mutter, and I saw they were gathered about Abe.

I thrust in among them. Some that read this may chance to have seen a dog with its back broken, and known the way it looked at any that went near it. There was that look in his face, and he said never a word, but held fast by his slay-board. I shouted when I spake to him, thinking, in some way, that he would be deaf.

"Abe, what ails tha?"

Then I saw that he had loosed his picking-stick, and his hand was shaking the warp. "T' palsy," one said. "Chaps, we s' hae to tak him home."

That nipped me by the throttle right bitterly. I gathered him in my arms, and hugged (carried) him down into the skep-room. He was a heavy man, and yet to me he felt like nought. My head was throng as I went, and I saw that I should have to make two journeys of it, so I set him down on a skep, and bade them see to him while I came back. Ay! but my heart dunted woefully; for when I leaned him against

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the wall his head was going with his hand, and he tried hard to utter somewhat, but we could make nought out.

"John!" she cried out, as soon as ever I opened the door. "What is ther"? It's my father!"

I know not rightly what I began to say, striving to make it appear a little matter; I seemed to stand thewless, looking at her face, and my tongue talking as it would.

She was as quiet and white as if I had put a knife into her. So before I could end the tale my heart sickened, and I came to a cruel silence. She picked up her shawl from the table. "I'll go see," she said, and dropped down on the flag-stones in a swoon.

It was a dear-bought happiness to hear her draw breath again, and feel her tears begin to fall. When I held her up in my arms, and saw that the life was gone out of her bonny face, and felt her strangely heavy, as if all her beauty were to be nought to me for evermore, I was not in my right senses. I cried out to her that she must not die, for I loved her; and at that first sign of life coming back I called her all manner of fond names, smoothening her hair, till at last, when she opened wide her een and knew her sorrow afresh, I saw where I had ventured. But I said now what ailed her father.

"He's none so badly, Lizzie," I telled her. "He'll

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hae to lig at home a week or two, that's all. Thou sees, he's been short of his rest. It'll just be that 'at 's done it."

And in a bit she wiped her face. "I munnot let him see me so," she said, and she picked up her shawl again.

So then I said I would bring him; and I left her. And when I had brought him my mother went to her help.

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CHAPTER VII.

I GO A-COURTING.

We always said that a man might have two strokes and live; so, seeing that Abe had been hale and cant (nimble), and one that had kept himself steady, there was less occasion to fear for him than for some. And I could hear fro my mother that Elizabeth had plenty to comfort her with that opinion. I would have given a deal to know another thing as well, and that was, how far she saw her way; for I doubted whether Abe had been as well able to put money by as my father had. There was none that Binnie would sooner have helped; but I knew that he was put to it to do for his own.

I thought likely my mother would know, but I was swamous of asking her, for it looked no business of mine. However, one day I was deep: I gat her talking about what poverty there was, and at last I said:

"I wonder how 'Lizabeth'll do?"

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She was agate with some sort of work, and she never answered.

"I did finish Abe his piece," I said then. But still she had nought to say.

I tried even a third time, for it never struck me that she could be jealous. "They've ne'er hed t' doctor, hae they?" And by the way she said "No," I judged she would liefer I talked of somewhat else.

I be thought me of seeing some childer that day eating potato peelings off the road; and when I spake of that the water was in her een directly. She was always tender-hearted over children; and she talked on while I pondered. I could make nought of her being so strange, unless it was that she feared I should want to let Abe have some of her money.

Now at that I was down-hearted more nor a little. I had not thought of such a thing, for it was her money and not mine, and so was every penny that I won. What irked me was, that she should be so blind to my love and duty toward her as to think that I wanted to man it in the house. I could not rest for grieving over it; and all that day I did little but walk in and out, shaping what to say to put it straight. She was forced to see that somewhat ailed me, but she never once so much as looked in my face. At last I

marched in and began on it straightway.

"Mother," I said, "I cannot endure it!"

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I called to mind at after, that she looked at me through her spectacles with a kind of fright. Poor little mother! I had a terrible rough way at that time if ought jaeged me. She just looked up from her mending or darning, or what, and opened her mouth to speak, but said never a word.

"Ye judge me amiss, mother; I can see ye do," I said. "Now, when I asked ye a week or two sin' if t' money were getting done, what for did ye think I wanted to know?"

As soon as I had spoken I rued; for there came a little flush on her cheeks, and I could tell by the shaking of her fingers that she was flustered. But, being set on a wrong tack, I was satisfied none when she answered me.

"John, there's *plenty* o' brass," she said. "Eh, how thou startled me! Thou s'ouldn't do so."

"Mother, I want to know nought about it one way or another," I said. "It's thine, mother, and I've nought to do wi' it Never think 'at I shall meddle. I cannot bide ye to think me so mean."

"Nay, John!" she said gently. "Thou'rt mistaen. It's none that 'at troubles me. But I think ... thou brings too mony o' these rabbits, John. I'd liefer thou brought none at all! I would. They cannot be reight come by. They are not. Thou knaws they're not."

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I thought this was all that ailed her, and my trouble melted. "Eh, mother," I said; "ye've no 'casion to fear. I shall do nought to shame yo'."

She shook her head, and sighed, and said no more. She was never one that talked much. But I should have heeded more what she did say, if, a day or two at after, I had not chanced to see somewhat for myself. I was seeking a pot of dubbin on the top shelf of her cupboard. There I lit on my father's old lead tobacco jar, took it in my hand and

lifted the weight out. In below the weight was a guinea and a ten-shilling piece.

I made no doubt that that was all her store; for, whatever she might say, we had latterly been "drawing in." Porridge made with water is good eating, but it cannot be mistaen for porridge made with blue milk. Had she been helping Elizabeth, and feared to let me know? I laughed to myself when I thought of it, and, I believe, had she been in the house, I should have telled her straight about my sweethearting. However, I took another way.

That night we had a long talk; and, all the time, I was held back by a make of joyful excitement and swamousness (shyness) from showing what was in my mind. And yet I had never seen her so contented since my father died. But finally, when we had fallen silent a time, I said to her:

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"Mother, we munnot let Elizabeth go short, if they need ough."

And then she cried, "Eh, my lad, thou talks a deal about Elizabeth."

It was on my lips to tell her, but like as she took me at unawares. So she went on.

"A body might a'most think ye aimed at courting, if ye were owd enough for such matters. ... Thou munnot let *her* think so, John. Young lasses are quick to fancy things."

It thrust a chafing bit across my tongue. I shall be thought easily cast down when I tell that I partly cried myself to sleep that night, like a young wench. But, how it be, I seemed now no better nor a make of stranger in my own home; and yet I was like a wench again in waking with a cheerful heart.

Nay, it was out of these moidering talks with my mother that I gathered nerve enough, at last, to go boldly in and satisfy my een with a sight of Elizabeth. I could bide no longer away. Besides, to keep walking past her door, with my een slyly glimpsing, had gotten to be shameful. So, one fine afternoon, with my heart going like a slay-board, I pushed it open and cried as if nought were, "How's thy father getting on, 'Lizabeth?"

I heard her cross the chamber floor, and begin to come down, and I think I was never nearer running

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away in my life. For I be thought me of what she had happen heard me say, in my excitement. So when she gat to the bottom of the steps, I had no more to say for myself than a little lad caught in an apple tree.

Ah, but I was glad next minute. I could tell rarely that she was fain to see me, for all she gave me but one look; I could tell by the way she cried out (hardly to be heard) and then moved a step or two toward me. But oh! the swift, rosy prime and dayspring of her modesty that feared me!

"There is a thing I will not show. There's John, father," she said; and I saw that he was laid in the shut-up bed anent me. Then to me she said, with a seeming timidness, "He's thankful to yo' for finishing his piece."

He could move his head, and he managed just to say, "Ay;" but it was a queer, shaking voice that brake in the middle; and his face had changed.

"He cannot talk," she telled me.

The picture of his helpless plight, and the thought of hers, brought me sharply back to my right senses; and I found somewhat to say to hearten him. It was better to have befallen then, when there was no work to be done, than in a thronger time, I said; and it was a gradely thing that he had somebody to do for him, while he needed. (For this, poor wench, she paid me with a smile; but it was a pale April smile, shining

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doubtfully from tearful een.) According to all I could hear, I said, he should be about again in a month or six weeks; and then he must take things quietly. There would be *some way* of doing. The best he could do for himself was to keep fro fretting: there were plenty that would not see him want.

And it seemed that Binnie had sent the doctor to him; and this had eased Elizabeth's mind. "If he could but hae plenty of good food," the doctor had said, "and be kept in a cheerful way like, he'd need to take no medicine. It was a simple matter; but he must be patient. If he strave to do more nor he could do, he might get a backening." But

she was best pleased with some bobbin-winding that Binnie had found for her. She brought it to show me, and said how much she had done in two days, and seemed every way so blythesome over it that I could do nought but look at her. Now this visit eased my mind as well as hers; but after it I could not bide in the house with my mother.

I lighted a bit offer on Weasel than I might have done otherwise, for about this time he was seldom seen in Cragside, or in any of his haunts. "There's a reward out," he telled me; "and aw want no bother wi' Sammy, tha sees. For aw willn't be taen, nawther by him nor nobody else."

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"Tha mun cower quiet, then," said I.

"Aw'll do my heels as stight!" he cried in a savage way. "What, aw 're i' Colne yesterda', reight ameng 'em. There's not a man i' twenty miles round wi' *wit* to tak me."

I know not that I ever heard him brag but then; and he was furious at this reward, 'ticing men, for brass, to play false with a mate.

But when we had said our say about such tactics— which I will not write down, because it was not all wise talk— he came back to a pleasanter mood. "Aw'll tell tha what aw did at Colne," he said, and burst out with a bit of a laugh. "Tha knows they hed Pash?"

"Ay." Pash was one of his cronies. They had taen him one night afore he had done ought. He had stood and let them search him, and of course they had found pegs and snares in his pockets.

"Ay; but now they're seeking him again," said Weasel.

"Oh?" said I. "How's that?"

"Two on 'em swopped him for an owd coat." And when I had marvelled a time over this saying, he made it plain.

For doing nought but aim to do somewhat, Pash had been doomed to bide in the hole for six months. "Nay," said Weasel, when he heard it, "That s'all *niver* be." So on Friday, the day they always took

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any prisoners to Leeds, he was in the George yard, where the coach loaded up. Talking to the hostler, he saw this old coat lying in a corner.

"Sam," he said, "what's ta want for this?"

"Tha'll none wear 't" Sam answered him. "There's no laps."

"No, but happen Pash will." "Why, tak it if ta thinks he will," says this hostler. "He's welcome to't."

Two constables came marching up to the coach with Pash between them, handcuffed.

" 'Day to yo'," says Weasel to the three of them. "Pash, lad, aw've brought thy coarse-weather coat, thy dreadnought, or whatever tha calls it." And he held it up. It had been a right driver's coat, yellow and stylish, but there seemed so little left, and that little so forlorn-looking, they all laughed. However, Weasel had made a little cough afore he spake to Pash, a quiet signal they used in their poaching when either smelt mischief, and wanted to warn his mate.

"Nay," says one of the constables, "*that* isn't going to Leeds."

"Now, be quiet, says Weasel, walking up to Pash; "it's all t' coat he hes; and it's cowl eniff to-day to freeze t' nose off a brass monkey."

So after a bit of bother, one of them took this coat from him, while the other loosed the handcuffs on

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Pash; and then all four set off for an uphill race on to Colne Moss, where they lost one another!

For cunning boldness, that trick looks to me like a thing to be read of in some old tale, and I cannot but wonder what he would have done if it had miscarried; for certain it is he was not to be baulked. But it was none like to miscarry, except somebody had known him. That was what he risked. Now, there were some in Cragside jealous-minded enough to rejoice at this reward, and yet they received ought that Weasel gave them. I will not say they would have betrayed him; but they took gradely care to have no hand in helping him. For what little *I* did I had to suffer, and that bitterly, yet sooner

than do as they did, I would beg my bread.

At this time about, she that I doated on began to show fear for me. I saw it (and somewhat beside), one morning just upon Christmas, when I took her a couple of fat rabbits that I had skinned and fettled, ready to put in the pot. I judge she fancied there was somewhat strange at seeing me come in by the back door; but I had aimed to be with her alone.

There she was, with her bonny round arms bare, at a steaming wash-tub; and by the way she stood up to it, you could tell what a marvellous solid, tight-made wench she was, with all her quiet ways. For she was one that hard work nourished and brightened. I stood

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a time in the door-hole, watching her with a sly delight unbeknown; and my een missed nought of her trim shapeliness that could help to peark my pride. I might well be proud for ever after, too, when I thought of how, as soon as she turned and saw me, the rose blush in her cheek flamed over all, and then, when I had her in my arms— striving nought against it, but with her pretty head drooped— faded clean away to a paleness like hawthorn blossom. For I did clasp her at last, being drawn beyond myself, and past measure wrought upon by the strong magic of her loveliness.

"Nay, John," she said, very low and sober-like, and in a gentle way denied me. But I was at such a pass that the chill of that word seemed bitter, and I whispered, "Lizzie, I cannot bide! I love tha, Lizzie; I do nought but think on tha, neeght and day."

She partly let me draw her in again, but as I did so, she lifted a pale face, and her een were brimming. Some way, my heart sank, and stopped.

"What is there, Lizzie?" I asked her. "Are ye pledged?"

She answered, "No," looking at me steadily; and a touch of colour came back to her cheeks. "I've never thought o' nobody but ye, John," she said.

Now, surely this was right modesty, nought else; yet though she laid her head utterly on my shoulder, in under my beard, my heart was unsatisfied. I could

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not see that she had much joy of it, and my own joy was killed. It is a strange memory to this day, that I heard her tell she loved me, and felt little but wonder, compassion, and fear; till, holding her so, the warm tide of love came back upon me like sleep, and I lifted her sweet face, and kissed her for the first time. Ay, then I knew that she loved me; and such a joy of assurance welled up in my heart that a giddiness took me, and I bowed myself before God Almighty, with a great yearning of gratitude.

I know not if other courters be so, but we could oft stand contented with never a word between us; and this we found out that happy morning. Yet I judge the happiest time for me was when she put up her arm about my neck, and her face shyly against my ear, and whispered close, "I never meant to tell ye, John, but ye made me." At that I kissed her over and over again, laughing-keen to see her shamefaced. Now, there I was proud with good reason; but I doubt if all that will read this tale deserve to know of it.

Time speeds jealously with all courters, that is sure, and full hours passed look like grudging minutes. But when there is work a proper wench will court and catch up again; and she can do it with a man hindering her— what men would never do if women wooed. Yet that first time, I felt as much guilty as capt (astonished), when she cried out of a sudden that her

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water was all cold, and darted away like as nought were between us.

She telled me it was dinner-time; but she looked so bonny saying it that I cared not for forty dinner-times. However, it made me think of her rabbits; I rolled them out of the clout I had brought them in; and at this sight her face fell sober again.

"Have ye taen 'em?" she asked me.

I said; and then she came to me, and put her hand on my arm, and reddened while she spake.

"Eh, John! Is't not thieving? I thought Weasel took 'em."

"Thieving? Nay, how can that be, when they're wild?" said I: for that was, and still mainly is, our way of thinking, though the law be otherwise.

"Eh, but there's no 'casion," she said. "We've plenty without."

However, I knew different; and besides, it was a way of showing my love.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE KILDWICK MURDER

If I could sink all but what had been joyful in my life, I should get on a deal faster, and be better pleased with this writing. I shall have to ease my mind, and freely own that it is the heaviest job I have faced yet, whether for my intellect or my heart. Now, I partly knew when I started that it must be so, and I said that I was like a man engaged to mow a twenty-acre field single-handed. But that would be simple. I seem to be mowing in a magic meadow, for though I cut a clean swathe as I go, lo! if I look back upon it, I have left three parts of the grass standing; and I am meadless whether to drive on or begin again. Such slovenly labour is just what I could never thoil to see, and it sets me near frantic; yet if I try to mend it I am done; for I get on so slowly with my bad mowing, that what looked like twenty acres is now grown in my mind to the size of a parish.

But I shall finish in a way, if my life be spared, for

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the toil draws me to it again. It seems I did but stop for the forenoon drinking.

Were it for my own reading just, this chronicle should be all Elizabeth, and finish it I never could, and never would. Nay, I need never leave the sweet revealing prime of my days with her, when I was like a man that should walk for the first time in woods and fields on a spring morning, if he had never looked till then upon the world's beauty. For would he not tremble at the expanse and bright wonder of it, as I did; and would not all dim secrets of the woods amaze him—the first bare flush of bluebells, the beseeching breath of tiny violets, and all manner of pretty buds and sproutings, like to a lass's thoughts? It is plain to me that he would be near to lose his wits; and so was I.

For to me it was better nor so. I had always in mind the promise of greater and holier joys; every kindness and every shy forbidding gave me to feel it. And my world's

beauty was a living, true-hearted, warm-breathing wench, loving me with the same love that I owned for her, but a love so veiled and overblushed with these wild-flower modesties, that if haply I gat a peep in beneath them, it was ever a fresh wonder.

But I judge that if I said much the men-folk would think me fond, and the women-folk be happen jealous;

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and so, as we say in Crag-side, "I mun cower quiet." I was content, and that is enough to tell. I fretted at poverty none, except when I looked ahead (and for that matter there was a bit more work to do after Christmas nor had been, so I could hope for a good time coming); I did my poaching with a light heart; I never troubled my head about Weasel's outlawry; and politics was almost "become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

That March there came a wind into my life that near stripped it. Some think I walked out into this wind foolhardily, and that I had no occasion to face it. However, I can but show the way on't.

I went with Weasel one night to see him use a net. He had it a time to keep for a man in Sutton parish he partly mated with— a butcher, that used to carry their rabbits to market in his dog-cart, when they had enough to sell. I had never seen a net till then, and this was a grand one, all silk, and so finely made that I could not at all think it strong enough for such a service. There were fifty yards of it, and yet, when it was rolled up, he could put it in his pocket and find room for other stuff. I believe he said that it cost £16 new. It was either £16 or £18, and he talked as if that were less than like.

We were bound for a spot no farther nor four miles away, but ill to get at unless we went boldly; for the

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river Aire had to be crossed, and it was out over the level ings, leaving no choice thereabouts but to pass by the stone brig that carries the main road across.

Otherwise we should have passed by a little wood brig, two or three hundred yards higher up. However, we gat across unchallenged, and for ought I know, unwatched; but

any way, I judge there was little hazarded, for it was then but ten o'clock.

Now, for any that know not this country, I must tell how the land lies, and that may soon be done. Our Cragside beck runs slanting down into Aire, but between them there is that hill where we saw the badger; and it narrows down into a long, low wedge, keeping them apart till a good piece below the stone brig. So from the beck side we had struck over this low wedge; and we had seen the ings first from the rig of it. Whether we looked up or down the valley of Aire, there were gray patches of flood water.

It was still night, and starlit only. The steeple clock of Kildwick Parish Church¹ sang out marvellous clear from the far side over anent us, and the hills on that side showed full black aboon the flood. You might see a man's face well if he were at arm's length, and hear his coming half a mile off. The water made a rare soughing just under the brig.

