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STVDII
SALAMANTINI
TALES
OF THE
YORKSHIRE WOLDS

BY

J. KEIGHLEY SNOWDEN

SECOND EDITION

LONDON

SAMPSON, LOW, MARSTON & COMPANY, LIMITED

St. Dunstan's House

FETTER LANE, FLEET STREET, E.C.

1894

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[NP]

TO YORKSHIRE READERS.

IN the following stories, which are a tribute of affection offered to his kinsfolk by a Yorkshireman who is no longer privileged to dwell amongst them, Yorkshire readers will not find the broad and manly speech of the North West Riding set down with phonetic precision. The author begs them to believe—hard saying as it may seem—that so set down their simple mother-tongue might have been unintelligible to some Englishmen. They will not need to be told why, as between one story and another, it varies a little with the *local*.

BIRMINGHAM, *July*, 1893.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THIS book has been reprinted by a new printer; and looks so different that many people will mistake it for another. Therefore, taking all risks of an action for Libel, I must explain why I broke with the first printer.

To be quite fair, I had thought his work passable. A good many pages were smudged or thumb-marked; but of course the binder called attention to these, and they were discarded. Here and there, too, the ink seemed to have faded in queer, unaccountable patches; and it is no use pretending that he could spell, because that was just where he most signally failed. Still, the binding pleased me. It gave the book an appearance of finish. I mean that when bound this book looked like other books; and

somehow, until then, I had doubted whether it would do so. I got a good deal of quiet satisfaction out of it by putting it in places where I could see the binding. It appeared to me

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that the public would judge by the binding what sort of book it was.

So the printer and I continued good friends, and dined at an expensive eating-house. The estrangement came when the "Pall Mall Gazette" said that the stories were like "pearls set in brass." I had not paid him, and it is perhaps natural that a man who gives his time and skill for nothing should be sensitive to criticism. He did not get anxious about payment; by common consent the subject was tacitly avoided. Never, I suppose, were the relations between author and printer more delicate, more touching. But after this, my printer had a furtive look that was infinitely pathetic; and I, who knew him well, and had jested with him in the heyday of his blundering confidence, was quick to perceive that he wished to be forgotten. Nor was I mistaken. When the publishers wrote for more sheets, he excused himself.

I have only to add that the printer was *not* Mr. James Wright, who, with a rare magnanimity, lent his name to the first edition. He was, in fact, your humble and contrite servant, the Author, who hereby tenders to many indulgent people who have bought the book his apologies for its manifold imperfections. If they will forgive him, he may appeal with a better grace to the brotherhood of printers, whose ancient art and mystery he has lightly abused. But in any

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case, these craftsmen may be sure that, as it was a first, so it is a last offence. The transgressor has learned to respect, not alone that art and mystery, but a certain injunction still more ancient, once addressed to a cobbler.

J. K. S

LEEDS, *March 17th*, 1894.

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[1]

TALES OF THE YORKSHIRE
WOLDS.

AN IDYL OF WHARFEDALE.

AFTER a summer of broken weather, there had come to the farm-folk of Barden parish, as late as the first week of August, the golden chance to get their hay in. The crop was almost everywhere cut and garnered. The rough-hewn valley of the Wharfe showed a brighter green between the moorlands, and under its thin snod pellicle of aftermath you could see its bones, like a sheep's after shearing. But the last of the ten fine days which, one hour's thunder excepted, had followed each other in a serene procession, was plainly come. Twice the sun had "set moist," that is to say, in a perfect

glory; and now it was the third evening, and rolling grey vapours, pendent from the hill tops, shut him out altogether from the cosmic scheme of

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Barden. Moreover, the river, whose habitual roar had sunk a week ago to a mere slumberous breathing, was awake again. There had been rain already, higher up the valley.

Alone among the farmers of the parish, "old" Ephraim Smith, with the smallest holding of them all, had still some hay out; and for his handful of workers it was a race with the coming tempest. He himself, a paralytic, stood looking on from the gateway of the meadow, whither he had dragged his palsied limbs from a wonted seat by the kitchen fire. He supported himself upon a stick and the stone gatepost, and gazed, with a querulous look on his dull, pinched, and unshaven face, at the toilers. A life of such toil, on a farm too small for his needs and too poor to support any labourers but himself and his family, had cost him his wife, risen too soon from her last child-bed, and had aged and broken him before his time.

The haymakers were but four—his daughter Lizzie, a strapping wench, who had been woman grown since she was sixteen, four years ago; John Ainsworth, a young farmer of the next homestead, who was giving them a hand in return for kindred services, as is the custom, and in virtue of other reasons not less touching and sacred; a hired Irishman, employed from sheer necessity at the last pinch; and a boy of twelve

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years, Lizzie's only brother. Lacking a horse, they had despaired of getting the hay housed that night, and they were hurrying to rake it up into a big loose mow, and cover it with a temporary sheet of tarpaulin.

Ephraim Smith looked up at the clouds, hanging like full udders over the dale, and fidgetted in the sod with his stick. Then he turned about, and hobbled a step or two towards a spare rake that had been left against the fence; but stood still again with a pathetic air of helplessness and a muttered plaint. He could only watch.

“They'll nut manage it,” he said presently. “There's ower few at it. Durn that idle little vagabone! Lizzie's worth three on him.” It was the son of Erin he girded at. Even as he spoke a few big drops fell, and the light waned visibly; and the old man, sighing, made his way back to the fire.

But the rain held off a little longer, and they finished their work just as it came pelting down and drove them indoors at something like a run. Lizzie and young Ainsworth burst into the kitchen laughing and talking in mere exultation.