Weasel had agreed with a lime-burner on that side,

¹This is the "Lang Kirk of Craven."

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by the name of Sleek, to meet at a stone delf aback of the Lang Kirk, nigh to Kildwick Hall, and thence to creep along the black hillside as far as their netting spot. This was to be higher up the valley, about a mile fro Kildwick Brig, and two miles fro the next stone brig, at Cononley. We sat in the ling and waited better nor half an hour. It was full early. There were doors opening and shutting down in Kildwick, and a light or two in the windows.

When there is a moon you can look straight back from this hillside across that badger hill, and see Cragside out beyond it just against the sky-line—that is, you may if you know where to look, for it makes but a gray scar on the uplands.

A little thing may appear curious to any that know no more nor I did—it seemed to me that a dog came up out of the darkness and just sniffed at my boots. "Did ta see that?" I said low to Weasel. "It's reight," he answered me. "That's t' best powcher ameng us."

"What, hes he comed wi' us?" I asked; for I could make nought of it.

"Ea, for seur he hes," Weasel said.

So then he telled me all about this dog. "Tha niver noticed him, aw see," said he. "No; nor nobody else, aw's wager. There's one 'at says he's dead."

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"Dead?" said I, nearly ready to think it might be so.

"Ay, him 'at owns him reckons he is." But of course it had never been Weasel not to make a mystery of a simple matter. The dog belonged to a farmer on Cragedge, one of Hardaker's tenants, and Hardaker had threatened to turn him out of his farm unless he shot it. Instead of doing that he kept it fastened up, and *said* he had shot it. However, any that it knew could get it when they wanted. They had nought to do, Weasel said, but go whistle for't: it would potter out some way, being keen for sport. It was a sensible dog, part collie, part greyhound.

Sleek, when he came, peered hard at me afore he spake. I had never been with him, and I doubt if he knew my name when Weasel telled it.

"Well, aw fully thought it were Lang Jim Bailey," he said.

I was young enough to feel flattered, for Lang Jim Bailey's name as a keeper was never scoffed at. But Weasel answered him sharply.

"What, and aw'd letten tha walk up and niver said a word!"

"Well— "

"Telled him just wheer to wait for tha. Nay, Sleek!"

So Sleek said no more. He had but little talk

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being slow-witted; still, Weasel thought adeal of him, because, he said, Sleek would always go through a hayrick sooner nor round it. He meant not in less time, but that Sleek would choose that way, liking it best. He was a thick-set man of Weasel's height. But for my part, I think Weasel was worth three such.

Nearly as soon as we came together, Sleek and I began to fratch. He handed to Weasel what turned out to be a gunstock, and let himself down the face of the delf. It

was a fearsome thing to do, even in daylight. He said that he knew the way; but to hear him feeling for a hold with his shoe-toes, and little stones rattling down into the bottom, was uncanny. I could not have guessed what he wanted there. He came up with the gun-barrel in his mouth. Now, when he began to spit out the taste of it, and to say that it was rusty, but no worse, I looked at what he had left with Weasel; and I said,

"What's that for?"

They both made believe that they had not heard me, and went on fitting barrel and stock together; till Weasel said, in his dry way, "It's to shoot wi'."

"Shoot what?" said I.

"Wha nowght, lad; nowght, to-neeght," he answered. "We cannot see to shoot to-neeght."

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I saw not just why, in that case, Sleek should burden himself with the gun at all then. So I said, "That'll do. I mean to do my bit o' poaching fair."

I am willing to think, now, that Weasel gave me a true answer. Stock and barrel had both been hidden since last back-end, and Sleek had picked a dark night to get the barrel up, for fear of spoiling a good whishtspot. Happen he hoped to get a shot at a bird after daylight; but I do not think he rightly meant to use the gun otherwise. However, when I talked about fair doings, he looked up.

"Tha sounds like a soft lad," he said. "They'd shoot thee and transport tha at after."

So I said, "I know not what tha sounds like."

Weasel sware at us between his teeth. "Hod your din!" he said, "gaumless!" But he took a chance to whisper to me, "It'll not be loadened. Tak no notice." And that set my mind at ease. Yet I well recollect that as we sat, waiting on and ruminating, a keen stound shot through me at the sight of a point of light, glowing fro some window away in Cragside. We seemed to me to be forlorn.¹ ...

But when we moved on to the venture I had a quiet heart in my breast, as at other times. There was not

¹Some lines have been painstakingly erased after the word "forlorn." In such a passage this lacuna may, in respect of all that follows, be thought unfortunate.— J. K.S.

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more than half a mile to go. We dropped down into a lane there is, and followed it a piece. There was no din made— all quiet as mice. We kept to the grass on the high side, and never once spake till just getting agate. Then under a young plantation on that side Weasel stopped, with the net in his hand, and looked round for Sleek. We had to wait a minute or two for him. He had loitered; and he could be heard clicking his gun as he came up.

It was easy to tell that Weasel was not suited. A less matter angered him at such times. He stood stock still for full another minute after Sleek had gotten there, looking at him over his shoulder.

"Hest-a done lakin' wi't?" he said. "Fix this end o' t'net, witta?"

So Sleek leaned his gun up against the bank, and gat to work; and Weasel started to run the net out along the bank side. They pegged down the bottom edge of it, and set it up like a cobweb fence. Then I saw what a gain there is in that way of doing, over using simple snares. For when we had drawn off to one end again, away went the dog at a sign, fetching a circuit on the low side of the road, and as soon as he had started, almost, I began to hear a great fittering. The net twitched and pulled like a living thing. They had nought to do but walk down it and kill, filling their pockets; and Weasel spun round on his heel

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when they had finished, and waved his arms like a dancing wench I once saw.

We had a warning of what was coming, fro this dog. He came bobbing against our legs, and trotted off, with a bit of a growl, under the wall.

"By gow, we're in for't!" said Weasel. "Whip that net up, ye two; aw'm for th' other end." And he went pelting down the lane. I could hear a crackling in the plantation.

Sleek shouldered me away fro the net. "Keep off!" he said. "Tha'rt clumsy's a bull. Damn tha, go farther down."

But afore we could fairly stir a hand to save ought, it was agate— a rumble of falling wall-stones, and Weasel "Hither to me, lads!" sang out.

We could see them skipping about, and there would be a knock or two as we ran in. One darted up on to the bank. It was Weasel: "Away!" he yells, "or aw'll crack yo'r skulls!"

I pulled up short as he flang a gurt stone at him that I had picked out. This man ducked under; but the stone strake fire out of the wall behind him, and Weasel on him like a dog, and sent him down I know not how. For, after Weasel, there jumped down out of the plantation a bigger man nor me, and felled my mate with a gun. The stock brake off against his head.

I gat my two hands at the big one's neck to throttle

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him. If he were alive, and nought but me and him in the world, I could find in my heart to do it now. But he thrust the broken end of the gun-barrel up against my face and my jawbone, I had to get a closer hod, and then we wrestled fair.

Now, he was the better man. I never want to meet another such. I had him clean cross-buttocked, and yet it felt like trying to pull a horse down; and he nipped his neives (fists) into my ribs till I thought they would crack. How it came I know not, but I was first nearly done, through treading on Weasel, and then with a scramble I gat a better grip. So at that I strave mightily, and threw him clean and hard; and when I gat my knee on him he loosed me.

I seemed to think then that it was overed and done with, because I had just thrown this one man; but not so! I felt a crack on my arm that instant, and when I jumped up he made to rise as weel; so I saw that I had two to face, and Sleek was throng with another—I could hear their feet. Then I be thought me that Sleek had left his gun.

I am tied (bound in honour) to tell what I did next. I used my foot to him that was getting up— and the other went backwards-way over Weasel as he lay there. That gave me my chance, as I reckoned; and I ran back for this gun. I meant to swing it

lustily.

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But when they came polling after me, the devil put it in my head to do a bit of clevering. I stood out in the road and shouted, "Stop, now! I'll shoosit t' first 'at stirs!" And as soon as they stopped, "Back wi' yo'!" I said, and pointed straight at the gurt one, for he was shifting about as if he aimed to dart in at me. Now, Sleek had loaded it; and it went off in my hands.

It was so, and no other way, that I killed him they called Lang Jim Bailey.

I was cheated for a minute, after the slash, by hearing more than one running; for ought I knew I had missed both; but I took the gun by the barrel end, and whirled it away in a fury. Then Sleek came up, wiping his face. "Tha's feared 'em wi' that," he said. "Goff! Aw wish *aw'd* hed it." Him I never answered; but started to see what ailed Weasel, for I judged that he was fettled. However, Sleek called after me:

"Wheer hest-a that gun?"

"Thy gun's down i' t' pastur', " I telled him.

I know not what he made of that, but as I was stooping over Weasel, listening for his breath and feeling his head, I heard Sleek give out a curse, and then he shouted, "There's one here." I was slow to mark his words; but in a minute he uttered a strange make of sound that drew me to go see what he had;

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and I know that my heart stirred queerly as I went. He rase up and took a step or two toward me.

"Now, young fellow," says he, "aw want that gun? Wheer is it?"

Somewhat in his way of asking gave me to know the mischief. He laid his hands on me and shook me.

"Dost hear?" he shouted. "Wheer's t' gun? damn tha, dost want me to swing as weel's thee? Wheer is it?"

"I flang it away," I answered then.

"What says ta?" he snapped at me. "Tha'rt bleatin'. Wheer? Wheer?"

I pointed, and he climbed over the wall to go seek it. I never saw him again. I know not why he gat leave to talk to me like that, but he did get leave. I potted about and found my handiwork among some wet rushes by the wall side. He was a stranger to me; I gat to know his name at after; but he seemed a gradely man. It was his face that I had shot. Some that are shot so live after it, but I could tell that he was done for. I could not bide near him, after a bit, and I stood off a piece, shivering. They might have ta'en me then, for I was full stupefied with misery, knowing there was nought to be done.

But that minute I saw a fearful strange thing. What started me thinking for myself was this: I looked round at the plantation, and there was my

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father's face as plain as if it had been daylight; only, while he lived I never saw him so sorrowful. As soon as I looked, it vanished. The hair on my head stiffened and lifted up.

There was little in my thoughts, after this sight, but to fly for home. I ran down to where Weasel lay, and tried to lift him, but my strength was wanting. I called once to Sleek; I dared not call a second time. So in a bit I managed to shift Weasel to the bank and get him on my rig; and after a stride or two my natural power began to come again. I made for the wood brig: the other I could not man.

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CHAPTER IX.

ONE ON MY BACK.

If Weasel had been master of himself, I should have been likelier to get safe home; for, being pursued, he had known how to double and turn till the scent was lost. Yet I was forced to take him with me, for all I knew no better nor to go straight. He was senseless, utterly, but he did breathe.

I made poor speed. I bare him well enough at first, but, going downhill across rough fields in such a darkness, I could hardly keep my feet at all, but slurred and staggered desperately, till he was sometimes nearly off my shoulders. I was most

bothered with walls, for they were ill to climb— high and loose-built— and I could use but one hand; and I made so much din, once or twice, that I cried out to God in my heart to let them wait for me at the stone brig while I went over the wood one. If they came after me, or gat a wind of where I was aiming for, they need be never at fault, I thought.

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I doubted none they were for after me. I heard them shouting one to another; and it stood to sense that when they found this Bailey lying dead, they would try to dog us. Yet if they had judged by our talk that we came fro the other side, as they must, it looked as they should dart for the main road— if I could but go pratty! So at every clatter, my heart stood still in my breast.

However, I had to cower at last, being mazy, and my legs shaking. If they had come then, it was in my mind to set Weasel down and face them, for they need never find him. But almost as soon as I stopped I had a feeling that I should see my father again; and the fear of that was keen. It happen kept me fro killing another; or being killed myself. Who can tell? There is like to have been a meaning in it, how't be.

I jogged on to the flood edge, and then I partly owned in my heart that I was done. I knew no more where I was than if I had never been within ten miles of that spot. The flood had changed all. I could discern a wall running out across it, and a tree or two; but I could not call them to mind; and I saw nought for it but to wade out by the wall side till I came to where the river should be, and then seek the little foot-brig one way or another. Now I doubted my strength, for I could but just stand up; and when I

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peered down into the water it flaed me more than need was, for it looked deep. The ings were flat, and the flood a little matter; but being spent, and without a reckoning, I seemed to be easily daunted.

As I stood caffling, ¹ a flock of sheep came galloping down a field behind me, and afore I rightly knew what was astir I went splashing forward. Then, of course, there was some baa-ing. However, that eased my mind none; for what set them off? I had

needgo more craftily!

Yet I dared not. If any man came behind them, it was ten to one the wood brig that he aimed for, and craft was vain. I could do nought but put on speed.

Water and the soft ground hopped me, as you may judge; but I gat as far as to the river, or near it, and at a hazard I tried down stream. I was feeling every step with my feet, and trembling like an old man, with fear, and haste, and feebleness. Out in the middle I turned back, thinking I must be wrong, and then I turned again, and so up and down till I cried out in a misery, and dropped, panting and pithless, on my hands and knees in the water, that came lapping into my beard. However, I contrived to keep him still on my back.

"Caffling," a term best known among lads at play, is commonly used to describe the act of backing out of a bargain or a promise

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Now I had been right when I took down stream first of all. I saw it almost as soon as I had wilted and fallen; for, me being lower, the tops of two trees that stood by this bridge showed against the sky. Eh, how I strave to rise again. But I had to go as I could. I found that a man may crawl when he cannot walk; and I laughed, in a way, as I went.

Not till my dying day shall I forget hearing them shout across the water. They shouted as joyfully as a tally-ho, and came plunging across to cut me off— not two, but four. I marvel at myself that I strained on.

It seemed a long time to their coming; but I could hear myself whining and moaning like a dog when he is terrified, and I knew they must win it. Then I stopped; for I saw that the brig was gone.

There was one man as near to me as five or six yards, and he laughed.

"He's trapped," he said. "Hollou! And his mate on his back."

I saw him stretch out his hands to take us, and then the water came over my head. Whether I had stirred, or the bank had crumbled, I cannot tell, but I sank clean away fro him down into the river; and, for all I could not swim, it slaed me no more nor

sleep coming on. I was fain to drown.

Yet, as soon as I thought so, my heart cried out in

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a dumb way of longing to see Elizabeth again, if only for once; and Providence, that had brought me through a worse peril, saved me fro this. The current rolled us athwart a bend, and we swept in among the branches of a strong young tree on the far bank. So I clicked, and held fast, and gat Weasel's head aboon water.

Now the crowning mercy of this deliverance was that it stopped them from pursuing. Under that tree we could not be seen, on account, I suppose, of the water being troubled and broken; and yet we swung round out of the river-bed so far, that my feet sank down upon firm ground. What was more, I knew then that the chase was ended; for I heard one shout to the others that they should go to the flood-gates, and they made off to get us there. So I had time to recover my wind.

But afore I rested, I drew Weasel out of the water to the hill bottom, and looked at him.

He had felt a deal heavier nor like, and he seemed to be cold; yet I never fairly thought him done for till I laid him down all dripping, and hearkened for any sign of breathing. At first he had drawn his breath no worse nor a man that snores in his sleep; but now he made no sound at all. I tried to hear his heart again, and rave open his waistcoat to make sure. There was a strong and steady throbbing; but

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it was too strong to be his— it pulsed in my own ears, that were full of water. However, when I laid my hand over his heart, I did partly satisfy myself that I could feel it move, and began again to cherish a little hope that my labour was not in vain.

While I kneeled by him, with no joy for my escape, I considered my way home. I must never let myself be seen, or I should spoil all; and I saw nought for it but to shun Hardaker Park, striking along over the badger hill and coming to Cragside roundabout It meant a gey rough journey; but I should stand less chance of running against either

keeper, farmer, or wayfarer on that moorland nor in the bottoms, and I believed I could man it. All against it was, that I must be in by morning light, and it was the longer way.

This would never have daunted me. A young lad that cannot bear a smaller man on his back at need, four miles in three hours or better, must be made of poor stuff. But my sin knocked at my heart now, all of a sudden. I remembered what I had done, and what I had a right to be called, and a sweat of blood guiltiness came on me like a foul dream. I saw, beside, that unless he had lost his cap in Aire water, I had left it to trace us by.

I would have given my right hand to know if Weasel could live. It seemed to me that if I took

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home a dead man I might as well give myself up. They would seek to know who brought him, and how could they miss but light on me? I put my hand up to the smart on my cheek, and felt it swelled, and my beard clotted stiff. I should be known by that—as Cain was by the branded mark on his forehead—wherever I went. And where to go I knew not, except I could make up some tale for my uncle in Lancashire. Now, if Weasel had been fairly dead, I might have put him back in the river, and chanced it, maybe.

So when I had looked at him again, and made nought out, all stood still within me. Nay, the darkness itself began to flae me, being fearful black and quiet, and I was so nipped by the cold that my teeth kept up a rattling.

It is a bitter thing, at a time like that, for a man to bethink himself of the lass that has shared his lovedreams. I laid me down and cried like one that can never be happy again. I must have lain so a longish time, for when I stirred again I was stark cold, and there was a puff of morning wind blowing.

By a deal of contriving I stood up at last with Weasel on my back, and started; but this time I never cared to look whether he was dead or alive. My mind was dulled, I judge. I can tell of nought that I did or resolved on my way; I have never been able to rightly trace the road I took, more nor to say

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that I went by the moor, and to partly own (identify) one or two spots where I bated. I know not what I held on for, either. For I was without care and without hope; and I believe my thought was, when I should have delivered Weasel at his own door, to go on to Colne Court-house and challenge the worst straightway. To my thinking then, there was no more in life for me to do but that.

This part of my journey is short to look back upon; but it appeared endless. And when I landed at last in the Scar, and after wading through the beck, staggered and went down at a pass where the footing is slape, I knew not that I could go another inch. I lost hold of Weasel and lay like a weltered ewe.

The night was gray by this with the coming light. In a bit I turned my een to look at him, and saw that he had fallen with his head in the running water. But if it had been his face I should never have troubled. There was a sullenness in my mind; and even while my heart was thumping at my ribs with hugging (carrying) him, I said to myself savagely that I would leave him where he was till somebody found him. The next of ought I knew, I wakened out of a dog sleep with a belief that I had heard talking. Somebody that might have been near enough to stand over me seemed to say, quick and eager-like:

"That's two. Who maks three?"

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I was on my feet in a crack; but nought to be seen. Night was done, and unless behind some bush, in that stretch of the Scar where I stood I could see well all that was. I guessed that it must have been Weasel: in his swoon he was still fighting.

When I had lifted him out of the water he opened his een, but there was no sense in his look; so I shook him, and at last he spake some words in a mutter, as if he would have me let him be, and made to put his hand to his head. I had no mercy on him; if I could bring him to his senses now, I thought there might be a chance for us.

"Weasel!" I cried, "dost hear me?"

"Give ower," he growled; but he spake in his right voice, and that made me suddenly merry.