“Just i' time!” cried the girl, throwing her wet dress down from over her head, and turning on the young fellow a face that was radiant in the firelight with the beauty of excitement and bounding health.

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“My word, bud ye can race!” he replied heartily. He was a lusty and good-looking example of the Saxon peasant, bearded at twenty years, heavy shouldered, rudely clad in corduroys and clump boots.

She sent the boy out, with a sack about him, to bring in the two cows, which had still to be milked; and she went herself to get the milking pails.

Bestowing a nod of recognition on the old man, John Ainsworth followed her to the mistal, and milked one of the beasts himself. She was in high spirits, and talked; he was content to listen. But she finished first for all that; and then, with the pail in her hand, she stood watching him “strib.” The udder being at last drained, he set his pail down for a moment to stow the stool away; and she took it up, to carry them both to the dairy-pans, as usual. There was a brief dispute, caused by his insistence in wanting to relieve her of the burden; and then something happened which no one could have foreseen, least of all John Ainsworth. He took her suddenly by the shoulders while her hands were engaged, and gave her a kiss, full on the laughing mouth. You might have seen her eyes dilate, even in the dark mistal; and a moment later she had clapped down the milk-pails, and dealt him the soundest smack on the ear he had ever received. After which there was silence for a space.

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“Lizzie,” he said at last, rather ruefully, “tha didn't mean that.”

“Think nut?” quoth Lizzie, pertly. “We’re quits then, that way.”

He laughed quietly. “Nay,” he said, “I were i' earnest; so tha owes me one yet. Fire away. They say 'at fair swappin' 's nut robbery.”

“Tha'd soon tire o' that bargain,” nodded Lizzie.

For answer, he gripped her round both waist and neck and set about it. She struggled with a virgin's strength to push his face away, bending back almost out of reach, but first on her brow, then on her cheek, and last and longest on her neck beneath the ear, she felt his eager kisses. “Try me!” he said after each of them; “try me. Ye'se hev some to go on wi', onyway.”

Over went one of the milk-pails, with a swish and a clatter, and they sprang apart, looking at one another rather sheepishly, since the truth must be told. “Theer!” said Lizzie, wiping her face ostentatiously, and making to leave him; “ye've done it nah. I'd like my father to just come.”

“Ah, but I wo'dn't yet,” he said with quiet roguery, “for I cannot afford to fall aht wi' him. Lizzie, lass,”—a sudden tenderness came into his deep voice, and he took her hand very gently—“wilt 'a come an' be my wife? Dunnot say ‘Nay’—nah dunnot!

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Tha knaws we've allus been a mak' o' sweethearts. An'—an' I can wed noan bud thee, lass, noan i' t' world.”

The blood had mantled her cheeks at first, but the face she turned quietly upon him was so pale that in the gloaming it seemed almost lustrous, for her eyes shone with starting tears and about her mouth there trembled a smile. “Nor I nawther, John,” she said.

But the chronicler is already a too flagrant tell-tale, and upon this sweet encounter he begs respectfully to drop the curtain, raising it only when Lizzie, with an air of exaggerated levity and unconcern, appeared in the kitchen twenty minutes later, and began to go about her duties as at other times. Somehow she found less to do that night than usual, and, without imagining that she betrayed herself by doing so, she sat

down presently in the dark by the window, and fell into a reverie—a reverie so seductive that the eight-day clock striking ten was the first thing which broke the spell of it. Then she sprang up, locked the doors, took two lighted candles into the bedrooms, and helped her father upstairs. Surely he was clumsier and heavier that night!

She could not sleep for happiness, even after a day of heavy labour. She turned from side to side, threw the clothes off as low as her waist, and finally sat up and shook her long tresses loose. Then in a freak

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of vanity she slid out of bed to relight the candle, and sit down before her little square mirror. For the first time she found herself good-looking; and I vow that with her eyes so bright, and her cheeks and ears tingling with colour, she must have had no taste if she had come to any other conclusion. Only she could have wished her arms white, and her hands neater.

A tapping sound on the wood partition that separated the two rooms startled her. She took up the candle instantly, and went to see what the old man wanted. As she entered, and the light fell dimly on his face, she discerned in his glance a peculiar restlessness, and advanced quickly, with a momentary chill of anxiety. But he spoke in his usual tone, and with a certain accent of caress in his tremulous voice.

"Tha worn't sleepin', then," he said.

"What is it, father?" she asked. "Aren't ye weel?"

"Nobbud middlin', my lass; nobbud middlin'. Bud tha'll be tired like. Nay, go back to thi bed. It's a hard life tha's hed sin' I fell poorly—an' sin' thi mother were ta'en. I'll bide till another time. Go back an' git some sleep, my lass."

She set down the candle, drew a chair up to the bed, and sat there, tucking her night-gown about her

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shapely limbs. She was not sleepy, she said; and indeed she looked as strong to endure fatigue as an Amazon.

He did not speak for a while, but lay watching her. "Tha's been weel tuned to-neet," he said at last.

"Father!" She leapt to her feet, stung by the cynicism of the speech—of which he was totally unconscious—and an angry flush deepened the hue of her cheeks. "If that be all ye've to say, ye mud ha' shahted it thro' t' wall."

"Aye," he said, quickly. "Bud if it beant? Sit tha dahn, Lizzie; Aw'm noan strang enif to cry after tha. Wha, tha'rt as skittish as a filly unbrokken." And he tried to smile, but on his drawn and semi-paralysed features the smile resolved itself into a pathetic grimace. "Just pool t' pillow dahn under my head a bit."

She complied, softened in a moment by this reminder of his helplessness. Suddenly he thrust forth his one unstricken arm and seized upon her wrist.

"Dunnot be hard, my lass!" he whined. "I'm a gainless thing—a mak' o' lumber, Lizzie; an' tha'rt dowter an' housewife an' iverything to me. I'm noan lang for this world, Lizzie, an'—an' I cannot see tha thraw thysen away."

"Father, ye're hurtin' me."

"Am I? I didn't mean to, my lass." And he

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loosed his tense and bony gripe. There were tears running down his face. "But ther's war hurts nor that for young lasses."

She bent over him with a quick gesture of womanly tenderness, and kissed his forehead. "He's axed me to wed him," she said in a shy whisper.

"I knew it!" cried the old man passionately, turning his face to the wall: "I 're seur on 't."

Slowly the girl raised herself, and stood erect. Slowly the colour left her handsome face, which grew as hard and stem as a man's face, set against peril. "What do ye know?" she demanded. "What is there? Speyk aht like a man,"

"What for s'ould he want *my* lass?" wailed the paralytic. "Ther's plenty more wenches i' t' country-side. What for s'ould he envy my ewe-lamb?"

She seized him by the shoulder and shook him. "Father!" she said angrily, "Dunnot keep me standin' here! What is ther' agean 'im?"

"Agean 'im? Agean 'im? Ther's this agean 'im. He's ower covetous and proud, wi' his pink face, damn him! Ther's this agean 'im—he pays tuv a child 'i Cononley parish; that's what's agean 'im." The bed shook with his trembling, and his eyes blazed like a man's in a fever.

Lizzie's grasp on his shoulder had grown rigid. "Who's been tell in' ye *that* lie?" she said.

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"Lie? What lie? Who says it's a lie? When I saw it sworn tuv i' Skipton police court, an' niver a word to disawn it." He laughed hysterically. "Niver a word bigow! A grand husband he'll mak' tha. A ready-made family. What? Hah does ta like it? What the hengments! It'll save tha some trouble o' rearin', like! His voice had become a clamorous and mocking wail, and in a spasm of febrile strength he hurled at the candle the pillow from under his head, and plunged the room in darkness. Then he lay still, sobbing childishly, while his daughter groped her way back to a joyless couch.

Nevertheless, Ephraim Smith's fury was essentially a crisis of jealousy. When, four years before, Ainsworth took land next his own and rebuilt the farmstead "on a new-farrand plan," he had felt a secret irk against him, and everything the young spendthrift had since done seemed to justify the feeling. Versed in modern methods, he blossomed out of due time into a successful farmer, and was known to have said, with a smug insolence, that any other man might do as well, if he would go about it aright. Of course he might if he had sackfuls of money to fatten the soil with. But not else, God knew, or if so, not in that country. He, Ephraim Smith, had proved it well, and spent his strength for naught. What did this braggart lad know about it? And why should he

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come lording it over other folks, as he had done that day, as if it were his awn hay he were getting? It was plain enough: he was itching for a dead man's shoes, and couldn't wait till he was in the coffin before trying them on. Pah! women were born to be fooled. Lizzie would marry him, and think him a catch. There were plenty of youngers in the

countryside that people told such other tales about, and not a wench who thought them a penny the worse. But to be old and past service, to be bankrupt of strength and yet need food and fire, to be a living corpse in the house, that was a crime which was not so soon forgiven. Aye, she had slunk away without a word. She hated him because he would not die, and for what he had said of the dandy spark she had set her cap at.

The same week a shooting party did great execution on the neighbouring moors, and, the keeper being ill, John Ainsworth undertook his onerous duties, at an hour's notice. He was up at daybreak to meet the beaters and begin driving; and at night, after bestowing the sportsmen's bag, he only reached home again when all the twinkling lights in the valley had gone out. So it was that Lizzie saw nothing of him for a time. Once, as he passed close by her father's farm, there was a light in one of the tiny windows upstairs, and he reined up his sleepy horse and waited in a

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state of guilty excitement for a glimpse of her shadow on the blind; but the light was put out a moment or two later. At times, again, his strong and eager sight spied out a busy figure moving about the farmyard, and then his heart would beat much as if he had been two miles nearer her. The worst of it was, that his conquest did not make him perfectly happy. I suppose it had been too easy. This was why, when the guns were resting, and he had time to think his own thoughts, he always fell to dreaming on impossible adventures, to be undertaken for her especial glory, or in her defence. He sat apart from his jocular companions, and so busied himself with fancied deeds of prowess that he had not a word to parry their banter with. I suppose that a furious bull would have been welcome to chase her, if he had been there to take the brute by the horn and the nose-ring and upset him. Nay, he almost longed that she might one day fall into the roaring Wharfe, so that he could plunge in after her and bring her quickly back to the bank of jutting rocks. And catching, in truculent fancy, a gang of poachers in her father's fields, he fought them single-handed, and slew all and sundry with a hedge-stake.

One fine evening, when nearly a week had gone by and the inevitable glut of sport had freed him to look after his own work, he left all and followed the road

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to Ephraim Smith's farm. Beneath the home-made waistcoat of moleskins which, after much internal debate, he had donned in honour of the occasion, there glowed a tender and secret joy of the kind that belongs only to youth and love. It suffused his thoughts so kindly that he was vaguely conscious of its resemblance to the pure radiance which, at the moment when he set out bathed the landscape after rain. The unaccustomed gaiety of his mood was to be plainly discerned by the most indifferent observer, for, as he strode along, down a lane whose hedgerows glistened with pendent pearls, he broke out into a song. It was a bucolic Scotch melody which he had picked up somewhere, and which came into his mind now like an inspiration.