"Wakken up, they're after us," I said. So he seemed then to find out where he was, and to wonder what ailed him. "We hed to come through t' river," I telled him. "Lang Jim Baile's killed."

By the way he looked at me, turning over on to his elbow, I judged that he was gaumless; I bethought me of a man I had seen in Burnley, that had gone about silly ever since he gat a crack on the head at Peterloo.

"Wheer's t' net?" he said.

I asked him if he had heard what I said; and presently he gat on his feet, taking hold of my coat

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"Ay," he answered me. "Aw heard tha. Did Sleek get t' net?"

I saw that he was rational, and it did not suit me that he put so much faith in Sleek. "I know nought about Sleek," I said. "I left him seeking his gun."

At that he looked me well in the face; but I would not eye him at all, and presently made toward home. I was sick of poaching, and poachers too. However, when I had climbed out of the Scar, and just as I thought of looking round to see what he would do, I heard him come after me. Stones falling into the beck let me know that he came hastily, and so I stopped.

"Wheer's ta bound?" he said, when he reached me. "Tha munnot show thysen like that! What, there'll be some astir."

"I care nought," I answered. "Look thou to thysen."

But he gripped me by the elbow, to drag me his way. "Tha'rt not fit to be seen," he said. "Dost want to flae folk? Now, be guided. Aw knaw best. We mun pike off some whither. . . . Niver say dee!"

Now, he might have taen me at my word, and left me to repent it. But it seems he read me so far, that I had a just grievance against this Sleek— if he did not know the weight of it; and what he said jumped

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with some of my own thinking. So I hearkened to his counsel.

"What for should I go wi' thee?" I asked him; and his answer settled it.

"To learn sense," he laughed, "and git me clapped up for being seen i' company wi' that face. Nay, John! Niver think aw s' leave a mate so, at after he's saved my skin. What the hengment!... Wheer's my cap?"

I could not tell him, and I came near hand to shedding tears about it. My face flamed over; I stood speechless, losing all pride in what I had done for him.

"Tha left it?"

"I do not knaw," said I. "But, happen it's i' t' river! It mud be i' t' river, tha knaws. ... Weasel, I'd no time to think on't."

And after pondering a bit, "Tsha!" said he, "we munnot freat. Caps is mich alike. If tha'd saved t' cap and left me, now—it wo'dn't ha' been wonderful; wo'd it?"

That put new heart into me, for all I dared not show it, chance he should see me woman-side out. I went with him. But still he had to let me slip in home, for I thought of what I should need to do, and he agreed, and advised me how to be cunning.

The sky was full of light, but I saw not a living

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soul. I cleaned my clogs well with grass afore I went in, and the first thing I did in the house was to lift some half-burned peats out of the grate, just as if I had come in while they were burning. The bite of supper my mother had put out for me I popped into my pocket. Then I found a bit of an old copy-book and wrate on it as if it had been yesternight, saying that, as Binnie was empty again, I had gone into Lancashire to see if I could addle there a few shillings. I left it on the table, and came away again with no more noise nor a cat makes. And I cared not if she asked Sammy himself to read it for her.

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CHAPTER X.
THE BLIND GHYLL.

Actually we were not bound for Lancashire. I named Lancashire to keep my mother fro fretting, and because it lies in a contrary direction to Kildwick; but Weasel had said that he knew of a "cowering spot," near at hand, where we might bide " as snug as ratten in a tree root," and yet know what went on.

Now to what we call the Scar, which is a kind of clough made when they washed for lime, the beck comes winding and prattling in the bottom of a deep gully from one end of the Crag. Ling, and grass, and small trees cover the sides of this trench, but there must have been a time when it was bare, for it is so heavily wrought into strange hollows, with sharp knowes parting and turning them, that nought can have quarried it, as I judge, but a great bog-burst, sapping the entrails out of the hill. Up this broken waste we posted, among the shadows of a clear morning. We spake never a word as we mounted,

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but whenever I looked up at the shining ground over anent, or the fiery edge of moorland straight ahead, or the brightness of the sky with larks singing in it, my heart quavered.

We were steering clear away fro the road I had come, so as to have the badger hill at our backs; for the beck comes down not out of that moor, but out of the moor on our side, where it is common land of the Lothersden folk. And at last Weasel struck up a little side stream that took us out of sight of all.

The course of this side stream is almost straight for near quarter of a mile. A wood stretched up at that day on either hand, and in front a sheer face of stone, with the water running out from under it. Who planted the wood, there is no telling: it was just a fertile no-man's-land sunk in the natural moor, worthless and outcast. I saw a bird there, that I had never seen the marrow of, and never have since; and there was a thick ravelment of dead undergrowth. They call this place the Blind Ghyll. But for all it was wild, Weasel found a track through it, trodden in and out among bare roots, and easy to follow, once it was seen. When we were little lads, we feared this ghyll, because Old Matty Moss, that made besoms and passed for a witch, cowered there to cal (gossip) with Beelzebub, so they said; and I had never been in it for that reason.

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A better spot he could not have picked, or a bonnier when the sunshine riddled it. I can call to mind, as plain as a picture, the green tree-stems, bright as new grass where the light touched them; and the mist of young twigs, the colour of wild thyme almost, that showed on the far side of the ghyll whenever we gat a peep through at it. Yet I have seen the Blind Ghyll in its winter wear but that once, I do believe. In summer it is bonnie, too, but with a different look.

We pushed right on up to the rock. It is as high as three or four houses, and I saw no way of climbing it, or out of the ghyll either. But when I looked at Weasel, he was considering somewhat on the other side, and there I spied a breath of blue rik (smoke) rising out of the undergrowth. He turned to me then. "Tha'll nut hae to be dainty," he said. "Come on. Shoo's noan stirred out yit." So we went down, and passed over the water on steppingstones, and winding round a piece as we climbed the bank, came to our hiding-place. Now this was where Old Matty Moss called¹ with Beelzebub.

She had no better door-hole than a rabbit has, bar that it was bigger, with some rotten plank-ends sticking out over it to keep the wet off. It went in low against

¹Pronounce to rhyme with "caballed."

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the rock. There was no louvre, ¹ so the smarting smoke met us stooping.

"What, Matty, ye're making a rare fume," cries Weasel, peering in. "Now, there'll be summat tasty doing, will theren't?" And in a bit I heard a quavering small voice answer him back heartily: "Eh, bless thy bonny face! Aw niver thowght to see't no more."

It was such a homelike welcome that I pitied her, living in nought but a warren. But me she had not seen till I crept in after him. I just gat a glimpse at her in a cloud of dark rik, a hunched-up little body tottering betwixt me and her peat fire; and then she flew at me, shrieking out like a pie-annet (magpie).

"Back!" she squeals, thrusting and riving with her cold, wizened arms all bare. "Go back!"— And afore I could turn round, she clutched me as a bat might do, arms and legs clipping tight, and I felt her bite my shoulder with a toothless nip. It was not a fright she gave me at first onset. My stomach turned at her, with a feeling I once had when I put my elbow on a toad. I shook myself, and she fell off like a bundle at my feet. I saw her little bald head as she went

¹"Louvre," an opening in the roofs or walls of ancient houses to emit the smoke, or for purposes of ventilation, is here used to mean "chimney."

[117] down— Weasel stooping to catch her— and I turned and scrambled out.

In a twinkling she was up and after me. She stood in the hole shaking with fierce anger, lifting her arms aboon her head. "Wach! Murderer!" she cried, and hissed like a trapped ratten at me. "Blood on his face. ... Not here! Nay, tha cannot touch me now!"

Weasel drew her cursing in again, and her voice still came to me out of the ground, overcrying his persuasions. But I can tell of little she said. I was in a mortal sweat of guilty fear. She knew; I saw in her een the certain knowledge. Why, then, thought I, one had speeded word of it, running on in front of me. It was known in the loneliest nook of the hills afore I could stir, and I saw myself all ways penned in and taken. Now, at this let none laugh, or think himself bolder-hearted, because murder will out, be a man never so cunning or close, and oft afore the time is ripe the strong terrors of God shall compass him about. My heart had scarce gotten leave to be glad, and the first living thing I met called me by my name!

Then it flashed on me that there must be witchcraft in it. Nay, it looked certain. Else how did she ken me, when I had never seen her till that day?

As soon as I thought on it my fear of others seemed a folly, and I began to hearken, for I might

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Yet be safe if Weasel could win her to a good mind. She had fallen to a moaning. Every so oft I could hear him say a word or two; but what he was saying, or whether she answered him, I could not tell. "Choose how it be," I said in my teeth, "I willn't live with her," and I marvelled that he should be so hardy. It was just then that I saw the strange bird. It flew swiftly in and out of Matty's, as if it nested there, and then popped on to a tree branch, and off again chattering. It had a topping like a peewit, and on its wing a little spot as red as sealing-wax. "Oh," said I, when it vanished, "there's waur birds nor craws, I see."

Now, all this will but show how gaumless I could be. When Weasel came out he said, "It's all reight. Tha can goin."

"Never," said I, and partly astonished him, I judge.

"What, tha munnot think owght o' that!" he cried. "Shoo's like to be so."

But I was the more astonished to hear him talk so lightly. "I'll live wi' no witches," I said; "no, not if folk shout 'Murder' through all Crag-side."

"Nay," quo' he, "Matty's no witch."

"How does she know, then?"

He laughed. "Shoo knaws nowght," he said, and half laughed. "Poor owd Matty!" And he made it

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plain to me that she was a woman not fully herself. I had heard nought of her young years, or I might have been quicker to see it. She had been turned out of her right dwelling, with two little ones; and she had taken it ill, being then but three or four months widowed. It seems she wandered wild and found this hole, and her little ones died in it, as they were like to do. I never heard a more pitiful tale in my life.

"Now aw've pacified her," Weasel said. "Shoo took tha for another, that's all. Tha's no 'casion to say a word."

When we went in again she was cowered on some peats, with her face in her hands. She peered out at me a minute, and then went on rocking herself back and forward. It seemed a marvel that a woman so full of years as she looked to be could have stirred herself so briskly. But she was sair spent with it, as you could see by her

way of rocking. "Nay, nay," she kept sighing out, and in a bit she looked up at Weasel: "Nobody knows but me."

"No, an' niver will," said he, for he knew her fears.

"They're safe."

"Under a tree," she nodded. "It's my grund, young man." This she said to me. "But I mun watch it. Ay, they come to me i' t' neet-time; they do. ... He says ye willn't drive me away."

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"Not I, mother," I answered her. "Never think so."

It is an eerie thing to hear such talk. "There's been snawdrops on't," she telled us; "grand uns, they wor!... But now they're withered. ... Aw niver touch nowght. Stuff grows as 't will. ... Eh, but aw thought ye'd corned to drive me away."

Weasel took little notice of what she said. I judge that he oft heard her talk so of her childer. He looked into her pot, and started to skin a rabbit straightway— all that was left in his pouch. She had her fire among some stones in the middle of the floor. It seemed to me a dangerous contrivance, for the floor was I know not how deep under bits of broom trodden down.

She let him do. He wanted no help. He knew just where her bit of salt and bit of pepper were, screwed up in papers among other bits of things, on a piece of a plank in one corner; and he found some onions too.

It was a strange living-place, not as big as I have known pig-sheds to be. I could see well the shapeless earthen sides of it by the dull burning of her peats and through the smoke; roots hanging fro the hollow roof, with aran-webs among them; a bundle of made brooms on a heap of ling, near where she sat anent me; an old tub or two, and some clouts.

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What I could not see at all was where among all that litter we could find room to lig. But I was too glad of the fire to care much. Weasel, being hardened against wet more

than I was, made little of his damp clothes; but I had been taken with a shivering gird. I know of nought to be said for Old Matty's cave but this, that it was dry.

When the broth was ready Weasel would sup none. He tried a spoonful, but no more, and then stretched himself out on the ling. So as soon as Matty gat to know what ailed him, nought would do but she must make him a poultice of herbs and he must wear it. For my part I ate and drank greedily, and fell asleep after, where I sat, being too far done to heed him. But whether her herbs were good for him, or whether his skull was hard, he felt no more of his hurt but a dulness, and a trembling in one of his hands.

Nobody that has never tried it can understand what a weariful time we passed. We had no more to liven us nor an urcheon has in winter-time, but sleep we could not. You may know what my thoughts were at. I gat so downhearted that I was oft in a mind to deliver myself up and end it, and so timid, that I could not take my een off the foot-road out on the other side, whether by day or night. By day I kept watch in the throat of the cave, peering

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into every dim thicket; at night I sat once or twice outside in the black shadow of the rock, starting at every bit of a rustle, and tormented with fancies till dawning. The worst was not to know whether the seekers had come to Crag-side.

As for Weasel, he took it very quietly. He spake hardly a word to me, either bodeful or comfortable, but lay and smoked his pipe all day; and the most I could make of him was that he feared nought where we were— he never so much as looked out. We had talked all over, the first night, sitting out under the rock together; he had milked me dry with questions then; and I believe we never spake of it again. Yet it is a certain thing that his mind was thrang; for, even when Matty came in of a night from her hawking, he had little to say for a man so witty.

I think it was the third morning that he began to be restless.

"Aw wish tha'd come in fro t' door," he cried to me. "Tha makes it fearful dark i' t' hoil."

So I went in and sat me down; and then he flang himself over, with his face to the wall.

"Hest-a telled Matty?" I asked him. "She brings no news."

It was but a somewhat to say; I never doubted that he had warned her; and when he answered me

"No," ill-tempered-like, I left him alone, amazed.

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However, he sat up directly. "What's t' use o' telling her?" he said.

I saw then that he was wise. Still, I asked him would she not happen slip a word of our being there?

"Nay, nut shoo," he said, and went out and stretched himself in the sun, as if nought mattered. But at night, when she came in, I could see that he guided her talk, to hear if haply she had met with a rumour; and being baulked, he spake no more to her. She had been away in Lothersdale, and she was no gossip.

Now, that same night my dog-watch slackened; sleep weighed on me, and keeping waken seemed a foolishness. My head dropped on my arms as I sat, and I lifted it but once. When next I knew ought, I was being shaken by the shoulder roughly; but that did not fairly rouse me till I heard Weasel laugh.

"Wakken up!" he cried, and thrust me off my perch with his knee. "*Gaw-y'-on, tha'rt* a noble sentry. Aw'm noan safe wi' tha, aw can see."

If he had suffered me, I should have lain where I fell; I cared so little. But he kept on shaking till I showed temper.

"Aw knew aw'st wakken tha," he said then. "Aw'm off, dost hear? Aw'm leavin' tha."

"How's that?" said I.

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"Let me hae thi cap:" he took it off my head. "Tha'rt poor company, and aw'm stalled (tired) on tha. ... Tha'll see me agean afore tha wants me." And with that he was gone.

He would have been welcome to go while I slept; but, then, I should have

wondered strangely— not knowing when to look for him back. I wakened no more till the sun was hot on my head.

Matty was at home, making up besoms, and I put the time on learning to help her. She was no way fain of my help; I had to learn all by watching, for she would teach me nought, unless by grumbling at what I did. But there were some parts of the job that I managed better nor her stiff old fingers could, and these at last she did let me do for her; ye see, I worked that way without getting to know her trade.

Mark you, she was a cute old woman, not near so crazy as my queer welcome made her look, nor so ill to live with. Her way of talking about her childer was strange, because it sounded as if they had died but latterly, and yet there was no sign of tears on her, but only a cunning and bitter sadness. Still, she knew her own know, and reckoned up other folk very sharply, I thought; but as for her witchcraft, that was a tale, good to flae mischievous lads away. Now, I made sure for myself that she had kept her mouth shut about us. We were praising Weasel:

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"Nobody gaums where we are now," I said; and she looked at me keenly out of her little red een.

"Nou, they willn't!" she answered. "Nor aw cannot tell what ye corned for."

"No mak o' harm to ye, mother," said I.

I laid me down in Weasel's place at night, with a better spirit. The smell of the ling set me thinking of Elizabeth, and the lightsome days we had lived when we were lad and lass, up on the Crag; and it came then into my mind that if this jeopardy would pass, I could some day like to tell her it. Now I once knew a man that left off courting a wench because, he said, he did not feel free to let her know his ill deeds; and I judge him a wise one. I did but think on that comfort, and my trouble melted and passed off like an April cloud. I should be no murderer to her, I knew well. Nay, I was tied to show her, by all I should do and all the strong love I bare toward her, that I could not be such a man. Thinking so, I lay and planned as if the ash of Matty's peats were glowing on my own hearthstone; and in that childish way I went to sleep.

Weasel wakened me again in the gray of the morning. "Hollou! Tha sleeps

leeghter to-neet," he said. "But it's time to be up, lad." And when he had lighted his pipe among the embers he beckoned me to come outside.

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"Well," he telled me, "they're after Sleck, kee. And they've gitten t' net and t' gun. Here's thy cap— aw've nailed one o' Pash's, 'at doesn't fit near so weel."

I put it on, with an idea that he meant us to set off some whither. But he sat him down on a tree root, like a man that means to settle. "Eh-h-h!" says he, "aw've nut hed a smoke sin' yesterda'."

I asked him, "Are ye for doing nought, then?"

"He had a way of staring with his mouth open. No," he said, when he had looked at me so a time;" aw'm for resting a bit. . . . *Tha'rt* all safe for a day or two: cower tha down. They're raking t' river for me and thee."

"Dost think," I asked him, " 'at Sleek hes my name?"

Now Weasel's thought had jumped with mine. For he answered, "Nay, aw knawn't But if aw could finnd him aw'd gie him a dummy!"

All day I sweated in fear of the gallows, or felt my heart near bursting with good-byes; and at night there came such a deadness on me that I cared no more for any living thing. I sat me down then close by the beck, and pondered on nought but the big bass voice it had, where it grumbles all night in-under the rock.

Yet I could sleep when daylight showed again;

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and after sleeping I said to myself, "Happen they willn't catch him."

But I cannot see that it much benefits any man to tell him all these mangy quaverings. It looks as if I were no better nor a make of spaniel dog, fit to crawl all my life on my belly. I shall be quit, I think, if I own that I was never myself while I skulked with Matty, waiting for my face to mend. A man may set so much store by his life that it is a burden and a shame.

If I had but considered, Weasel showed me a manlier mood. He went about as at

other times. I saw no more of him after wakening that day till I had slept in a bed. He gat us what we should need in the way of food— some moorcocks, a hare, and three or four small beck-trout, taken all with his hands in one clever way or another— and then he vanished again, this time to look for Sleek.

What cured me was to find myself in two minds about going back, when Matty brought me word that the shed was agate. But understand me well: I do not say that I thought to forsake my nest. Nay, I could never have begun to write with that on my mind. I should be offald then, I think; folk would have leave to say that I had cheated Jack Ketch. But till I came to this pass, and saw myself thrust upon dangers that I had so long been counting up, I

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do confess that it never dawned on me to man them out for others' sake.

"I'll see th'end on't," I said then.

But Matty's parting was full as strange as her greeting had been. It was a Sunday, and she sat out in the sun, smoking tobacco— for she had a little black pipe, like an Irishman's. When I bade her good-bye, she was so slow at answering me that I had near started unsped; but at last she gave a manner of long grunt. "Tha'rt a gradely lad o' somebody's," says she.

"What mean yo' by that, mother?" I asked her.

"Why, tha mun let none tak tha fro her!" she said; and then she partly rase up to stretch her arm at me. "They'll show no mercy. Lang tha'll rue't"

I feared her again. I did, fairly. I cannot show you what make of wildness gleamed sharp and sudden inher wizened face, and shook her lifted finger.

"Aw've rued it. Flint hearts, all on 'em! Murderers!" She laid her hand on me, blinking, and took her pipe fro her chin to whisper. "Shave not thi beard, my lad, and talk wi' thi mouth shut. They'll be after tha. Oh, aw s' see tha agean." And then she seemed to laugh, and wagged her head.

There was a true word in her talk; but if I had known it, I should have fared happen worse nor I did.

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CHAPTER XI.
HUE AND CRY.

Now, my mother doated on me. If I had ever forgotten it, I saw it when I gat in home; and it both shamed and flaed me. I could almost have wished that I had been a loveless ill-doer all my life. Yet I judge that that would have made no odds; because she doated no less on the others, for all the little they did for her. It could but have hardened me.

My coming was timed so that I found her spelling out her Bible by the window, as her way was if she missed chapel. Seemingly she saw nought strange in me; howbeit, I never looked at her fairly, or said more to her than if I had been for a walk. Partly she herself was troubled at being without fire when I came. Up she jumped in a gladsome fluster and began straightway to kindle a fire. Always quick to do what needed, she was; not like some women, that deave a man with talk afore he can pass the doorstones.

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At first I saw nought one way or another. I was over fain to slip through to the back and fall to washing myself, and then up into the chamber to change my clothes. But when I was dressing I heard her agate with the tinder-box, and bethought me. I went then to help her; and chided her.

"Eh, mother! Whatever are ye doing wi' no fire i' t' house?"

The tinder was damp. There could not have been a fire for days! She watched me till I gat a sulphur match burning, and then said that she had not known when I should come back home: she had fully thought I should stop at my uncle Zephaniah's. Elizabeth knew nought, it seemed.

"Why, but ye'll get your death!" I telled her; and when all was said, I found that her peats were low, and she disliked to borrow. So there upon I confessed my empty pockets; and it must seem that her cheerful way of answering made me a right hypocrite.

"Never freat, my lad," said she. "Tha's done thy best, aw knaw."

A hypocrite I was tied to be, yet I had never seen it till then. And I shammed sleepiness after tea, so as not to go with her to chapel at night; for aboon all else I could not face my innocent wench!

Ay, marry, I was fain to be left to myself. Afore I saw *her* any more, I had to consider well my way.

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Bitterly I rued what had been between us; bitterly called to mind every proof of her honest liking, bitterly many a winsome word of mine in her ear. It needed no pondering to bring them back; I had gotten all by heart in my first night-watches, every one a fresh stab, and oft at times when my mind was firmer they had suddenly wrungmy tears. And now I said within myself, "No more! I've given her my last kiss. I will not utterly break her heart. ... If by any mercy it be not done!" And I cried out loud, "Oh, poor, bonny lass! God make it easy to her! For she's done nought amiss at all."

On my knees, just where my father had used to kneel, I pleaded desperately for that much forgiveness. "O Lord," I said, "Thou knowest that I have killed a man, but not aiming to do so; save not me if I ought to die, but take my life. Look only in mercy upon her, and pity her—so she may forget me quickly, before I be taen. Not for myself I ask it, but just for her: and it is a little matter! So if there be any other, able to cherish her as now I cannot, let her be drawn towards him; for she can sorrow then over me and not be heartbroken." Ay, I went that far.

But I prayed not aright, though it seemed that fro my father's chair must be heard;— I was asking for a light punishment, and that without a thought of my nearest duty.

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Yet it eased me, and I did not see till after how much I asked amiss. I could sit and talk pleasantly with my mother that night, and wait for all else to fall quiet, till I might go pratly (noiselessly) to look at where Elizabeth lived. There were but one or two lights in chamber windows when I slipped out, and her window was dark. I know

not that I wanted to see it otherwise. I stood anent it a fair lang time, and then I drew off a bit under a laithe-porch, for fear she might be wakeful and look out.

It was a cold night, and the wind kept rattling her door-sneck. I know I felt glad to think she was sleeping warm. I was fain to be so near her, as well. I thought, "She'll be sound, like a little one, with her cheek on her hand; and afore she slept she'd pray for me." I could not think any sorrow was like to come to such a sweet wench. It seemed a grand thing that I had bethought me of a way to help her.

I count it no shame to tell that the water ran continually down my cheeks; for I took little notice of it, being fully minded to see her no more. And it was but a desolate fashion of parting, never to tell her that I did so to her because I knew she loved me! I said, "When I'm taen, she'll know how it stood. She'll see I did not play false with her. She'll see I wanted her to take it less to heart." But if I speak truly, I never fairly tried, at this time, to think how she

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would endure it. I saw not that I could do other; and I turned my mind fro that, in a way, and just stood with my heart aching, and looked at her window.

The sharpest was when a kittling that she owned came mewing, and rubbed itself against me. I picked it up and stroked it on my cheek, and it purred and settled on my shoulder. It purred, but I could do nought but sob, I was so fain to see it.

In my trouble I talked to it. "Thou'll be sorry, willn't ta? *Thou*'ll wonder where I am. He munnot ooin (ill-treat) tha, mun he— him 'at's coming astead of me? Wilt purr for him, and make no difference betwixt us? Thou mun do as she does, choose how. Is' never come back to blame tha. Is' know nought, whatever thou does." And more I said in that miserable way, but I cannot fashion to set it down.

"I mun put tha in home," I thought at last; "thou'll be lost else"— for it was but a little thing. So I ventured across, and found the door not locked; as doors never were till latterly. And when I opened it, I gat a breath of warm air fro inside. Some make of stupefaction held me on her doorstones, I know not what; and I started for my own house like one groping.

It was no farther than a step or two, and yet I

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could hardly man it, for my mind was dazed, and I laboured in my breathing; but after I had lain a time this passed off in a shuddering, bitter but kindly. It must be that there was a mercy in it, for, getting to my bed, I fell into a very deep slumber that left me tame and cheerful; and to all that at first befell next day I was dulled, as if to me it mattered nought more nor to watch a play acted.

And everything chimed in with my humour. When I set off to my work it was near breakfast-time, but Binnie spake me as freely as if I had never been out of sight.

"Just i' time lad," said he. "Thou's done weel to come back. Praise God, we've enough for three week this time. There'd ha' been another at that loom directly, and nowght else for thee to do. Theer's thi beam, and that's t' yarn. Shaloons, eighteen picks."¹

It was new to see so much stuff piled; and upstairs they nodded like men in a good temper. Abe was back at his loom, though at first I did not see him. That pleased me, to be sure, but not to make me go and speak to him, nor to think at all what a gradely thing it was for Elizabeth. It caps (surprises) me that I could weave so. But I gat nought amiss; and

¹This direction relates to the texture of a worsted cloth to be woven.— J. K. S.

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with a word fro Binnie— for he did say, after an hour or two, that I had fallen short of elbow-grease— I wave near as well as at other times, ay, and took a pleasure in my steady toil, and in the busy din around me.

I did not even bethink me of yesternight till I saw Elizabeth talking to her father over his drinking (midday meal), and then I partly marvelled that I had been so wrought upon. For now I was satisfied, in a way, to pity her; I felt no sorrow in myself; I could go on weaving and not look a second time. Nay, I could be spoken to by her and answer as if nought were; feel her hand on my shoulder and not flinch. She stood and touched

me as she came away.

"John," she said, pleased to see me again.

I glanced around, and did but give her a smile and a nod. Ever so long after, I saw her going;— I thought she had been gone. Ah! my patient, sweet, and gaumless wench, thou wert not easily offended; and I made thee suffer for it. But it is an ill memory to see thee turn thy bonnie face on me, fro the stairs top, to waft me a pleasant parting sign when I chanced to look. It made me uneasy then, but I let it pass; and if I had felt as I do now, I must still have held to my cruelty, aiming to be kind.

That same day, in the afternoon, they came for me,

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and like as my heart mounted up strong when I knew they were there. Yet see you how they took me unawares:

Binnie came up the stairs, and, standing with a grim look on his face, beckoned me to him. "Hev we lost a shuttle?" He asked, speaking low.

"Nay," said I, "I've missed nought."

He answered, "Reight; thou'd knaw, I judge, if ought went."

"Is there one to be owned?" I said, and made to follow him down. Afore he could speak again, I knew. It flashed back on me that after the last spell of work I had had one in my pocket; and now it was gone.

"Ay," he said. "Come down and tell 'em."

I went boldly, and took it in my hand. There was Sammy o' Ruth Ann's, and another constable that I did not know.

"It'll not be ours," said Binnie. "There's none amissing."

It was my shuttle, past a doubt, and when I gave it back to Sammy, the other asked me whether I had ever seen it afore. As soon as he spake, I looked well at him. He was the man that had called out joyfully when I seemed to be taen; that had set on me, two against one, when I was dealing with Lang Jim Bailey. His face I liked ill; a pinched face,

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and miserable; and he took stock of me fro head to foot.

So I answered him straight: "Nay, I'll not own't. Ye mun find somebody 'at lacks a shuttle."

A keenness came into his een. "Tha's niver seen it?" he asked again.

"Now, be content," said Binnie. "Ye're at t' wrang shop; ye hear." And Sammy nodded, turning away to go. But this man never stirred, and we stood looking one at another till I stared him out.

"Niver heed," he said, with a clevering smile on one side of his face. "Just try this cap on, my lad." He drew Weasel's cap out of his pocket.

"Him!" cries Binnie. "Sammy, what mak o' mischief hae yo' agate? Just tell this mateo' thine what day it is."

Sammy took hold of his sleeve to pull him away.

"Come on," he growled; "he's no powcher." But I had the cap in my hands, and I put it on. Within myself I felt no fear, as you may judge, of any man there but Binnie.

"I think it fits," I said. "Am I to keep it, says ta?"

Binnie snatched it fro my head. "Be not a fool, John," said he, and gave it back. "It's not his cap; he wears a cleaner."

"That's to be proved," this constable answered.

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"Go prove it," said Binnie. "I've wasted enough time on yo' both. Sammy, I'm licked wi' thee. Thou s'ould know better."

"Wha," quoth Sammy, in his slow way, "we mun do what we can. There's nowght i' t' river, seemingly."

So they left us, and as soon as they were gone a sweat came out on me, with such a trembling that I could scarce get back to my loom. I know not what had ailed me to be so bold. I sat agape over it till my fit passed; but after I had fallen to work again I almost laughed. With all his cleverness, this Kildwick man had been done; he had had a fair chance to scholar (identify) me, yet he could not; he had been baulked no more nor he deserved about this shuttle, and if he meant to make folk say that that was my cap, I

thought he would have somewhat to do.

But while I was ruminating, Binnie bounced up the stairs again, his face aflame with anger, and instead of beckoning to me, "John!" he shouted, and straight went down. Then, for sure, I breathed danger in. And when I stood up, and looked round about me, I set my teeth. "If it be so," I thought, "I mun give 'em a run for my life."

Binnie was talking hotly. I know not what he said; but they stood shamed. I went in front of him. "Now then," I said, "what is't ye want me for?"

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"Now, tha's nowght to fear, John," Sammy began; but his mate took him up.

"Young fellow," said he, "I'm not satisfied, and I s' see tha strip. There's my mark on thee or on some other, yet, and I've a fancy to look at it."

Binnie was shutting the door. "Ye've no mense (decency) about yo'," he said. I would have given a deal if he had been otherwise; for all he never looked at me, and made a job of shifting skeps. I thought they could not miss but read shame and fear in my face.

"Come, thou hes it to do, my lad," this man chirped. "Doff thy waistcoat and pull thy shirt off."

I could hear that part looms had stopped, and when I looked behind me there were one or two weavers peeping down. Binnie drave them back; but after that the shed fell quiet altogether, but for a murmur of talking.

"Am Ito do't?" I said to him; and he answered,

"Ay, we mun humour 'em."

A sheep that knows itself fairly held will let the knife be thrust in its neck, and never strive. I was just as easily handled. Yet I saw my snod tormentor take note when my voice trembled, offering to Binnie a last chance to save me. He looked first at my arm, where his blow had fallen, and then he walked round me and looked at every inch of my

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carcase; and if there had been so much as a pin scratch he would have sworn to it.

"That'll do, John," said Binnie, suddenly. "Don thy clothes."

I did what I was bidden to do.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" cries the constable. "We knaw what that means."

"Ye do not!" Binnie answered him; and cowed him with blazing een. "But I'll tell yo'. This here's my shop: walk out. Why, t' lad cam' down to help yo'— of his awn accord— and ye mun look him ower and finger him like a fat beast. Why, ye knawn't what ye're seeking! Ye're a dangerous man! What's your name? What akin are yo'?"

He did mutter somewhat, but Binnie drave on.

"Ye knaw what it means, said yo'? Sammy, come here! Is there a mark on his skin?"

"Nut theer!" said Sammy. "And niver hes been. Aw said so."

"Off out o' my sight!"

Ay, he was a good man to me, was Binnie. He did his best for me, then and always. And I did my best for him, and would do now if he were living.

I have my own reason why they found no sign of bruises. I had never felt sore, more than to be stiff after hugging (carrying) Weasel. Is it not likely that while he was on my back he rubbed all the bruises

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off, as 'twere? I set it down to that, there and then, and purposed to tell him on't as soon as I saw him. But he walked up alongside me when I left my work that night, and said in my ear, "Sleek's taen."

I had to hearken to his tale first; and for all he telled it with a gloomy face, I can sometimes think that parts were comical. Ay, and he must tell it nowhere but up under the Crag, where there would be, he said, no lang lugs. Thither we climbed; and in a dry and bielder nook, open only to a swatch of starlight, I forgat my new hopes while I listened.

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CHAPTER XII.

WEASEL PUTS HIS HEAD IN A NOOSE.

It stood ill with Sleek. The under-keeper that he fought with knew him as well almost as I knew Weasel, for he had oft come of a night to warm himself at Sleek's kiln, and they had smoked and talked together. I dare say he would never have denounced him in a less matter; it does seem to me that they fought gingerly. But with his mate dead, it was different. Sleek judged that it would be so, and waited none to let down his baking of lime when it should cool, but left all. He left his gun among the rest. It was never found until next mowing time, for it had fallen in a dyke, overgrown with young nettles.

Weasel, when he started after him, knew not where he had gone. Nor knew he ought of this underkeeper, to whet his intent. That knowledge came to us both at after. But he fancied he could prick the track closer than a constable, or any other man less skilled nor he was in Sleek's ways; and so he faced

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all risk of hunting with the hounds, for nought but to whisper a word to the hare. It was done for me; and I could see that he laid bare every shift and turn of it now, just to show me that more had not been possible.

It passes me to tell what guided him, though he took me step by step along the road. He gat a start from a road-mender in Farnhill, and struck over the moor into Wharfedale. In the duke's woods somewhere¹ the lighted on a forester they both knew, that had shown Sleek the way to Pateley Brig three days before. But then he was at fault; for he could find no lime-burner in all Nidderdale that had seen such a man as he asked after. He doubted not that Sleek had thrown the duke's man off his scent, and he had nought to do but sit down and ponder out a way. He seemed to have walked thirty or forty miles to no purpose.

As darkness fell, he called at an alehouse and sat him down to some bread and cheese. He was downcast, that is certain, for he sat a long time afore he spake, and then he was first spoken to. Yet one man of the three or four by the fire was Poss Lightfoot, a poacher so famous that as soon as he made him out he counted his day's march paid for;

and he knew by hearsay that Poss was a big man blind of one eye.

¹The Duke of Devonshire's Bolton estate.

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It was Poss that challenged him, and Weasel no sooner looked up to answer than he knew his man. A ruddy, full-faced man he pictured him to me; with a loud and cheerful voice; but a man that liked to let others talk.

"Well, young man, ye're keen set," said Poss. "Ha' ye travelled far?"

"All ower Nidderdale," answered Weasel.

"And a piece to boot," quoth the other. "When a man comes fro Haworth parish he comes no farther."

"Yigh, he does," cries Weasel.

"Then I'll make one guess, and be done," says Poss. "They shut wi' guns i'yar country."

"And point as straight as Poss Lightfoot."

Somewhat in that keen way their talk began, and brought a laugh; so then Weasel drew in among them; and he declared to me that he had never found better company. Now, to say to a man that they shoot with guns in his country is no more nor a common speech; but "Ill news goes with wings," and Poss meant it otherwise. They could tell Weasel a deal more nor he knew about the business that set him on his travels. I judge they badgered him rarely. Only Poss said little, watching him with his one blue eye "hard enough for another man with two;" and for all they sat till bed-time, he heard not a word of Sleek. Yet Sleek had been with them. When they were parting, one

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began tuning up a song that Sleek used to sing, and seemed to mimic Sleek's way of singing it.

The Nidderdalers are canny men, and the faces of these four showed no sign; but afore Weasel could frame to say ought, Poss Lightfoot signalled to him, and they went

out together. Then Poss told him somewhat; but Weasel never believed that he trusted him fully. What he said was of no more use nor that loose end of a song, and he made it seem that the purpose he had in this private talk was to put Weasel in a cheap bed.

"Ye're a merry talker," said he, when that was settled. "What do ye do for a living when ye're at home?"

Weasel answered that he was his own master.

"Ay," said Poss, "I deemed ye so. Ha' ye seen a better job in Nidderdale, then?"

"Nowght to suit me. There's a mate o' mine aw mun talk tul first."

Poss kept his teeth shut a time; but at last he said, "He'd be that chap 'at were here a day or two past. He talk desperate like him."

"Reight," said Weasel. "He wor here. A man my height about; but heavier. And aw'd give a deal to know which way he took."

"Nay," quoth Poss, with a laugh, "if ye're his mate ye'll know better nor I do." And afterward he declared

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he had no idea: the man had left early next morning, afore any other body stirred.

Then Weasel did a bold thing. "Come," he said, "ye s'ould be a reight man, Poss Lightfoot. Aw'll test yo', how't be. This is t' matter—we're both i' that shooiting-do, and aw mun finnd him or we're done! Now what say yo'?"

"Why, I think ye are done," he agreed; "for he sups a deal of ale."

More nor this Weasel could nowise get out of him, barring that Sleek's pockets had been plumbed to pay for supping-stuff. "Aw niver," he said to me, "met a closer man. Now, aw'm out wi' him. Aw put my life in his hands, and he still be have das if ther' no sich matter." But I can see that Weasel's witty answers marred his market with a man so canny.

From off his pillow Weasel's mind ranged north, east, west and south that night, and found Sleek nowhere. But when he had slept he set off straightway for Harrogate and Leeds: moorland tracks no more, but turnpike road. Near to Leeds somewhere, Sleek's old mother lived, among a two-or-three houses by the road side; and down in the town there must be some that had known him, when he worked in his young days

unloading canal boats.