Come, all ye jolly shepherds, that whistle thro' the glen,
I'll tell ye o' a secret that courtiers dinna ken!
What is the sweetest bliss that the tongue o' man can name?
'Tis to woo a bonny lassie when the kye comes hame!

A cow gazed at him over a gate as he passed, and manifestly moved to sympathy by what she took to be a lamentation, responded with a friendly moan. Startled by the laugh with which he received her well-meant condolence, a pair of young horses in the neighbour pasture went careering away as if from a strange creature. He stood still for a moment to watch them, and then to admire the cloudscape—

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his eye attracted and fascinated by the luminous whiteness of piled masses of vapour, and by their stupendous height and bulk, as of Alps. Through a shining pass of their fastnesses a shaft of light fell on the farthest western moor, and showed its glorious unpatterned tapestry of gorse and ling and bilberry bush as bright as the patchwork of mosses on a wet boulder.

The prancing of another restive horse came to his ears from the main road that ran along the hill-side below him; and, shading his eyes, he made out between the

feathery tops of a tall hedge which intervened, two things that interested him: first, that the horse was mounted by a rider who appeared to treat his fretful temper with a singular coolness, if not with an actual unconcern, and next, that he himself knew the animal well, as being a spirited young creature whom it was dangerous to handle so cavalierly. A moment later he saw with a pang of alarm that the rider was Lizzie. She sat bareback, holding the mane and a halter in one hand and resting the other hand lightly on the croup; while the horse, unbroken except for some sorts of shaftwork, was shaking his fiery, rebellious head, and curvetting and jibbing by turns. John Ainsworth smothered a curse between his clenched teeth, and made for the highway at a run, to intercept them as they passed the mouth of the lane. He was

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cunning enough to run in a stooping posture, and to keep to the grass with which the lane was bordered; albeit the suspense of thus denying himself a sight of Lizzie's peril was terrible.

He was just in time; but as he came out upon the road, the horse, frightened by his manner of approaching or fretted by the rider's agitation, began to back rapidly toward the high wall of a rough "biggin" that stood against the roadside. Lizzie must have been cruelly bruised, but that her deliverer was too quick. The horse eluded the first grasp of his forelock with a toss of the head, and rearing, struck at him with both forelegs; but the manoeuvre was of no avail against a skilful and resolute man, and John made good his hold as soon as the creature touched the ground again. And then, as he drew him away from the wall, prancing still and quivering with vice, he looked up into his sweetheart's face with a twinkle in his eye, and said,

"Ye'll be turnin' lion-tamer next."

She avoided his look, and she was pale with anger. "Let me alone!" she said, in a voice that startled him by its unnatural tone and its violence; and striking the horse across the withers she broke away and left him dumfounded.

Some farmfolk who had come out to see what the matter was were spectators of the rapid incident. "I

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reckon them's a gradely pair," said one, looking after Lizzie and the horse.

John made no reply. He scarcely heard the comment, and was but dimly aware of the puzzled faces of his neighbours. He was the subject of a half-suspended consciousness, like a man who has fallen from a height, and lies for a while partially stunned, and without pulse and breath. He followed down the road mechanically, but none the less anxiously, to see the end of the adventure, and was very content when she passed safely out of sight over the next rise, some fifty or a hundred yards from home. Then only, his wits coming painfully back to him, did he awake to a sense of the incomprehensible affront she had put upon him; and it was well that at the same time the conviction came into his mind, merciful if mortifying, that in her excitement she had not noticed who he was. He got to laughing over it after a while, and promised himself that when he saw her at home he would tease her finely.

But the illusion was short-lived. Having caught sight of him through the window as he came up the garden path, she darted to the door and shut it in his face; and he, poor mortal, with a gasp of bewilderment and a pang like that of guilty fright, heard the bolt grate as it was pushed into the staple.

"Who is't?" asked her father vacantly. He was

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sitting in the chimney neuk, and he peered out into the gloom of the kitchen, trying to scrutinize her face in the glow of the firelight. Lizzie was listening intently at the door and seemed to beckon him to be silent. He had made out, however, that there was something curiously amiss, and rising painfully, and leaning his weight upon the dresser, he began to shuffle towards her; but with a half-articulate cry, and an impulsive, quick movement, she prevented him, and pushed him back unresisting into his seat on the langsettle.

Then, after returning to listen for a moment longer, she glided out of the kitchen. He heard her stumble against a chair in the unlighted sitting-room, but with that an

absolute stillness fell upon the house, a stillness in which the falling cinders in the grate and the halting tick of the big clock made the only interruption.

Doubtless he guessed what the matter was. A crafty smile wrinkled up the unparalysed cheek. He took up a churchwarden pipe that he had laid down on the oven top, and having lighted it between the fire-bars he fell into an apparent doze, the stem between his teeth and his wry mouth pendulous. He was ruminating. Now and again, with an effort, he turned his head to look towards the door through which his daughter had so significantly disappeared. At last, grown fidgetty, he uttered her name.

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There was no response till he called a second time, and then, after a pause, he heard her moving. She came as far as the doorway and stopped, where the light could not reach her face.

"Lizzie," he said, kindly, speaking in a tremulous voice for which the palsy was accountable, "Gipsy Martha 'ull be callin' i' t' 'morn, willn't shoo?"

"Maybe. It's Saturda'.

"Tha'll be wantin' a winter frock; what? Summat more i' t' fashionable way—what do they call't? Alpacker; what? For t' Sunda'."

"Nay, I can manage," said Lizzie—not ungraciously, but because she had never learned to be envious of fine gear.

"Ah, bud tha will; tha'll be wantin' one," urged the old man eagerly; and when the morrow came he insisted on her choosing the material. What is even more remarkable, he haggled less over the price than the gipsy was justified in expecting. It was a black cloth, as became its prospective Sabbatarian uses; and when the woman had gone, and it lay on the table, while Lizzie, half-abashed by his generosity, stood looking at it with something like a smile, he leaned towards her and said slyly:

"Does it suit? What?"

"Bud it seems so wasteful," she protested.

"Niver thee heed," he responded, a glitter of pride

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and satisfaction in his eyes, "it'll wear tha better nor a white 'un."

The spring of the following year came in like a convalescence after deadly suffering. The sun smiled on the pallid vale, and nursed it day by day into perfect health. Nay, seeing how malign had been the spell of sickness, the patient made a quick recovery. While the last traces of a cruel leprosy of snow had not yet vanished from the hillsides, the woods and pastures were tinged with a delicate beauty—with a tender glow of health where the violets flushed, with a lustier promise in the purple bursting buds and the beautiful bright laughter of daffodils. The bees were soon humming again, unseen in the moist and fragrant pine-wood, though it was there, beneath the tangle of finely interlaced branches, that the snows had lingered longest; and the small birds, nest-building, were as busy, and as merry and talkative over it, as English girls can be at a bazaar.

But while Nature bloomed into new life and loveliness, Ephraim Smith, having gone to bed for the last time, was dying of premature old age. He had not been told it. Wasted by unstanchable perspirations to a mere shadow, and unable to raise himself on his elbow, he yet indulged the flattering vision of happy years, with his daughter secure by his side. Indeed, a curious and significant effect of his illness—which had

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begun after a black frost in Christmas week—was that his old querulous mood had left him. He slept much, but his mental faculties were unimpaired and bright. Only he had one foible. He liked to see his daughter don the frocks and aprons and ribbons which, out of his tiny store of savings, kept in a stocking beneath his pillow, he had continued to buy since the day when he made her surely his own. Lizzie resisted in vain, and put them on only to please him. She would sit by his side like a fine lady for hours of an evening, after battling all day, joyless but undaunted, with the work of the farm.

Some duties were neglected, for she was fairly overborne. Her brother, being a growing lad, slept heavily, and in spite of her watchfulness their handful of sheep got scant attention at lambing-time. Yet she was intensely vexed to find that someone, watching more keenly than she, had folded three or four of the heavy ewes. It is true

that in such bitter weather these acts of furtive solicitude had probably saved the lives of both lambs and sheep; but she suspected the motive which had prompted them, and burned with indignation to think of that.

I saw her about this time, and was pained by the startling change in her appearance. It would seem that her father had been strangely blind to it, and had only of late begun to own it, as she knew he did,

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from the way he looked at her. But her full-blown beauty had faded, and the jaunty air of wanton strength and conscious good looks which she formerly wore was replaced by a pale, unemotional and half-defiant look. I suppose that the old man was so content to see her sitting in brave apparel, bent over some homely piece of needlework, that he had failed to note how little she talked nowadays. When the recollection of her natural manner came back to him, he of course, with a fond egotism, attributed the change entirely to her distress at seeing him bed-ridden and weak. He probably forgot that until lately he had never in his life done anything to make her love him greatly.

One day he had a fainting fit as he lay in bed, and then Lizzie sent her brother for the doctor. When she told him that she had done so, he looked at her strangely. It had come suddenly into his mind that she thought he was going to die. But he did not speak about it. Only his eyes rested on her face so constantly that she could not force herself to stay in the room with him, and continually made excuses to go downstairs and push on with the work a bit. When the doctor came some hours later, he found the old man in a condition of feverish excitement.

Lizzie answered the questions the doctor asked, and waited in vain to hear his opinion on the illness. He

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only said that her father must not excite himself, on any account, and promised to send up a soothing draught before night. But, downstairs, he looked sharply at Lizzie and seemed to ponder.

"Do you know your father is very weak?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Lizzie, in a whisper. Her heart beat so, that her voice would not come. The doctor was a terribly busy man, and not prone to be sentimental; but he hesitated when he scrutinised her face. His hand went up to her shoulder.

"My girl," he said, "You're over-working yourself. Haven't you any friends that you can send for?"

"No," answered Lizzie, and then paused, gazing into his eyes but not daring to question him.

"Nobody who—would care to see him, I suppose?"

Her lips parted, and she gripped his arm tightly. When she saw that he avoided her gaze she fell a-trembling.

"There, there!" he broke out suddenly, speaking with a certain trick of tenderness, and patting her hand, but all with the look of wanting to get away. "You're a brave girl, I can see. Don't let him see you've been crying. And—you needn't tell him anything, perhaps. Or—yes, you'd better say he's going on as well as can be expected; but that he must keep

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very quiet, very quiet. He won't have any pain. Gently now, there's a good girl; gently"—and he pushed her towards a chair and was gone.

As the door closed upon him, she heard her father's voice calling her. "Directly," she answered; but to her infinite alarm something stumbled on the wooden staircase, that was only separated from the room in which she sat by a thin partition. She was in time to see him sink down on the stairs, holding by a little window-sill where there were some plants.

"What're ye plannin'?" he gasped, thrusting her off. "I heard ye. Aye, ye thowt I're i' bed, bud I heard ye."

He was hoarse with excitement, and shaking violently. His white hair, grown long, hung over his forehead and cheeks like an old woman's.

"Leave me be! I'm weel, I tell tha. I'm—"

Cut off by a lapse into unconsciousness with the words in his mouth, he slid and toppled forward into his daughter's arms, an inert bundle of bones. She thought he was dead when she laid him on the disordered bed and covered him, and she fell with her arms about him in a passionate fit of weeping. She was alone in the world now.