Once at after, when I asked him what made him think that Sleek would go thither, "Aw've t' second

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seeght," he said. But I think, if he had had it, he would have shaped better, and spared trouble.

He will have known more of Sleek than he let be seen. But the way he found the house where Sleek's mother lived was this. Just at sight of the brown rik of Leeds, he came to two little rows of houses, end-on to the road, with a stable and two middens betwixt them. They made a little square, with a little pump in it; and there was some lettering on a smooth stone aboon the stable door, as if it had been done by a tombstone-writer. All was just as Sleek had once pictured it. "Providence Fold " they called the place, and the lettering was this (but Weasel could not scholar the words): "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

Weasel spat over his finger when he saw this colony. "Now then," he said, "aw mun see who lives here." But he knew neither Sleek's christening name nor his mother's name. So he knocked at the first door, and, like clown in a pantomime, he came face to face with a constable that he did not know.

"How do?" he said in a town voice, "yo're a stranger to me."

The constable looked at him, he declared, as if Weasel had done him an injury; but still stood on one side to let him enter, and called over his shoulder: "Missis! yo're wanted." So in he popped.

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An old woman in a white cap came pottering towards him, and he made her out at a glance to be Sleek's mother, she favoured him so strongly.

"Nay," he said then, "aw'm i' t' wrang house; or else yo're newcomers."

"Who are you seeking?" the constable asked.

"Why," said Weasel, "yo'll happen know her. It's a wench o' t' name o'

Busfeild—Mary Busfeild, fro Gomersal. Shoolodges somewheer hereabouts. They said I mud try th' first house."

Of course there was no such a name; but he was terribly downcast to hear nought of her, and he would see if she was known at the first house on the contrary side. But he had taken stock of a coat, all white with lime, thrown over a chair back.

When he crossed the fold, nearly every door was open and a woman looking out; and luck still helped his craft, for the woman at the end house was a gradely body and free-spoken. "Aw plucked up at seeght on her," he said: "one o' these big-made women, weel favoured, lad, wi' a reight mouthful o' teeth, and a tongue as lang's my arm. I faw'd been deaf aw'd ha' wed her."

She had not been long a widow, and I judge he made her fancy that he meant to do so, as it was; or else she aimed to wed him herself. She gave him some dinner, directly; and then he sat afore her fire, telling

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all manner of tales about places where he had never been, and wonders coined in his own head, while she went cheerfully on with her smoothing (ironing). It seems she washed clothes for some of the better sort; so there were folk with money to spare even at that day, when banks were breaking.

He said nought to *her* about Mary Busfeild. When he crossed the fold he started straightway to ask her gainer (directer) questions, and two of her neighbours coming up he pushed her indoors. She would hear all about Mary Busfeild when he had gone!

Now Sleek had been at home two days; and he was sick of a fever. This constable had come up out of Leeds, as if he expected to find him there, and he seemed to be stopping. There had been a rare pother at first, for he wanted to take Sleek out of his bed, and they all cried shame on him—he was no man to do so to a poor old woman when it was all her lad's life was worth. Natheless he would have done it, only this widow fetched a doctor that hindered him.

While Weasel kept her in talk, he was stretching his wit to make a plan, and he could think of nought that would serve him. She asked him too many questions, he said—not about Sleek, for he had put her off that with a new lie, but about everything

else that a woman could lig her tongue to. Howbeit she stayed

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him so oft when he made a pretence of going, that he determined at last to sleep in her house. So he stood up as if he were off.

"Eh, wife!" he said, "aw'm fair downhearted to leave ye. Aw am. But aw'm a stranger i' these parts, and aw've my bed to seek."

He could tell by the way she looked at him that she would have offered him a bed if there had been two. "Now, if ye worn't a single woman," he said, "aw could sleep i' this chair and be thankful."

"Why," says she, "ye'll get in nowhere hereabouts. Ye'll hae to go down into Leeds if ye cross t' doorstone. Ye'll hae to go to one o' these ludging-houses. Eh, dear-a-dear!"

"Oh," says Weasel, "one o' t' neighbours 'll tak me in."

That pricked her. "Now, for ony sake, lad!" she cried, with her hands up. "Ye munnot go near 'em." And I cannot call to mind what ailed them all, but they all did ail somewhat.

"Well," he said, just at the door, "aw mun sleep somewheer; and it willn't be i' Leeds, ameng thieves and vagabonds. ... But aw'll pop in i' t' morning, lass, just to see 'at ye're takin' care o'yersel."

Now, she was a gradely sort; a right Yorkshire woman. She flushed up, he said, and turned to her work; but at sound of the door sneck, down went

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her iron, and she pulled him back. "Theer, sit tha down agean," she ended. "Tha'rt an honest lad, I think, and I can't bide to see tha go, choose how. Sit tha down. I care not what be said. ... Tha mun go out for a bit, and let 'em hear tha say 'Goodnight'—and I'll leave t' door for tha."

"Gaw-yon," he said, "aw've a mind to kuss tha." But "Nay, ye munnot," she answered, "or Is' turn yo' out." And he judged it best not to try her. She seemed almost

to repent once, when they were planning his getting away next morning; but he said he never slept after four o' t' clock at home, and so she let it be.

As it lighted, he slept not at all that night. After she had gone to her bed, he doffed his shoon, peeped through the window, and set them outside on the doorstone. All was then dark and quiet, for she had sat late with him, and he had given her time to settle besides. He slipped across the fold, and softly lifted the sneck of the old woman's door, to see if the bolt was put in. The door held fast. Then he hearkened, and a sound of snoring seemed to come fro the livingroom. "That's t' watch-dog," he thought. Round at the back he managed to open a little window; but he could not squeeze in, for all he doffed coat and waistcoat to make himself smaller. He hearkened again, and shut it.

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that was only a little one. In front, the house had what we used to call weavers' windows— three or four narrow lights together. He saw that downstairs these were made to open outwards; but "Nay," he said, "I mun be upstairs," and he went to the stable to look for a stee (ladder). Into the stable he climbed through a hay-loft hole; sought all about in the dark, moving his feet warily for fear of rat-traps; and found not what he needed.

He had nought to do, if he would enter, but try the living-room windows.

He set to work prately to prize open one of them with his knife. No use: he had to cut a pane of glass out. The cutting made a fearful din, yet when it was finished he still heard a snoring, and so he ventured in. Nay, they must all be hard asleep; for it was so dark that he could not move without knocking against one thing after another. But he stoodless chance of talking with Sleek than he had counted on. The man that slept with a noise was up in the chamber, and downstairs he could hear no other breathing. He opened the door and left it wide.

"Aw niver heard stairs mak sich a shout i' my life," he telled me. "It licked pig-stickin'. And they were nowght but little uns! Howiver, fowk slept as if aw're playin' soft music, begow!— Wi' t' double bass i' th'

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chamber, it seemed to me more like a young brass band tuning up.

"T' stair-top wor oppen— just a hoil i' t' floor, tha knaws. Nowght to steady tha but an owd weshing-tub, 'at smelled fearful foul.— Aw s' know wheer *thou* stands! aw thought.

"It're as dark as pitch, and aw knawn't which o' t' three made this snoring; but aw wakkened th' constable astead o' Sleek, and telled him to cower quiet, and aw'd git him away. Well, he let me talk a bit, and then he ripped me. Aw believe aw're glopped for an odd minute, now!

"When aw gat free aw dropped straight through t' stair-hoil, like aseek o'potates emptied, and off then like a cat. Just as aw shot out he cam' rumblin' after, and th' tub swishin' down wi' him. Aw laughed till aw're weak. If he'd knawn wheer to find me, cowering behint th' widow's door, he mud ha' taen me wi' one hand."

But that was all the fun Weasel gat of his travels. Whether this constable was wet or dry, he donned all his clothes and stood about till daylight, so Weasel had either to bide indoors, or betray the widow woman. He had gotten his shoon again, and he longed to walk boldly out, for he saw no use in waiting; but wait he did, and let her know his reasons; and all that day he was a prisoner in her chamber. I judge he liked

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this little, but it gave him time to make a plan, and that was to run down the road crying "Fire!" and spread a tale that should draw Sleek's keeper off. "To see whether he're dull or jealous (suspicious), John. For, tha knaws, he niver cam' near t' window. Aw s'd ha' wanted to know summat if aw'd been him."

Now, when Weasel came down at dark, the widow had nought to say to him. "Aw tried her three times," he said; "but it're a sulking-do." So he walked straight out. There were plenty to see him, and all quiet as mice, — standing out in the fold as if they watched. But when he stood, to give them a fair look, it was no such matter. Sleek was loud talking in his bed.

The first that Weasel heard was a full shout— "Aw cannot finnd it!"— and then a murmuring off and on, not to be plainly understood, and so another shout, "Heigh!

Wheer art-a?" While he hearkened, his pluck swealed away like a candle in wind; for there was nought more to be done. The fever had swithered Sleek his wits, and he was publishing all.

"Aw waited through t' neeght," Weasel said, "to knaw as mich as aw could; and then aw shook mysen up and corned home... So tha sees what a poor job aw made on't"

I had to ask him whether Sleek named us.

"Nay, he said nowght about thee 'at aw could hear.

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He just acted it ower, planning and wittering (fretting over little things). Aw cannot tell what he did say. It matters not. They cannot mak sworn evidence on't. What, it were feltered up (tangled) wi' all maks o' stuff."

I said no, but it was a parlous thing.

"Well," he answered, "is there owght more to do? If there be, aw'll do't, and willing."

"Nay," said I, "I think we're quits, lad." He seemed to catch at his breath, like. "None so," he said. "Never."

If I had had as much wit as after-wit, I might have shown him that what I did Iwas forced to do, whereas he perilled his neck for choice. Did I not say that I proved him a good one? He was one in ten thousand. Fire and water could never have hindered him, me to be served.

However, at my tale he brightened. "What, John!" he cried. "Tha'rt gittin' clever!" And when I came to the part about Binnie, he did nought but cry "Well! Eh!" and "Capital!" and swear he had a mind to turn teetotal, after all; for "Binnie's a reight un," he said. ... Now, he is." And on that we were agreed.

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CHAPTER XIII.

I PUT AWAY LOVE MATTERS.

The same night, being the 17th of March, a terrifying thing befell in Cragside

and other parishes;¹ strong spasms of the ground, that wakened all fro their sleep, and made some rise and don their clothes, and go no more to bed till the next night. As for me, when I knew what they said it was, and when I had talked with my mother, I laid me down again; but, at first onset, I own I was flaed. It came like boggarts at Hardaker Hall, afore "t' Wise Man fro Rummies Moor benselled 'em." A crash of pots wakening me, the bed lifting, the chamber-door swinging open of itself, and a strange, soft, shuttering sound (that came up really from a landslip in the Scar) seeming close about me. I made no doubt it was some warning. It turned me palsy-cold, and I could hardly answer when

¹This earthquake was felt over a much wider district than that with which the writer is in touch, and seems to have been everywhere severe.— J. K. S.

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my mother called out to me; but as we were staring at the broken pots downstairs, folk began to cry one to another.

It looks queer that if I had fully settled to lose my life, an earthquake should be the first thing to put me in mind of death, and what comes after death. Now, I can see how it is with them that take their own lives. They know not what they do.

I lay awake till nigh morning, thinking what jeopardy I had come through, both then and in the river, and what an ill mullock I had made of my life, straight after saying at my father's grave that I would do as he had done! I saw then the meaning of his look fro the plantation, as plain as if he had spoken. I saw, besides, that I had no footing to chaffer with God Almighty, making a merit and sacrifice of yielding up what was due. So at last you may say I knew where I stood.

One day I did; but another it was not so. While I blenched at death, my sins being unforgiven, an idea darted through my head that if in the court I told them how the shot was fired, they would hardly be able to do more nor transport me. For it was never my fault that Lang Jim Bailey was dead. I had meant not to kill him; and if they knew that rightly, it would be a strange make of justice to send me to the gallows. But I could see that it would never be easy

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to show it, if they drave me to say ought of the desperate strife that came before. Therefore, instead of much prayer, I fell to uttering in my mind what I should say, as if the time were come; and, as I shaped it then, I could not see how any man should doubt the truth; till I bethought me that they would need another witness to it. So then I pictured myself turning round and seeing Weasel stand up among a cluthered crowd of folk and cry out that it was so, for he was ignorant as well as me of the gun being loadened. Well, we should be transported together just for poaching, because we had foughfen. I could thoil it them rarely, I said, if Weasel were with me; and after I had planned it in this way, I fell asleep.

Whether I was to be transported or hanged made no matter as to one thing, and this I thought on as soon as I set foot in the road next morning. I feared no less nor either the one or the other to face a lass. Nay, when it flashed on me, I nearly caffled (shirked the situation). I was cast down already, my mind being all toward repentance again; and I think I went to my work with little better heart nor I would have gone to another poaching-do. All the talk of the earthquake went in one ear and out at the other, while the nooning came, and Elizabeth; and then, as soon as she had passed in by me, I slipped away home, and waited there till I knew she must have

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gone. I know not what my mother thought; for I had no better errand nor to fetch my knife, and sharpen it up.

Well, it went on day after day, me never speaking but weaving pell-mell through the stopping-time, and eating nought till on in the afternoon. She stood beside me a minute or two the first day, saying nought, and once at after she just touched me in passing. But most times there were other women, and I thought they watched. So did one or two of the men, or I am mistaen; and at last she tarried none, with either her father or me, but came straight in and out again. Judge any man, whether I felt my heart bleeding for her, or gaily whistled as I wrought.

Said one, when I had to stop once to put in a shuttle: "What's t! matter wi' Abe lass? Shoo's fearful little to say tul him i' these days."

I could have brayed his mouth. "Oh?" I said. "Why, she'll be thrang (busy) wi' her spinning."

For though I was glad to see her take a jilting so quietly, it cut me, too, that she had not loved me more; and I wanted nobody to talk about it. I can see now that I was foolish. I had made no secret of following her aforetime, so they could not fail to talk when she passed me by in the road or the shop, like an utter stranger.

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Meantime, somebody let my mother know that I had been stripped, and at this, too, I was angered; for she flited (chid) as if she had known me guilty—and yet, had she, I should never have heard blame on her tongue.

There is a well in Hardaker Park where we gat our water. One Saturday, in the afternoon, I went down to this well for my mother; and it must be that I was fallen into a reckless mood—as oft befell—for I found a pleasure in seeing shadows of trees on the new grass, and looked up continually at the shining cloudmountains. The mating of birds was on, and I thought they sang main sweetly; I saw lambs frolicking, and cattle part asleep in the sun; and in my tranquil mind I was as fain as a little lad when he can run out and gather first daisies. Like as I had forgotten what a bright world this is, and now I rejoiced to see all going well—forgotten what a loftiness and quiet majesty there is in a fine day, to make a man's troubles and all Cragside look little. I could hardly have been more lifted up if I had known that all peril had then passed off me, leaving me still my own man for better or worse.

With the warm sun on my face, dazzling my een, I sauntered down the beck side, where the foot-road winds in and out, falling over rough ground; and all about me the young growths were showing purple

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haulms or green leaf, and the banks at my feet were starred with primroses. At a little

foot-brig that crosses toward the well I stopped to let a wench come over; and it was Elizabeth!

She bare two full buckets in her hands. At the first glint of her I felt the blood flush over my face all hot, she was so mild-looking and bonnie. I could nowise look toward her again; and when I grew aware that she was standing to talk with me, I could have wished myself a mouldiewarp (mole), to be swift out of sight.

"John," she said, in a sweet but sorrowful voice, "I cannot choose but speak. Since ye were in Lancashire ye see nought in me, do yo'? ... Well, ye're free, John— if ye will. Ye cannot help it if another take your fancy, I expect. But I think ye— ye should have let me know your mind."

"Lizzie," I burst out, "there is no other."

She stood looking up the syke. She was as white as milk, and she went on quietly as if I had not spoken—

"That's all, John. Ye're free. ... And I hope ye'll be happy, I'm sure."

I heard her voice shake, and saw her begin to move on. "Lizzie!" I said. "For God's sake!"

Then she turned, but with such a weary look that I was dumb at sight of my handiwork. We stood so a

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through not knowing how to answer her without more mischief.

"It's best to be open," she said at last; and at that there came a kind of sob to her lips.

"Lizzie, ye're wrang," I cried. "If I wed not ye, I'll wed none. Will that do?"

She opened wide her een, and the tears started. It made me frantic to see how she loved me. "I've done wi' yo' all," I said. "I'm sick o' wenches— wi' their snod ways. Oh, I'm for no lass, me."

She set down her buckets, and cast her arms about my neck. "John, if I've done ought— what have I done?" she moaned. "Tell me, John, what I've done."

"Ye've been ower fain to believe I loved ye," said I, and held her off. "I never did. No, never... I expect ye think somewhat of me," I said, for now she "had started

sobbing, with her hands to her face. That's where ye're taen in. See yo'," I said in her ear: "I've gien my life to wickedness. For a reason— oh! a good reason. Some day ye'll happen know."

As I whispered on, the sweetness of her took me suddenly like a gurd, and made me cry out; so then I snatched up my water-cans and tare away headlong, knowing nought of where I went. I dived into a little

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plantation, and flang myself down there, and lay till I was quiet again.

By that time I felt a touch on my shoulder, and lo! She knelt on one knee close by me. She was partly smiling, for all her paleness and trembling; and I feared her. "John," she said, "ye do love me, do not yo'?"

I know not what made me, but I sprang to my feet and left her without a word. A make of dry hardness burned in me. I did my errand of water-fetching in the heat of it, and when I gat in home I was like one light-given, laughing at trifles, and talking more than my use was. In this you may know there was no content, or satisfaction with what I had done; nay, it pulled heavily on my heart; and when I said to myself, "How if I scape all, and still lose her?" a weakness came into my joints. Such a trick would look like cruelty for wantonness.

Moreover I had been a very little time filling my cans, yet coming back I had seen no sign of her; and it was not to tell, what she might have had strength of mind to do. These thoughts together kept me on a rack; and fifty times that afternoon I was at the point of going in search of her, when, if my wish had held so, I might have undone all the harm.

The next day was one that some folk marked with a red letter. It was a Sabbath; and partly in hopes

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to see her, partly that my mother begged it, I went to the chapel. We had hardly set foot in the road, when I saw as much as made me loth to go farther. There burst out of

Molly's, just afore us, two or three men at a gallop; and the head of speed they had set others at the door reeling wide. For the length of time it takes to turn a beast there was a quick scuffle, and then one came past us, leading a downhill race. His head being turned away for a gliff of his pursuers, I saw not his face; but ten or twelve years afore, when I was a barn, I knew only one that so gathered up his limbs and body to run. He looked now like a swift whirlwind, carrying straws and dry leaves after it; and as for me, forgetting the day, and the peril, and who stood by my side, I shouted after him with a tremendous voice, "Hooy, lad!"

This, you will think, was an ill beginning; but indeed my mother looked so scared and pitiful that I went with her very humbly. It was well, too, that Elizabeth did not come, for so I sat with a single mind in my father's place. To be sure, my thoughts at first were in a worldly mooid (disorder). But I was drawn into hearkening, and with such profit that at night I went again, alone and unasked, full of a desire to make my peace while there was yet time. And in this mind I was helped, not hindered, by seeing her there as at other times.