Her grief lasted for a long time, and spent itself in a succession of sobs, that shook her persistently as sobbing used to do when she was a child. But being

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weak from long watching, she began at last to fall into a kindly stupor. She awoke to the consciousness of a hand resting on her head, and when she looked up her father was watching her. It was as if she were dreaming, for she felt no surprise. There were tears on his cheek, too; but the fear of death was in his eyes, and it gradually infected her.

She wiped the beaded perspiration from his forehead, and tried to smile at him. His breathing was quick and difficult.

"I knaw," he said suddenly, in a voice grown like a child's. "I'm goin'. I'm a man done for." His hand wandered about the counterpane.

Somehow Lizzie found courage to say that the doctor had not said so.

"Aye, I knaw," pursued the old man, not heeding.

"I thowt—bud that's past..... No time. My... my—breath"

His eyes gleamed with the effort of speaking, and he went on in short and hurried phrases:

"Tha knaws, Lizzie, lass—John—tha mun wed him. ...I cannot—cannot keep tha—nah. It're—a lie I telled tha... A lie... Forgi'e me!... No—no harm."

She had risen, with the same angry flush on her cheeks that John Ainsworth saw one terrible evening six months ago; but her face was turned away from the sufferer.

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His voice rose to a feeble wail. "Tha'rt all I hed—my bonny wench!... All—I hed to care abaht...I couldn't do—baht tha.... Tha'rt so like—thi mother... Forgi'e—"

She still stood motionless, perhaps for half-a-minute, perhaps longer—she never knew. Then an eerie shudder of fright and tenderness came upon her, and she turned towards him with the gracious sense of heart's-case and coming tears. But even while she stooped to press her lips upon his forehead, as she had often done when he was weary and fretful, she perceived that the wide beseeching eyes no longer sought her own. A moment of awful anxiety held her spell-bound, and then she screamed. He was dead.

Some time later a neighbour who had seen the doctor pass came in, and found her crying a little, but setting the death-chamber in seemly order. This woman assisted her to perform the physical rites prescribed by usage for the dead; and was moreover so touched by the grief of the boy—for the time unappeasable—that she offered to take him home with her, in the expectation that this would divert his mind a little. He went passively; and then Lizzie made haste to quit the silent house.

The winding valley shone grey and vast in the moonlight, with formless tracts and patches of solid-

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seeming gloom. Of the lights that twinkle from the scattered homesteads on the other side, one only, a mere needle-point in the wide solitude, glowed now among the billowy hills that stretched away to ghostly Whernside. Not alone was the house silent, but the night everywhere. Gradually a horror of loneliness, so foreign to her sanguine nature that it had the force of a presentiment, sank into her spirit. It did not turn her back; it drove her on, with a passionate anxiety throbbing in her heart. But when she paused for a moment, lacking breath and half-bewildered, the horror passed. For somewhere in the neighbouring pasture, she heard the quiet and familiar sound—the husky and measured rasp—of kine chewing the cud; crickets were chirping blithely in a mossy wall; a warm breeze fanned her cheek gently, and, when it blew, the voice of the river came to her like a sigh, mingled with odorous whispers from the pine-woods.

John Ainsworth stood listening to it in the rosegrown porch of his house, saddened by the beauty and kindness of the night. A footfall in the lane broke his reverie, and he turned to go indoors. But the gate-latch clanked; someone was hurrying

up the garden-path; and a moment later, he knew it was Lizzie. A whirling blindness came over him, but he had seen her face, white, large-eyed, piteous, and he folded her in his arms with a single word. How she

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sobbed against his breast, hiding her face, though he lifted it so often to kiss her fair forehead and murmur a little of his great happiness! But at length she spoke.

"Oh, John! I'm so ashamed an' miserable! But so—so happy, John!"

In the arbour of sweet-brier at the foot of the garden, she confessed her folly and spite, and told her grief, and did penance—penance so strange and honey-sweet, that the envious dawn awoke the thrushes long before their time, to bid her take the absolution and be gone.

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THE SQUIRE'S LADY.

ON a chilly afternoon in the autumn of 1860, I stood irresolute before a certain grandiose Italian gateway, which defends the entrance to Monument Manor, the home of a family of Yorkshire gentry named Hardaker. I had bought the practice of a superannuated country surgeon; and acting on a repentant counsel he had given me, I purposed to transfer the surgery to Cragside, which for twenty years past he had recognised as a better centre than his own, without finding courage enough to "move house." Two visits paid to that bleakly-posted village of rustic weavers had satisfied me that among its three score of featureless stone cottages, propping each other up on either side of the steep high road where it tops the shoulder of a moor, there was not a single house to suit my purposes; but that day I had spied out, a quarter of a mile away from the village, the very place I wanted—a small villa that nestled warmly under a wooded knoll on the fringe of the Hardaker lands. It was empty, and the

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country-folk thought it was "to let": so, the Squire's agent being away from home, I had posted off in my impatience to see the Squire in person.

Somehow the reflection that this was an irregular proceeding, which might be resented to my discomfiture and professional prejudice, had not troubled me until the last moment. But the approach to Monument Manor struck me as forbidding. The ponderous gate of the park, which I had paused to contemplate, was grimly flanked by a low, stout, castellated fence of formal stone-work, on which there hung in festoons a *chevaux de frise* of spiked balls; and it was guarded, moreover, by a tall and gloomy company of sentinel firs. Somewhere I had seen a cemetery with such an approach. But cemeteries are commonly kept so neat, and are so invitingly laid with gravelled walks and flower-beds, that they have almost an air of hospitality—and here there were drifted leaves underfoot and a black tangle of dead branches overhead, and on everything an aspect of solitude and neglect that made me shiver.

I gave unhesitating credence, in that moment of hesitation, to the gossip which said that the Squire was poor and miserly. I recalled his face, as I had seen it one day when he drove past me on the Crag-side road—massive and square, fresh-coloured enough and finely-chiselled, but with a thin, hard mouth, and

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stern unobservant blue eyes; the face, too, of a man of magnificent physique at fifty years, who sat bolt upright in his carriage with folded arms. He had married as lately as three years ago, and that his wife was young and beautiful.

There was some other gossip to which, though it was a little gruesome to think of among those silent firs, my mind attached a different value. It was of the kind without which no territorial house, however ancient and venerable, is properly furnished in the popular fancy: the Manor was, or had once been, haunted.

If in approaching that fearsome Gate of Giant Despair, you chance to be fascinated by the landscape, you will remark first of all some noble clumps of forest trees filling the park; above and far beyond them a bare hillside, on which the village clings like a piece of dry moss on a shelving face of rock; and finally, upon the level

crest of the hill—where a line of beetling crags marks the nearer boundary of an unseen plain of common land—a singular pinnacle, looking, at that distance, like a factory chimney.

This is the Monument. It is perilously perched upon the highest crag, and the joints of its big masonry have more than once been sundered by lightning, so that some day it will topple to destruction. Yet the security of the house of Hardaker is bound up in its

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power to withstand the tempest. For it was built to be a talisman to the house for ever, and the spirits it banished were potent and noxious. They had flung open doors of the mansion and taken possession one awful night when the firstborn was shipwrecked off the coast of Portugal; and they had raged thenceforth with such untiring fury, that the Hardaker who then lived paid a Wise Man from Rombald's Moor to curse them horribly and cast them out. Tradition tells how this man, having caused the Monument to be built, walked thrice between its huge foundation rock and the Manor, uttering a pious incantation, and thereafter bade the Hardakers all to be of good cheer, for until the Evil One should lay a chain of sand in his footsteps, they and their line would be free of his power.

I determined to risk the Squire's rebuff. Stepping quickly up the long drive, I was young enough to feel a sense of exhilaration in the enterprise; and the clucking flutter of a startled pheasant, suddenly heard in a dark coppice that I passed through, made me proud of my nerves. But the house was so masked by trees that I had to explore two paths before I could be sure that I was approaching the front, and a couple of dogs barked fiercely. Moreover, I was greatly annoyed to find, at the very door, that I was without my card-case. A middle-aged female servant who answered

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my ring showed me into a little library on the left and went upstairs to announce my name.

This library was barely furnished with a few uncushioned chairs of black oak, a little writing-table under the narrow ivy-bordered window, and a lamp standard of Venetian wrought iron. I think this is the full inventory. There was no carpet or skin of any kind on the polished floor, and no fire on the hearth. The air smelled musty, the old books were locked within glass doors like certain gruesome specimens in the College Museum that I remembered, and the apartment struck me as one seldom entered, except by the servants. In the absolute stillness which prevailed, and which produced in my mind an effect of suspense and anxiety, I was startled by a muffled scream and a heavy fall in the room above me.

The cry was followed by a light patter of feet descending the stairs, and by the opening of another door in the hall. Immediately afterwards there was talking at the door of the library. I overheard a man's voice say "Where is he?" and the answer was given in tones so low that I could not catch it.

Then the door was opened sharply, and I was face to face with the Squire. I heard the servant running upstairs again.

He fixed his eyes upon me with a searching intensity that I might have taken for the aspect of menace.

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"I can't see you, sir," he said harshly, with an unmistakable accent of suppressed anxiety; and then, as I hesitated how to answer, his calmness instantly and completely forsook him. "For God's sake, man, why do you wait?" he shouted.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Hardaker," I said; "I am a medical man. I came on another errand, but if—"

"This way," he cried, seizing me by the arm and almost flinging me through the doorway; and he dashed up the stairs, three at a stride, I following.

As it proved, there was no need for haste, or indeed for immediate alarm. The patient—Mrs. Hardaker—was merely suffering from hysteria, and I found her already half composed.

But the interest of the case for me was, I confess, a little more than professional. The Squire's Lady was a young woman of the most delicate constitution and beauty,

slenderly fashioned, altogether graceful and simple in bearing, touchingly ashamed of the outburst which had alarmed her husband. I made my visit as brief and cheery as possible, but I needed no longer stay to perceive that her condition of health was grave, and when I had taken leave of her and descended to the hall I said to her husband:

"Your wife must have change, Mr. Hardaker. That is, all she needs, but she must have that."

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"Do you mean she must go away?" His face was once calm and more inscrutable.

"It would be best"

"Very well. She shall go."

"And—forgive my insistence on this point—it would be well to surround her with people she likes, people who will divert her mind and keep her spirits up."

The Squire shook my hand. "Thank you," he said, stiffly. "You are a sensible man, doctor. I have been most anxious about her health; she has alarmed me once or twice. She feels the recent loss—as women will, you know—and upon her health, of course, depends everything. Now your own business: what can I do for you?"

But on this he would have nothing to say, averring that he left all such matters to his agent; and I went away unsatisfied.

As I walked homewards I pondered a good deal over the words he had used about his wife, and I found them enigmatical. They had been at once unsympathetic and solicitous. But in the light of what I afterwards learned they were lucid.