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It is our way at Craggside, when there is a penitent at the after-meeting, that some should gather about him and join their prayers with his, till he feel himself forgiven. Now, I was one that had to wrestle long. When I rase fro my knees at last, and a hymn was sung, there were but five or six voices, and the chapel was almost all in darkness.

Binnie Driver gripped me by the hand. He had prayed over me like one that would not be denied; and though there was joy in his face, he could say nought but "Praise God!" While he held me, a farmer that we called Gurt Tom, a pious man and a strong character in the parish, clapped me on the back and said that he had longed for this day since ever he saw me at the burial sermon. And the others, all but one, had a word. Yet I could look none of them in the face, for thinking of what they would say and feel when they knew my shame.

No, nor was it a right conversion, though after that night they counted me a member; for as soon as I was alone my faith melted away. You may say that I had come

to a turning-point; but, even so, that is not altogether my reason for setting all this down.

The main thing in my thoughts when I came home was not religion, but the sight of that poor lass slipping away out while the hymn was sung. I had never

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thought of her since the psalm was read over wherein are these word : *"For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied"*

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VNiVERSiTAS
STVDII
SALAMANIINI

CHAPTER XIV.
SPORT FOR DEVILMENT.

Fro this part of my tale, which I care no to follow hard, I can well turn aside to show the cause of Weasel's being so near taen. To me, he seemed sny and foolhardy. I was never of a venture some nature, and will not set up to be a judge of braver spirits; but there was no reason at all why he should put his head in the noose again. He came into Cragside with a kittle purpose, that any other man would have deemed fanciful, and after he had followed this out he still bided, for no purpose at all.

He came on the Saturday night; — marched into Molly's and sat him down as if £50 were no matter to any man there. (This was what Mark Nelson at Broughton¹ had offered for his capture, as I have maybe said.) He "had gitten stalled," he told me at after, "of being so mich alone." And he was welcome,

¹ I have thought it well to substitute this name for that which appears in the MS.— J. K. S.

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I dare wager. Sitting anent the door, too, he could watch who went out or who looked in; and he would know his friends fro his enemies. But as the time went by there was

such a merry din that folk outside were like to wonder; and so, about ten of the clock, Sammy wandered in. "He gaped," said Weasel, "as if he saw a boggart, " and instead of coming forward wimed off and out again.

"Now thou mun pike (get away)," said one, "He's gone pratly off for more strength."

"Ay, aw'll pike," Weasel answered. "Aw want him first to mysel."

What they said in the road I have heard both tell, or I should not have fully known, for neither told just all. What was done, Sammy never guessed as long as he lived. But Weasel, when he went after him, clapped him on the shoulther, and said, "Hollo, Sammy! How is't tha locks nobody up for losing that cap?" There were a dozen that it fitted, as he had proved.

Sammy stopped, and gathered his wits together.

"Nay," said he, "what ill is there i' losing summat?"

"Why, that aw cannot tell," laughed Weasel. "But they say it's mine. Let's look at it."

Now, he was a fat man, and slow-witted, but it seems that he saw somewhat strange in this boldness. "Ay,

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tha can look at it if ta wilt," he answered, after a time.

"Come wi' me down to th' house, and I'll fotch it for tha".

"Sammy," said Weasel then, "tha'rt a fearful planner. But aw'd liefer try't on now."

"Oh, and run away wi't!"

"Why, no; for then tha'd knaw aw're guilty."

"Well," said Sammy, thinking it over. "Happen I knaw that, choose how. But th' cap's put away, lad. We'll say it isn't thine, if that'll suit tha."

Weasel's ill name stood in his way, I judge. But he said, "Now, tha'll be sorry, at after! It s'ould be tried on all powchers, tha knaws."

"Hes ta *lost* a cap?" Sammy asked him at last."

"Ea, aw hev."

"Well, come on, then."

But Weasel began to talk. "Now, what's t' use o' being cunning?" he said. "We all know wheer this cap were fund, and th' owner on't s'ould be awther hinged or transported. Tha's no business to keep it up, lad; it's none jannock. Andas for going down to thy house, Sammy, aw willn't do 't for £50! So let's look at that cap." And Sammy pulled it out of his coat pocket, where he had had it for a week to Weasel's knowledge.

"Tha'll be capt (surprised) if it fits," he said; and,

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according to the tale Sammy always told, Weasel, when he thought of how he might be "done," had a face as long as a fiddle.

"Come hither to t' light," he said, and went under a window. "Let's be careful what we're doing. Here, tak hod o' this aw'm wearing."

But though he tried hard to make it fit, the cap was two or three sizes too small!

"What, Sammy!" he said, "it's but a little 'un!"

"Give't here," quoth the constable. "Thou's a head like a prize cabbage. Cover it up, do." And he gave him back the cap he wore.

Now, this reads like a puzzle, for you know well that the cap they had found was Weasel's. But it is simple. Weasel went after the constable because he had that smaller cap in his own pocket. When he turned toward the window he swopped it for the other; and so he brought away comfortably a thing that might have been used for evidence against either him or me. I have shown already that he was a bit of a conjuror; but he could do stranger things nor that. I once saw him nip an egg in his hand till it vanished, and there was none that could skill his manner of doing it.

"Art satisfied?" Sammy asked him.

"Sammy, it's taen a load off my mind," he said. "Aw'm obliged. If onybody's to handle Mark Nelson' money, it shall be thee, my bawcock. When

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aw want board an' lodging free, aw'll gie mysen up to tha— and put in a word wi' Molly for tha as weel."

That night he slept on Molly's stable balks (in the hay chamber) unknown to any. His own ill-furnished house was little better for looks and somewhat worse for comfort than such a lodging; and he knew, he said, that Sammy was keen to get him captured. But he was back in the kitchen at breakfast time, and there he sat calling (gossiping) till he had to skift.

The men that Sammy brought to take him were two navvies, at five shillings a-piece. With more craft they might have done it, for Weasel could never have guessed their aim unless it had been shown him; but Sammy was so big that afternoon that he walked into the kitchen with his two strong men, like a general on horseback; and "That's him!" said he. Weasel with a dart slipped through them. Outside, the men he scattered were mates of these others, that had come to see the sport and help to drink ten shillings. They heard a shout of "Stop him!" but it seems they knew not how to do so. Some, that watched them come back fro their run, said that one or two had been trying to stop him with their faces.

It was hardly dark when he walked into Sammy's house, and bolted the door behind him. Sammy sat

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in his shirt sleeves, supping at a bowl of porridge, and when he made out Weasel in the candle-light he jumped up so suddenly, that a spoonful went down the wrong way, and gave him a terrible fit of coughing. But through it all he managed to get hold of the poker and slip round behind the table; and when he had gained his wind again, there he stood, with his red face wet with tears and his mouth open.

"What's ta laking (playing) at?" said Weasel; but Sammy still kept his mouth open.

"Tha looks tewed, lad (jaded, harassed). Sup thy porridge up." No answer again.

"Why, what ails 'em? They *smell* good. Egow, they are good!" But when Weasel took a second spoonful, Sammy cried out:

"Nay, gie me my porridge!" he begged.

"Ay, get 'em into tha," said Weasel, and held out the bowl. "But tha'll mak a poor job on't wi' that skewer."

So seeing him in good temper, Sammy put the "skewer" back in the fender, and sat him down again. "I wish thou'rt i' Van Dieman Land!" he chunnered.

"Ea, an' tha works too hard for't," said Weasel. "Tha'rt as thrang as Thrap's Wife; an' it'll never do for a man so grosh as thee. Now, aw'm gien tha good advice, Sammy. Let me alone a bit. Wheer's thy sister?"

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"I 'bed."

"Reight. Then we can talk."

"I want none o' thy talk," growled Sammy, trying to feel more like himself. "I'm better bout it."

"Tha'rt wasting away for lack on't," Weasel told him. "Tha looks owder by ten year sin' yesterday."

Saying this, he knew where to touch him. In their threaping, of course, Sammy said, "Never heed," as if he cared not, and supped his porridge up; but that tenged¹ him, and when they had threaped a time longer he fell into a sadness.

"So be content," said Weasel. "There's nowght to be done wi' hurry. Nawther thee nor nobody else'll tak me till aw be ready. After what tha's done today, aw've a mind to gie that £50 to some other; aw tell tha straight. A keen man aw cannot suffer."

I judge that Sammy's face would be red again by this time; but he never denied that he wanted the reward.

"Aw'd planned to be neighbourly," Weasel went on; "but now aw see tha'rt nowght i' that way. Tha'rt no Crag sider at all. What sense is there i' helping sich a man? Aw declare aw cannot see ony... Can thou?"

¹Stung. "For she had a tongue with a tang" ("Tempest," Act ii., Sc. 2).

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Sammy fidgeted in his chair. "Tha'll loss me my job, I can see that," he said.

"And £50," said Weasel,

He puffed, and wiped his face. "I wish thou'rt dead," he whined.

"Now tha talks like a forsaken wench— for all t' world tha does. Do me a turn, and aw'll stand thy friend yet."

He looked so flaed when he heard this that Weasel saw no good in him. "Nay, there's no peril in't," he promised. "It'll be just betwixt me and thee. Aw want to know wheer that net is."

"Net? What net?" cried Sammy, sharply.

"Down at Kildwick."

"What's thou to do wi't?"

"Nay, nowght," said Weasel, "no-but a mate o' mine wants to know."

"I'll nut tell tha!"

"Please thysen," Weasel said. "It's a little matter. Is there a sup o' porridge i' t' pan?"

Oh, he could have some porridge, and welcome! Sammy bare no spite. A man must do his duty, that was all about it. So he fetched some more blue milk, and pondered, while Weasel scraped the pan. Then they lit their pipes, Sammy raked the fire, and they put their feet on the fender.

"Aw wonder at tha," said Weasel.

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"How's that?"

"Why, they're seeking an owner for't, are they not?" But never heed. ... Aw can git to know." Oh, well," said Sammy, "of course tha can. Why, it's yet at Kildwick— tha'll know that already. Tell thy mate to ax about."

Now (1), Weasel knew nought, and (2)Sammy knew that he knew nought; and (3) Weasel judged that Sammy knew, for, said he, "he looked as if summat disagreed wi' him." So Weasel pestered him with no more questions, for none were needed. The Kildwick constable had that net. He kept it a fortnight or three weeks longer; and then he missed it.

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CHAPTER XV.
IN TWO MINDS.

When there came, near the end of April, another long spell of idleness (you cannot call it laking, seeing that it brought so much hardship) I took to wandering on the moors, and drew my waistband in. News had come that Sleek was dead; I looked to be taen any day; and I did not want all to see me wear the shackle-irons.

I have laughed as I set down Weasel's pranks on paper; but when they were played I cared little about them. Time passed afore he told me the tale himself, and my thoughts fro that Sunday onward ran ever on another matter.

This it was that hopped all my wanderings. Whereever I strayed, I had to find a spot where I might look on Crag-side, and make out one house. When I looked, my bosom filled and trembled; and then I would sit me down in sorrow and bide till dusk; and watch for a speck of light in her window, and bide on till that

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vanished, in a cold blackness. For ought I knew, it was always the last time.

It may appear that I should have done better to stir myself, and seek some work elsewhere; for at home we were ill off. But I did not think on it. There was nought more that I could do for her, and nought else that seemed to be worth doing. Besides, by this time I wanted the end to come.

I bethought me in the second week that, if I kept to the Crag Edge, folk would get to know where I might be found, and Sammy could fetch me; for there was hardly a day passed without some coming up to the moor, to get peat or ling, or just to be out of door. So there I sat on one stone or another, where the rocks cluther about Hardaker Monument We had peaked there oft in the days before I went into Lancashire, little lass and little lad. If we were blackberrying, and heard the horn blown, we ran or scrambled thither to be in time to look over and see the coach crack up the bit of a steep to Molly's, or come gradely down off Reedshaw Moss. To us then, it seemed far off and little. I can think I see her yet, a weeny, red-cheeked, laughing thing, as oft as not afore me when

we climbed, and glancing back with her bright hair flying; or standing in the wind on Monument Rock, fearfully near to the edge, her hat in one hand and both stockings down.

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The horn sounded again, and that picture came into my mind. "Little fairy!" I said. "I never meant to mar so thy life."

Some that came up sat with me; and one thing I heard that I heeded, for it touched Binnie Driver, and he was a man that I almost put in the place of my father. A grocer out of Cornshaw had suddenly fetched his pigs for debt. Now I knew that he was at the far end, for he had paid us with tickets for months past. These tickets did instead of brass when we took them to the grocer's shop, and him Binnie settled with at after, when he gat paid for our pieces; but the week before, a man in Keighley parish that should have paid him for the last lot— a man called Butterfield, in a large way of business— brake; and Binnie was done out of what we had had. So I knew just his pickle; and I knew beside that this grocer gave no credit to any other. But when I heard of what he had done I was astonished. In my judgment he did a scurvy thing to act so with a man like Binnie; and I will not write his name.

I fancied after a day or two that some came on purpose to see me; and looked at me keenly while they talked, or when they went away. Thought I, "Well, it'll be ended soon. Sammy cannot miss but hear;" but oft I slipped away and went ranging— to be shut of them.

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I doubt if they guessed, either then or at after, what I did there, because that I waited for never came. All was seemingly put down to a falling out with Elizabeth; and it dawned on me at last— whereas I ought to have seen it to begin with— that it must appear to my shopmates as if I had wanted to put her to shame. Knowing that I was the one that had thrown out, and seeing me fretting, what could they think of her? *I* was shamed then; my face burned with shame; but the worst is that I let things be, judging

that others would understand as soon as she did.

One restless, empty day, a day when moving shadows darkened all below me to the farthest hills, I wandered back and forward in a savage mood. A shout stopped me, and looking about I saw old Abe just under the edge. He put up his hand.

At seeing him there, tewed after the climb, holding on by a fallen stone, his mouth drawn down and his head never still, a shrinking went through me. I was beside him in a trice, and steadied him while he sat down. He sat a time breathing hard and getting his strength back, and answered not when I spake to him; but it seemed, after all, that he had neither ill news nor blame for me.

"It gits steeper," he said at last, " nor it used to be!"

I dared not tell him he should never have started,

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for fear of his reasons. "It'll be th' wind," I said. "Tak thy time."

"Aw've a newspaper," he said then. "Happen tha'll finnd summat . . . about Parliment or summat. . . Tha'rt fearful ill to catch i' these days."

He drew it out of his pocket. The last time I had read him ought, or spoken to him, he lay on his back. Now, he was a keen politician; but still it looked to me strange that he had come a mile up a rough hillside, even to know what Villiers had been saying, or what stirrings there had been with these Chartists. However, the paper told of our Airedale poet, John Nicholson the woolsorter, being found dead on the river bank a day or two afore, below Bingley; and that gave him somewhat to talk about, for we had heard of this Nicholson's stage plays at Bradforth, and seen odd bits of his rhymes, and we knew enough to understand how he had come to die out of his bed. With this and other talk and reading, time passed almost careless. Except when I thought whose father He was; then, to be sure, my bowels yearned.

"How is't tha niver comes now to see me, John?" he said at last "Tha'rt as welcome as otherwheer, tha knaws."

I turned away my head, being taken at unawares.

"Like as aw'd gitten to look for tha coming, latterly.

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Niver heed being down-spirited— come when tha's a mind to. Aw'm gitten owd, John, and aw like a bit o' talk, whether't be politics or poverty, just."

His friendliness was more almost nor I could bear and not be unmanned; and I found nought to say to it. For I thought he talked as if he had never gaumed my love for Elizabeth.

"We do keep a fire, these cowl nights. Thank God for peat! I believe it seems cowder to an illined belly! How do *ye* manage?" And so he ran cheerfully on, without a sign fro me, save when he forced me to speak with questions on such passing matters; and, main part of the time, I heard his palsied voice yet knew not what he uttered.

He gave me to see what I had lost; and suddenly a make of anger burned in me. It was none of my fault: what for should I be punished? Elizabeth— and my old mother— what had *they* done, to be forsaken like strangers? What manner of justice was such cruelty? My life's theirs, I said, and my own. My strength is. Who forces me to lig me down for others to tread on? Why, I'm a coward and a lickspittle!

What if I had killed one? He had aimed to kill my mate, and he had had no mercy on me. I rued it none. I never had done, fairly. Nay, when I knelt in the chapel, baring my heart afore God Almighty

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and striving to think Him merciful, my spirit still rebelled, and I would not own that I ought to die.

I am but young, I thought. He was past middle life. I want my share of life, if it be no more nor he had. He died by a chance, and so will I.

In my thinking I gat upon my feet; and there sat Abe, staring at me. I seemed to know that he had asked me some new question. "Aw knaw not which is t' warst," he said, "thee, or 'Lizabeth whether. Aw left her for a bit o' company; but aw *declare* aw've been talking into th' wind! Are ye o' one mind, to hooin me?"

I cannot tell what fashion of tenderness and old liking came over me. "Nay, bless tha, Abe!" I cried. "Tha mun think nowght on't. I've been a bit moithered latterly. Let's

be going."

"Aw think tha hes been moithered," said he.

I drew him on to his feet, and put my arm about him for a stay. But with his independent spirit he wanted no helping. "Aw s' manage," he said. Aw've a stick."

I laughed at him, for joyfulness. "Well," I said, tha's gotten up. "Tha *can* get down."

So I let him pick his way among stones and lingbobs, and my heart was as light as thistle-dawn. Dare I go with him all the way, and let her see me?

In a lane that runs athwart the hill we met Gurt

[183] Tom, him that had spoken to me in the chapel. What, Abe?" he said. "Tha'rt gittin' cant (nimble) agean!" And when we stopped to talk with him he told us a tale that suited me rarely.

He was no way suited, himself; he told it for a grievance, with a face like grit-stone. "What's ta think Sammy's for doing?" he said. "Why, t' kine munnot eyt (graze) this bit o' girss by t' lane side. No, they munnot. Them's his orders! Man 'at drives t' coach ran over a beast down o' th' turnpike; so aw'm to be done out o' th' only pastur aw hev. Ea!"

He had a slow way of chewing his words that I cannot render, and he looked as fierce out of his beard as a dog.

"Aw see little sense in't," said Abe, agreed.

"No, nor me. But aw've done him this morning! Ea, aw hev. Aw gate up when't were coming leeght, and turned 'em out then. 'Thomas, ' aw said, 'we willn't be chet.' So aw sat me down on a stone and ruminated, while t' kine filled their bellies."

"Reight," said Abe.

"Ay, but tha knaws, Sammy's been fearful keen; for aw *telled* him aw s' do as aw like. Ea, aw did. So when aw'd ruminated a time, aw said, 'Thomas, look up.' And aw looked up. Ea! And theer aw spied his head, coming ower t' shouther o' th' hill."

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"Oh, ay? He're missing his bed, then."

"Ea, he wor. But aw said: '*Thomas!* —

'Thy little flock in safety keep,

For lo, the wolf is nigh!"

Ea. And aw turned 'em into th' ling."

As we drew down to the roadside, Abe went too fast for me. If he had rested, I should for certain have told him what there was between me and his winsome daughter; for my blood was dancing; only I knew not how to begin, for swamousness. However, we moved on steadily, and up the turnpike road toward their house; and by that time swamousness troubled me another way, for, lad-like, I had liefer have planned to be alone with her nor gone to see her with him by to watch us. So when we stopped anent the door, I was for slipping away.

"Nay," said he, " come and sit a bit. What, tha's nowght to do, John!"

I was ready to give an excuse, but my eenlighted on a woman squinting out across the road, and at that I made no more ado. Ay, my een then were sharp. As we entered I spied another thing— the tail of a skirt vanishing round the door of that back kitchen: and I duffed straight.

"Come forrad," Abe said. "Shut t' door, lad, and mak thysen at home." And then he shouted, "Elizabeth! Here's John."

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Now, when no answer came I judged that she had run out, and I wanted to tell him not to heed; but I did not find my tongue.

"Elizabeth!" he calls again. "Wheer art-a?" And then with a still voice she said, "I hear yo' father."

"Oh," he said, and sat him down contented. "Shut t' door," he said again to me. "It's but a cowl day."

I stood with the door in my hand. "Nay," I answered him. "I'll not come in this time. I'll come some other time."

"Now, aw s' be grieved, directly," said he, with a sudden sharpness. "What hae

we done, like? Sit tha down by t' fire, and 'Lizabeth'll put th' kettle on. We've nowght mich, but ye can happen do wi' a soop o' tea."

"Nay, I'll come some other time," I persevered; and at that Elizabeth showed herself. Her face was strangely colourless, not with any excitement, for she looked weary just, but as if she had partly lost her health, too; and as soon as I saw her Iforgat all shyness and fear, in a strong desire to comfort her. But she walked over to Abe, and her een never came near me.

"Father, let him go," she said. "It's me he doesn't want to see."

The difference in her looks moithered me. I began

[186] to feel a trembling, and to fear I knew not what. And it moithered me most of all to see the way she put her hand on his shoulder, standing by his chair. I could say nought but her name just, and when I uttered it she looked at me full steadily.

"Ye'd do better to go, John," she said. "I did wrong to speak to ye before."

I saw that it was so. I had had no right to go near her. "Good-bye," I said; and then I shut myself out. I believe I stood a time, letting folk see, for I was not master of myself; but all that I fairly recollect of it is walking down the road trying to look as I did at other times, and, in my mind, hurrying to be in a quiet spot.

I sat me down on a stone-heap, a little way out of the sight of houses, and strave to see what had been in her heart; however, I made nought of it— but that I had lost her.

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CHAPTER XVI.

HELP OUT OF LANCASHIRE.

The sharp crack of a voice that I knew shook me up fro this dismay, like a whip wakening a dull horse. Binnie Driver stood over anent, looking keenly at me under his thacked brow.

"Nowthen!" he cried. "Hes thou nought better to do, John, nor cower like a beggarman by t' wayside?"

I do not know that I cared much; but I felt my face go red, and I did rise to my feet. I saw that he was coming home after a deal of walking, for his shoon and his hose were splashed, and he looked haggard.

"I hear strange tales about tha," he said. "What does thy mother say?"

He had never spoken so to me till that time; and I liked him well. "She says nought," I answered out of a full heart. "But if I had no mother Is 'd hae summat to do!... I s'd go to prison."

He looked up and down the road. "I thowght so," he muttered; and he came towards me. When he spake

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again his voice was as gentle as a woman's. "John, my poor lad," he said. "Thou s'ould ha' telled me this afore. Thou s'd ha' telled me afore, John." And at that I lost command, and cried like a barn. Partly I was weak, through having eaten little; for I stumbled against him trying to turn away.

"Nay, nay, lad," he said. "This willn't do. This'll niver do. Sit tha down agean."

We sat down together, and he made me tell him all the mischief, first and last. "Ay," he kept saying. "Ay. For sure." But when he knew that I fired the shot, he struck his hand on his thigh. "What, *thou* killed him?" he asked, low under his voice; and as I ended he seemed to ponder it, and drew in a long breath between his teeth. "Ay-ay-ay," he cried, chafing.

"Thou's telled nobody else?"

"No."

"Nor Weasel willn't. Near six week sin', is't not? And there's but one 'at saw tha... Eh, these rabbits!"

"Ye do not think," I asked him, "'at I ought to confess? "

He darted one sharp glance at me, and then went on with his thinking. I can oft see him so, an elbow on either knee, and his stern countenance unchanging.

"It's wrang," he said to himself, softly. "It's all

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wrang." And while I wondered what his meaning was, he sprang up, and spake with a strong voice.

" 'The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor,' " he said: " 'Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.' Dost know where that is, John? It's i' t' Tenth Psalm, lad. Ay, ay. 'Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand.' Be sure it is so. Oft I turn to that Psalm. 'The poor committeth himself unto Thee; Thou art the helper of the fatherless.' " He repeated some of this Scripture more nor once, and I know not which of us was most moved. "Be not cast down, then," he said. "Were there'n't cities of refuge provided, for them 'at killed any unawares? Confess, says ta? Thou hes confessed, my lad, and found forgiveness!

"It's a queer do," he said, "if Lazarus munnot sam up t' crumbs now. We are not full of sores bodily, and we lig at no man's yate; but what by that? Who gav Dives a reight to set his dogs on us?"

He sat him down again, watching me awhile, and pondering, with now and then an exclamation. "God forgie me if I tell tha wrang," he said at last. "If I be a blind leader! But thou mun think o' summat else, John. Thou mun keep thy strength and thy young spirit, lad. ... Ay, I saw ther' summat amiss wi' tha. Thou's been strange."

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And when he spake again, I thought he forced a cheerfulness. "If we could but get a fair start: a straight going on. This Free Trade's what we want, John. We could stand agean t' power looms if we hed that. What thinkst? A reight weiver fears no power loom. Now, does he? "

"No," I said: for so we reckoned. "If he can but keep his loom gaited (in going order)."

"Not he," says Binnie, with a laugh. "No, tha munnot lose spunk, lad. There's a deal 'at do. These 9, 000 'at signed t' petition; eh? ¹ Ay, but power looms are standing (idle) this time, as weel as hand looms. ...

"I wish I could see th' end on't, John." I wish I could do ought to help yo'," I said. After we had sat a time longer, on a sudden he stretched himself, gritting his teeth

with a make of impatience; and we walked up the road together. Now, we had hardly passed his house, going on to the shed, when one of his barns ran after him with a letter; and as soon as he had looked at it, "Praise God!" he cries: " 'Way wi' tha! Tell 'em all to come i' t' morn! O thou of little faith— ' Nay, never stand gaping! What, there's weiving for ten week." And his een fairly seemed to dance and shout.

¹This petition, presented to Parliament two months earlier, prayed for protection against the competition of the power loom, to which all the prevalent distress was ascribed.— J. K. S.

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I was contented when I saw him so joyful; but, some way, I had as lief another had been sent on that errand. However, good tidings will mense a brazen messenger; and I have been asked to tell of it many a time. This order, that came unlooked for out of Lancashire, was the beginning of a better time ;after then, whether by luck or management, there was no such lack of work in Binnie's shed as long as it was a shed—and that was nine or ten years longer, till power looms came to Cragside, and a better wage.

There were some that laughed and some that cried; some that ran to tell others, doing part of my message, and some that just sat down and looked at their barns. Nay, there was one made a grumble of it. "It're time," he said. "We've gitten down to nettle porridge and stown (stolen) turnips." But he spake so more as a way of showing plucky nor out of any ill-nature. And if at first I had been poor-hearted, I could not choose but gather a heartiness as I went, for even the little ones understood it. I had to pass one row of houses twice, and I must have been a flintheart the second time not to see how they looked at me.

"Heigh!" cries one little man after me; and I cried back "Hello!" and partly stopped. He stood no taller than my knee, but his "Heigh" was as strong

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as a carter's "Whoa." Thought I, " *Thou's* not been pined, choose how."

"Are ye goin' about wi' cake?" says he.

The others were laughing. "Now, then," I said, "which on yo' telled him that?" and there was a little lass that blushed.

"Nay," I answered him. "Thou mun wait a bit, and thou'll happen get some then."

Through all this, I was meadless how to show myself again to Elizabeth, even with good tidings. Nay, the better my news, the more I must seem to be outfacing her. It would be a stark brutality.

But two or three weavers lived far out in the parish, and when I came back to Abe's, last of all, the house was in darkness; so I went in home to my bed with a kind of ease.

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CHAPTER XVII.

I LOSE A MATE AND A KEEPSAKE.

It always surprised and pleased me, when I thought of it, that my mother, being a keen-sighted woman, had never seen cause to guess aright what ailed me; for strange I had surely been, as Binnie said. Never a word had she uttered about my roamings in these latter weeks, more than to blame me for going out sometimes with nought to eat—a trick she balked me of at last by putting haver cracknels in my pocket when I slept. It appeared that because I had said I would go no more poaching, she was content. Nor had she for many a day shown me ought but a cheerful face; especially since my "bringing-in" at chapel. If I spake at all of bad times, "Tha'll be reight, John," she would say, " when ta settles to work again;" and if she saw me more cast down nor common, then she was sure to be full of talk. But I liked this talking little, for it was a new thing in her.

Think not that I owed her any grudge because she

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feared to see me wed; I dare say I was never much minded to hear such things as she would tell. Sometimes I wondered that she fretted so little for my father. I had small discernment. There was plenty of time to fret without my seeing it.

But when I had been a week working, and she still saw me at odds with her, out of tune and heedless— for now I cowered at home o' nights— she left me to myself. "Now," thought I, "she'll be fretting." I doubt I was not troubled; but so it was, that I made no murmur over a thing she had done that nearly angered me. There was no fault in it; she could have known no better; but it chanced that all I had ever had from Elizabeth was in a little drawer in my chamber, and when I went once to look at it, this drawer had been emptied.

"Ah!" I said. "I munnot keep a bit o' red leaf just! So jealous." And I came down the stairs with a fire in my breast. She had heard me rummaging. She looked at me weary-like, and as if she had aged on a sudden, without my knowing it till then. Yet though I held my peace, that little loss appeared no less nor all; and I laid me down and put one arm across my face, past caring what she might make out I could not choose but call to mind how I gat my keepsake. It was that bright morn when I gathered blackberries, with a lass that looked so clear and

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bonnie. There was a red leaf shining in the sun, so she plucked it to show me what a colour it had, and I kept it.

After a time my mother spake. "I think," she said, "ye rue what ye've done for me, John."

"Oh, let me be!" I cried, for I saw not her meaning.

"Ay," says she, "I know I'm no company for ye. I'm i' t' gate. Ye do but suffer me, I know that. "

"Mother!" I started up, "how can ye say so? Ye've no occasion to say it. God knows, ye're all I hae to do for."

"It's good to see, John," she said. "Ye cannot hid it. Sin' ever ye stopped going wi' 'Lizabeth ye've rued it continually."

At that I was dumfounded. She thought I had broken it off to please her; and I

might have seen as much in all her ways with me.

"But go back to her if thou wilt. Do thy own way, not mine; for I see it'll never do— thou cannot thoil it me. Go cai wi' her, and *leave* me. Thou mut as weel be wi' her as not, for all t' comfort thou hes for me, John."

"Mother, mother!" I burst out then. "I cannot bide to hear such talk!"— for it sounded to me like foolishness. "Ye know not what ye're saying. Ye'd never be so cruel-minded. Ask Binnie, then, or Abe, if ye will; onybody'll say I've been proud to do

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for ye!... Ay, my father would tell if he could speak."

But when I named my father she trembled, and presently at after, I saw that she had put her apron to her face. That softened me, to be sure; and I think she could not doubt that I kept my love for her. It was not so wonderful that we had differed. The wonder was, she had been so long patient. As for her hard words, she wanted nought but a little comfort. When I knelt beside her, and showed her what I aimed to be to her, she unsaid them all, and that with an eagerness beyond doubting. Her tears were dried directly, and she shook her head at my comfortable talk.

"But thou mun wed her, my lad," she said. "I've set my mind on that. Ay, I know thou'll do reight by me; but it's nature. I meant tha to wed her; not so soon just, but when we git better times again. I've allus liked Elizabeth."

And if I had to tell her then to say no more, it did me good to be at peace with her. There had long been nought but misunderstanding.

The same night, just afore bedtime, there came a gentle scratting at the window, and a dry cough that I had learned to know for Weasel's. I went out wondering. There he stood, propped against the doorcheek, scarce to be seen for mingled shine and darkness.

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"Witta come ower t' road?" he said; and we walked across, and leaned upon the wall. I call it to mind as if 't were yesternight; a warm and quiet gloaming under a heavy sky, with just a puff of fresh wind that smelled of the field.

"Well," he said, "how's John-o'-Jackie' Lad?" and clapped me on the shoulder.

I know not what mettled me, but I slipped one arm around him, and lifted Weasel off his feet.

"Gaw-y'-on!" he muttered, when I had set him down; "hest-a-n't hugged me enough? Aw mud be a wench."

"Nay," said I. "Not thou. Tha'rt as hard's a board."

"Well, how art-a?" he cried again; and when I had given him some make of an answer he seemed to hae nought left on his tongue. I think it dawned on me even then that he was strange. And in a bit he gave a sort of a laugh. "It's a poor spot, is Cragside," he said. "Aw knawn't what aw're doing to come tul't."

"Why," said I, "thou'rt born here, if I be not mistaen."

"They say so!" he cried—making as if it had oft puzzled him—"An' aw've stopped till now."

Then it flashed on me that he was for off; and I do not think a parting ever worse agreed with me.

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"Aw knawn't who made me welcome, nawther," he ran on; "no-but one woman, 'at're living i' Cornshaw while four days sin'. Nay, tha knew nowght about her. Cower quiet. But aw judge there's part fowk'll be fain to see t' back on me."

"I salln't," I said; and turned my back on him, for grief and lonesomeness.

"Witta-n't? Well, aw believe tha willn't. Come wi' me!"

I judge I made some sign, but he knew that I should not go.

"No, tha cannot, aw expect," he owned; and fell to ruminating. "Egow, tha maks me homesick afore aw start. Binnie'll be fain: what thinks ta? Well, niver heed! aw've happen done too mich."

"Tha's nowght o' t' sort!" I said, for I could not bide. "Is that what tha'rt going for?"

"Nay," he laughed, "not so. But aw mun be where there's a warm house for me."

So I saw that his mind was fixed. "Well," I said, "tha mun do as tha wilt."

Save in our house, and my mother coming sometimes to the door, there was

neither light nor stir by the time we said good-bye; and with all his wantonness it was plain to see that he little cared to be going; indeed, we passed a deal of time with little to say.

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he should but come back with me if I did; we had best part and have done. And so, like a tale when it is finished, the truest mate that ever I had went out of my life. We had been far too little together, I could see.

"When sail I see tha again?" I said.

"When tha brings that lass of Abe's to Girsston." With that he was going; but he turned back, still for a merry ending. "But tha munnot say 'Weasel.' He's lost. Tha mun *inquire for Thomas Driver*, lad; and see tha doffs thy cap to me, or tha'll get no fishing. Say nowght!" And then he vanished, with a fling of his arm.

When I drew indoors again, the candle-light daunting me, it was as if I came into an afflicted house. My mother went softly hither and thither, making for bed, so in a little time she left me; and at last her footfall over my head creaked no more in the chamber. As for Weasel, it seemed to me that he did well; I could be glad over him; yet, some way, his going brought me to a bodeful standstill. I sat and mused on his exploits, and knew not how it ailed me: for they stirred in my mind jauntily, some that I had shared as well as the others, and even then I partly believed that they were safely ended. At my heart there was nought but rue.

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But at last, as if I had forgotten, there came to me suddenly the fresh, sweet memory of my first lovedays, and hers. Ay, but she did love me; she showed it freely, without any fear of me; there were times when, as we stood together by night, I had held her while she sighed and fell asleep in my arms, tired out with her housework, and well content. I held her so, warm and quietly breathing, and sometimes touched her smooth hair gently with my mouth, not to waken her; yet, when she did waken, she never moved.

But once, she looked up at me with a timid face. "Eh, John!" she whispered. "If I weren't sure on yo'!" It made me proud then.

This was near the time of night we stole our meetings, Abe in his first sleepin the living-room; and to me a night missed was as much as a week's journey. Yet, sometimes, of my own accord I went with Weasel! Ay, but if ever I waited in vain, and saw at last a gleam in her chamber, I could not bide. The want of her was a keen dart quivering, till ever she put her arms around my neck again.

We planned continually how we should do when we were wed; nor ever feared for slack times. One home to keep and both working, my mother to do for Abe— it looked far better; and for us no partings.

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not touch her hand. It was somewhat, and yet when I had it what better was I?
A wench's love, for a man's life; and that was my bargain. I would have given
my own life stighter, only to keep what I had lost.

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CHAPTER XVIII.
BUT I FIND MY OWN AGAIN.

So ye see I managed at this time to forget where I stood, and what little mense there was in me to join myself with a wench so blameless, and one that I had altogether wronged. But indeed I could never go long without remembering her cold looks, when Abe would have brought us together; and at that memory I sweated to think she cared no more for me— for it was my own doing.

The main fear began to be that my mother would meddle. For a day or two she was just herself again; only more watchful-like, and moithered to know what she could find to better my strength, because I seemed to be pithless and low. And I believe if there had been any right herb in the house, I should have had to drink it. Then she fell to talking of time to come, as if all were settled, and she thought to make me see that we

should do very well. I could not tell *her*, and

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so I let her plan on. Finding me for ever dull, an ember not to be rekindled, at last she spared her breath; but I knew she would never be content. So I said one night:

"Mother, I wish ye'd not trouble your mind. There's nought to be won wi' worrying. Is' be reight i' time."

She offered no answer just then; plied her needle, without so much as looking up.

"Ye need not blame yourself," I said. "Ye've no cause to do so. I've gien her a chance to piece it up, mother; but I can see it's better as 'tis. Ay, ye shake your head; but I can see things 'at ye cannot. Let it be, mother; we s' never be o' one mind till ye Do let it be."

"Ay, well," she said then: and that was all she did say. But as time passed, and she saw me less cast down— for after that I was tied to seem so— she gave me less uneasiness. I might have known her better, but I see not what more I could have said; unless it had been that we ought to wait for good times, as she herself had purposed.

Then, forsooth, she turned face about, and praised other wenches to me. Why, there was never a wench in England to stand beside mine. They were but empty faces. Does it not look as if so much beauty and lowliness called for some better comfort? Ay, if

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I had been free to offer it! Nobody had then gotten leave to talk of others.

But I care not who he be, to a young lad the Spring season is blithesome. I could waken of a May morning, and, no matter how I had laid me down, I could rise and be fain of the sun. A grand blue sky, and all around me as pure as it were new made— when I saw it I donned my clothes with a will. There was right weather that year; and a bountiful reaping to end it.

Nay, I was not without hope in myself either. The main fear of the gallows had

passed off me; the foul thought of Lang Jim Bailey among the rushes chilled me now but seldom; and in all my fond rueings, sacless, I could still look onward to a time when I might confess to one other, and be done. It was ill waiting, of a surety, and most because she had shown me a strange countenance; I knew not rightly whether she suffered or no. Yet oft, in my mind, she was coming fro the well.

Then came the Saturday when I saw the reward out: "MURDER," and £100 for my life. I saw it on my morning way to the shed, and held on past it with one look, my knees knocking together. At the forenoon drinking I had to go look again; and straightway then I slipped in home.

"Mother," I said, "ye've never said ought to Elizabeth?"

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My sudden coming flustered her. "My lad," she cried— and stopped, her lips awork.

"Ye have!"

"I — I did it for t' best," she stammered, and laid hold of my smock. So we stood for a minute, me with some make of darkness afore my een; while I heard her give a little whimpering sound.

"What said she?" I asked her then.

But my mother thought I wanted a different answer, so she dared not speak. However, at last, "My poor lad!" she sobs, and puts up her old arms to my neck, for pity.

"Ye need not tell," I said quietly. "She'll hae nought to do wi' me, I know."

I do not mean to say that I was suited (well pleased). It can hardly be thought. Nay, I was more stunned than ought else; as I wrought the next two or three hours a bitter anger grew in me, my mother's way on't made me look so little.

The looms stopping brought me back to myself; but like as I had liefer have kept on. Downstairs, Binnie stood at the door, questioning me with his steady look. "Well," he said, talking full cheerfully, but in a way betwixt his teeth. "It looks as they were bothered, John." I believe, at bottom, he felt more to fear what threatened nor I did.

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"Do ye think so?" said I. "I wish they'd hae done, then. I'm stalled o' waiting for 'em."

He would have kept me talking, but his kindness jaeged on me, and I came away home; my anger simmering down to a coldness of misery. It chanced my mother should be out, and I was glad when I saw it, being, I think, at the far end of endurance, and wishing for nought so much as to throw myself down and forget all. "I cannot mend it (I thought); let it go by, then: I am but a bare looker-on, every way." I was overwrought, too, with a vengeance of weaving. So I fell into a daze, a blackbird piping at me near at hand, and a cool air, sweeter than at all common, puffing in sometimes on my temples. It was like an afternoon in July; all fallen to quietness, but for a cry of lambs after the shorn sheep, and in the road some childer talking.

Dreaming so, I was in a good way; my mind ran on, with a glisk of things past that I had seen and done, but dully, as if they were some tale of another; and I knew not that it was me, at odd times shaken with a burthensome sighing, so sleepywise it came, and easeful. I was for letting nought disturb me; my face snuggled on my arm, I looked not up when I heard, as I thought, my mother's quiet foot on the kitchen floor.

It came a step or two, and stopped. I heard that

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blackbird calling; it is the one bird I hearken for to this day. Then, on a trembling whisper, my own name; and it roused me like a wick noise in the nighttime.

"Elizabeth!" I cried out

She was standing a piece off, and what flaed me was to see again how her face had altered, all the bonny colour drawn out of it, and a look in it as if she feared me.

"Has my mother sent ye?" I said. For I knew not what to say, and my heart had started galloping.

Her pretty head just dropped, and there came a touch of red on her cheeks. "Ye are not fain to see me, then?"

I stood like a stock, letting her think so.

"When I've come to say 'at I'm sorry," she said: and oh, but her voice lifted

strangely. "I am sorry," she told me. "I can see, now, that I was hard. But ye know yourself I'd been provoked; ye must own it. And I cannot tell why ye kept it back, if ye loved me as— as ye made it seem ye did."

I think my breast was like to crack with her talking. It was pitiful, surely. But she waited then, to hear me say somewhat; and I could do nought but watch her.

"But I see," she said, with a quick and timid slash of her een," I see it's to be ended betwixt us; nor I

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think ye cannot lay it to my fault, John. Your mother cannot, I think. And I wish I'd known afore ye kissed me; so then there'd have been less to rue."

At that poor sadness I cried out fairly, and she came about me with her hands. "What is there?" she said. "What makes ye do so, John?" and me striving to keep her off. "Oh, I never meant to say it, but we seemed to be different, at first when ye came. John! Let me see your face. I cannot live if ye turn fro me. What is it ye're thinking? I'm sure I never did ought but love ye."

My arms, that should have folded her, hung by my sides. "Oh, my lass," I said, "it's not ye, you bonnie lass. ... Eh, yes'd never have been put to this. It's ower cruel. My blithesome wench." But with that I could not hold fro stroking her hair, and giving her all fond names, being utterly lost in pity for her; and she took it as if we were just as we had been. Nay, I knew not rightly what I did till she held up her wan, sweet face to me, and I saw her lips parted, with an eagerness.

"Oh, my love!" I cried then, "I cannot. I am not fit at all. Nay, let me go, Lizzie."

"But I've forgien yo', lad," she whispered. "John! I want ye to."

A make of dreadful hurry gathered in me. What could I do but tell her?

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Of a sudden she cried out, wild-like. "Ah, not this time!" she said. "Let's be mates;— do not forsake me this time. We've allus been mates, John." And at that I nerved myself, and spake it quick in her ear:

"Lizzie, lass," I said, "they can hang me; I've killed a man ... But they willn't," I telled her. "I do not *believe* they will. Ye can see for yoursel— they've hed to put a reward out. ...But it're niver a murder, Lizzie. Ye do not think it're a murder, do yo'? Nay, my wench! See, he were just shot wi' an empty gun, marlaking; they cannot fully hang me for an empty gun, can they? For a marlake?" Follies, I talked, fit to deave her, for she had given me a fearful strange look; and then I felt her wax heavy on my arms. My lass was in a swoon.

So I laid her down, all death-like, on the settle. Ay, but I had no cause to fear—repenting straightway of what I had said, and daft to undo it ;for when her een opened, and I still persevered to make it plain, she clipped me down to her, stopping my words with the strong toil of her bosom. "Oh, I'm fain," she murmured. At that my heart fell a-dancing, and while I still marvelled, up she sat, and "Oh!" she cries, "Ye s'ould ha' telled me, my poor lad. My lad! And me grieving all for mysel. Oh, are ye sure they willn't tak ye? Are ye sure ye— ye shot him?"

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What with the joy of it, and her way of asking, I could have laughed and cried together. I said, "I'm sure ye love me!"

But not so fast. No; we did but taste. For she put my arms away to go look out, and to shut the door on us— and then no more; I must tell her all the shameful tale. At first, indeed, I thought to put it quickly by; but her questions threw me back so oft, and her timid and puzzled look as oft as what she asked, that I saw myself losing all comfort. The need of it craved in me sorely; but I must still moil and sweat awhile in the bog that parted us.

I cannot frame to show what way I tortured her, striving to make it look no worse nor like, and to wrap it up in little compass. Parts of it, when she groped me for them, were as ill to tell as lies. But a black matter cannot be so handled; let there be any gainless piece of it not uncovered, that piece will be thought the foulest; and for my own felter of miseries and stubborn love, I could not talk of it at the same time. She understood a deal amiss; and for all she kept a brave steadiness, I saw her more fearful whatever I said. I saw that her study was to spy out my death for a certain thing. And to

have her sitting by me so patiently, with never a word of blame, and proffering all manner of simple consolation out of a sinking heart, I was like to go mad. At

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last there fell some farther talk about Sleek, and I spied her paleness all flushed over.

I came to a stoppage, tongue-tied; and her een quivered and swerved as she met my look. "Ye never said," she told me, "'at he did not get better."

"Surely," I answered her. "Oh, my lass, let's talk no more! Such a thing s'ould never ha' been twixt thee and me; and thou's done nought, to bear ony part on't. Nay, I never aimed to tell tha, Lizzie, never!— till all were past and done wi', I thought. Oh, I know not why I let it slip. If we'd never come together, then it might ha' been better." And no more could I say, for the grief that burst my bosom.

Tender her hands were, drawing me back to her; tender her snod cheek, cool-touching mine. "Never think that, John," she murmured. "Thou's no call to say that." And light on my face I felt her kisses hover. "My old mate! It maks no matter... If— if they willn't tak tha fro me!"

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CHAPTER XIX.
LEAVE TO HOLD IT.

But for one little piece this tale should now be finished. I have to show a farther mercy, whereby, in a few days' time, it was granted me to see for certain that I had nought to fear fro man's law. Of all the mercies God in his loving kindness has laid upon me, this I think the greatest, next only to her that is the mense and comfort of my years. Nay, they are both but one, in a way; for lacking full assurance of my life and liberty, I had never ventured to take her to wife. I had never been my own man at all. It looks as if, in time, I should have known myself safe; but there is such a thing as a man's pluck being killed. Even as it was, there were times I bethought me of Old Matty, her saying that she would see me hiding again; and I was fairly plagued with it till I had shaved my beard, to spite her monishments.

It cannot have been more nor a week after my wench crept back to me, that Binnie came upstairs one

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afternoon and said that he had some news; I must go down. By the weight of his hand on my shoulder, I judged there was little amiss; still he had a way with him that partly flustered me.

"These landlord's men," he began; "how many wor there, says-ta?"

I told him. "There were three that fought and some that gathered at after."

"Some that gathered!" said he, and seemed not to like my answer. "Well—thou's *one* less to reckon wi', choose how; and he's an ill un," said he. "That clever-head out o' Kildwick'll mell nomore."

"Him!" said I. "What"

"Nay, I know nought about it," he cried; "nor want to know. I'm well content 'at he's gone." And he looked at me sternly a time, and then turned away.

"Will he be gone for good?" I asked him.

"That'll be his way on't," he answered; still with his back toward me. "Sammy I can do wi'; we know one another... And tha mun thank God I hedn't heard tha talk afore they came."

To be sure, I partly saw how that matter stood with him; but my mind was hardly steady: "Where's he gone, then?" said I.

"Ha!" cried he with a snap, "he left no word. 'The wicked flee when no man pursueth, lad.' Thou's

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read that... But I could wish thou'd never telled me, John; I could! They'll put some awkward questions if we come to't."

"Why, but," said I, a little matter abashed, "if he be gone for good, ye'll not be troubled."

"How says-ta?" he cried.

"Ye cannot. He're all that saw me, fairly."

"I thought so," said he.

He stood and scanned my look till I was out of countenance. It was as if I took my safety over joyfully. And when he had marched back and forward once across the place, "It seems to me, John," he said, with his een cast down, and his hands behind him, "'at thou s'ould go down o' thy knees and gie thanks to God! I know not what thou thinks. Thanks for thy life; and for a chance to better it. It might ha' been taen, John, as eft as not, and niver forget that! 'Whom he foresaw, him Healso foreordained.' Thou's been marvellously dealt wi', John; marvellously dealt wi'. I'd no 'casion to doubt it, but I did. Ay, I've been sore buffeted wi' doubts this last week; i' deep waters; and a deal too much fashed wi' my awn part in't, as weel. I saw not my way at all."

To set down all he said is more nor I can do. I was very like a little lad that has gotten leave to run out, when his mother sticks to his coat-sleeve, telling him not to go near water, or climb any trees. He

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gave me a mint of gradely counsel, and, at after, I stored up some of it; but I should happen have kept it better in mind if he had first of all told me what he had heard. The tale was that this constable took money for other folk's beasts: and Binnie knew no more, for he was never one that would hearken to evil speaking. As for me, I could not leave it so; little grass grew while I sought out *that* business (there was another man in it, that drave the cattle and sold them); but not because I doubted Binnie's news at all, or feared to sing Hip Hurray for my liberation.

"I mun just slip out," I managed to say at last, "afore I sit in to my loom again." And I dare uphold that he shook his head after me, grieving that some empty matter came anent his exhortation. Ye may guess what errand I was on, and it runs in my mind I set off at a canter. Well, her door was locked. "Ne'er heed," thinks I. "There's a watchful sort of a woman I should recollect i' these parts;" and straight across to her I went.

"Hae ye seen Abe' lass?" said I, and let her spy a merry look, for her heart's content. She was a grosh lump of a body, with a fearful dolesomeness about her.

"Lizabeth?" said she. "Ay, shoo'll nut be in. Ye *hev* made it up, then?"

"I'm hoping so," I answered. "Can ye say where she is just now?"

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"Tha'rt keen set, aw see," she said with a flear. "So wor aw, at thy age, my lad; oh, and so wor him 'at reckons to keep me. Ye'll sooin be wed, aw dar be bun'."

"Can ye say?" I cut her short.

"Eh, what a fluster!" she cries then. "Shoo's off to Glusburn, for seur, wi' her spinning. Is there owght wrang?"

"There is that!" said I fro the door. "T' Crag's never safe." A laddish speech, but I thought she would have somewhat new to watch.

Then I stretched away for Glusburn, stepping on air. The king was never so happy. I looked continually sharp ahead to every twist of the road, and heard myself chuckle and crow; and I capered off and on like a man that is fresh with liquor. A stoneknapper saw me, and cried "Heigh!" and I cried back, "Heigh! Th' good time's coming!" Whereon I perceived that I had spoken in jest a true word, the very word I was carrying to my faithful, fretting wench, and my een filled with the best tears that ever brightened sunshine. Not till then had I felt the goodness of God in it; but it stopped me like a hand laid on my shoulder, and there where I stood, in the open road bare-headed, I gave thanks in my heart for His great mercy to her and to me.

At after that I went on partly sobered, but still

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very joyful, nigh to Glusburn, and spied her afar off, and flang up an arm to let her know that I was coming. At nearing her the blood for eagerness tingled in my limbs. So when I could fairly see her bonnie face, wondering and pale, and pleased, I looked "about none, but shouted, for all to hear that might do, I'm free, lass! Free!"

Not a word did she answer, but came steadily on with her bundle, while Iran to meet her, crying my news a third time, and so took her in my arms, bundle and all. "Oh, I'm free, Lizzie," I said, and kissed her clear brow. "Can ye think it? I am. Ye've nought

to fear now, my lady lass!— my wench !... Can yen't take it in?"

"Ay," she said. "I knew it wor that when I saw ye at first."

You would never credit what a quietness sat upon her, for she was like no other; but her face then was just an angel's face, shining;— only that it looked up to mine ! So I must kiss the new-blown rose on either cheek, and praise her beauty; she being well content, I think (though she always took my praise for a show of liking, and not a thing to be much believed); and it seemed as if I could never say enough, about that and all my happiness, and the times when I longed .for her, hopeless. But presently she found a sly word to steady me.

[218] "Will ye n't tell me what's been done?" she said.

So I showed her how I was safe, and parts of what Binnie had earnestly said to me; and she hearkened with her pleasant, sober look, and a glister of peeping tears. And when we had walked on a piece, fallen to a silence, "My father 'll be satisfied now," she said. I was a proud lad that day, bringing her back to Craggside. Young courters were seldom so bold then; they gat together slyly at dark, as we had done; and if any were seen in daylight, the talk went that they were razed. But I cared for no such foolishness, nor would have done if I had thought more on it. "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing." That stoneknapper suited me best, when he paid me back; for as we came along he stopped his hammer, and put up his black spectacles to watch us past, and says he, with a nod, "Now! Shoo's a rare wench, is Good Times!"

I took her in to my mother, straightway. She was thrang at her bakstone, ¹ and I can tell of a grand smell of haver bread meeting us in the door. " Mother," I said, " just look round." For I had never let her know till then.

"Eh!" she cried, and down went her ladle, "Elizabeth!"

¹A bakstone is a slate or iron plate for baking thin oat cakes upon.— J. K. S.

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Well, I left them together, for they were both in a taking; and back to my loom— with a power of merry work in me such as I had not felt for many a day. Nor did I ever stall again, as long as I held pickingstick and slayboard. I might manage *now* as well as some, if I were put to it;— it could not tew me more nor this writing has done, choose how.

Yet I am not altogether fain to finish, though there is one that thinks I have said a deal too much, and wrought over hard for no very sensible purpose. Ink and pen have kept me in toit (beguiled the time) these three years and more, and I shall be at a standstill when they are up on the firecase. But to go on and show the full tale of my life, and how Cragside came to be what it is now, and all about them that live in it, I should be younger. I will leave that tale to somebody else, if any there be that care so much about it. I can do to smoke my pipe, and watch folk thrive.

At all events, I have eased my own mind a bit, and shown the younger end whether they need to be thankful, born when they were. Some among them will be capt (surprised) at this poaching, for I think the swarth has been kept on it by all that have heard it hitherto. They will do well to keep out of the way of such-like mischief, an they can but think so; yet, for that matter, in these days there is little temptation. Weasel was about the last that did much. When he

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came back to Cragside he had no other trade in his fingers, and never seemed to want another. He poached off and on as long as he lived; paid his way manfully, they say, and led his merry life, as I can testify. If he was none of my mates again, we never lacked good will, on one side or on the other.

For as we stood at the time of that parting, I judged his peril to be more nor mine; and my redemption left him still in jeopardy. There was the underkeeper that had seen him; his journey to Providence Fold should have pricked that Leeds man's ears, and brought him ranging into Kildwick parish; and it was queer if Sammy never found his cap changed, or guessed the trick of it. After five or six years, it might be thought that all had blown over; but I liked ill to see the risk run— for what if Weasel had been taken, and me to blame ?

There is one thing left undone if the tale be ended; I cannot go on to show Binnie Driver's management of all of us, to turn us into better ways. We should have thrived little but for him, and more, I dare say, if he had not left us. For he did leave us, and the weaving shop was made into houses; he went to live near two of his lads, back of Pendle, and there died a gradely death when his summons came. I can never think that he ought to have gone. Toward the end he had very few weavers, for, in spite of his talk,

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hand looms would not do. But he might have run a power mill if he would. There was a firm at Colne that wanted to set him up with looms, and give him his own time to pay for them. I know not all that passed in his mind; however, his use had been to pay over to us what the weaving fetched, and charge a simple shop-room rent, and it seemed that he could not like a different way of doing. There were good masters after him, and still are; but the day that he went about saying good-bye was one of the heaviest days I have seen.

Then there may be some that want to know what make of wife mine is. It is not just as young folk plan it; they have a deal to learn. Well, she has taken good care of me, and never wearied; bred me fine children, seven of them, and brought them up to be a mense to us both; managed cleverly on little, and always known where to find corn in Egypt. Dark times and bright, her wisdom and cheerfulness have been a sure nourishment; nay, the dark times have been the best times, for then we have drawn nearest together. And so we still agree, looking on to the darkest time of all, and see our children round about us, and some of their children, that are strangely fond of this kitchen on baking days and thereabouts. God keep us all.

Now, if any grudge me so much comfort, because I

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am scot-free, he will be one that has had no touch of my complaint. He must believe that it is soon curable; that a man may shake himself and be well. Not so. It is a

complaint that will come back and back again upon him, darting in when he thinks it mastered. While I was young, it strake sometimes across my sunniest minutes; I saw myself happy, and straightway trembled. It may be said that I had nought to fear, and she that charmed such moods away would tell me so; but it was no true fear that troubled me. It was just memory, I think, and the strangeness of being overpaid.

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