Three months earlier an infectious disease had destroyed the first-fruits of the marriage, two bonny little girls who had come in the same day to gladden the young wife's heart; and when he said that everything

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depended on her restoration to health, Mr. Hardaker had meant only that he was anxious she should live to bear him a son. It was common talk that since her babies' death the

Squire's lady had been "fearful strange"; yet it is probable that but for my presence at the hall in such a moment as I have described, her husband would never have realised until too late how ill she was.

Mr. and Mrs. Hardaker went away for awhile to London. Two months later I heard that she had returned, and that a new disaster and a terrible had overtaken the house of Hardaker. She had lost her reason. It seemed that the Squire, unwilling to let her go away to an asylum, had arranged for her confinement at the Manor in charge of two female keepers. He himself had gone back to town on pressing business.

The consternation occasioned in Cragside by the news informed me of the rare esteem in which the stricken lady was held by the villagers. Failing to secure the house in the wood, I had established a place of call in the village itself, at the cottage of a woman named Driver, who let me her tiny front room; and she, I know, felt the misfortune as a personal and tragic sorrow. At first, she found no words to speak of it, but went about moping, and only asked me every time I called, if I had been to "see the

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Squire's lady." I had to answer "No" so often that at last she overflowed.

"Eh!" she said in the homely dialect, "it seems an awful thing, like. Aw think, some way, its war nor bein' dead. Do yo' think shoo'll mend?"

I said that I could not give any opinion as to that.

"Eh, Aw hope shoo will," she cried, fervently. "Aw cannot sleep for thinkin' on 't. If it hed been a poor body, starved an' ooined [ill treated], it mud feel nateral, like; bud sich a fine lady!

"Shoo com' in here one day to mak' my 'quaintance, shoo said, an' sat hersen dahn an' supped some bettony tea wi' me, and talked so winsome to t' little 'uns till Aw fair cried. Ye see, shoo're varra pale and thin then, bein' so sooin efter her liggin' in [confinement]

"Shoo'd a little white hand-like wax it wor-an' a face like a angil in a picture; an' shoo sat i' that chair. Aye, and shoo gied t' little 'uns hawf-a-crahn apiece afore shoo went away, bein' 'at they're twins like her awn. An' then to loss hers, little lambs!

—two-year owd, nobbud. An' go daft ower 't! It's fearful sad—fearful sad and strange.”
And while she talked she shed tears.

I was embarrassd and vexed, the next time I rode over to Cragside, to find myself unable to gain access

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to my surgery. The cottage appeared to be locked up. But a wrinkled old lady with a white cap an apron came to the door of the next house at the sound of my knocking, and said:

“Ye mun go through t'back. Shoo's goan to finnd her little 'uns. They're wanderin' on t' moor somewheer.”

“What, lost?”

“Eh, Aw'm flaid it's war nor that. They do say 'at t' Squire' lady's ta'en 'em.”

“The Squire's lady!” I echoed.

“Aye. Ye willn't hev heard 'at shoo's broken lowse, then?”

“But does anyone know that they're gone away together?”

“Why, aye. They went on t' moor at seven o'clock this mornin', an' they've hed no dinner.”

“But Mrs—the Squire's lady—has she been seen with them?”

“Nay, but Sam o'th' Windhill End seed her makkin' for th' Craggs.”

A bitter sleet was pelting. I ran round into the surgery for brandy and for chloroform, and set off to the moorlands. I passed others who were out upon the same quest, and they seemed glad to see me.

A gusty wind, beating the bracken down and hissing among the heather and rushes, came sweeping

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from behind and lashed me up the face of the hill with a stinging whip of rain; while low above the crags the gray cloudrack went scurrying out of sight, like a broad and swirling stream before the rapids. I did not know how breathless and thewless I was till

I had reached the crags themselves, and, taking hold with my hands essayed to climb the black and rugged front of them.

I was excited like the senseless elements. Bah! There must be many easier ways of mounting the Monument; which I must reach if possible, because it would afford a wide view of the common. I turned aside along the crown of the hill, to look for a track. The wind fought with me stoutly, and once hurled me brutally down among the jumbled fragments of rock that beset my feet. I had barely made a score of yards when, as I raised my eyes to examine the crags again, I saw that from which, in the first instant of dismay, I shrank involuntarily back.

The poor crazy fugitive and the children were huddled in a heap against the face of the lofty rock on which the Monument towers. To shield them from the cold and the rain she had stripped herself of all she wore but her mere smock, and with one arm clasping each of them against her naked bosom she held them asleep on her knees. Her beautiful hair was tossing in the wind, and the single garment

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of cotton that covered her clung wet about her fragile figure.

I took off my great coat to put over her, and she smiled, making a sign with her eyes that the children were asleep. I turned away, and went to look for help, and when I stood on the summit of the crags, the tears were streaming down my cheeks.

It must be that there is the mysterious and subtle thing we call instinct in a mother's love, else how came it that the first person I met should be the distracted Mrs. Driver, making for the very spot, her eyes a gleam with terror and sheer ferocity? I hastened to pacify her with the news that her children were found, and were in no danger; and meant to divert her search. But the moment I said so much, she darted past me down the rocks, and before I could overtake her, she pounced upon her quarry. She snatched her dear ones from the alien arms with an animal cry of menace, flung the dainty wraps from off them, and hugged them passionately.

And then the poor lady, who had been hurled to the ground by the fury of her onset, rose on her knees, and stretched out her arms with a look of piteous and frantic entreaty that I shall never forget.

"Oh, no, no, no!" she wailed, "Don't take them away again! I love them so! I love them so."

I hurried up to the frenzied mother, and spoke to

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her sharply. "For shame!" I said. "Give me the children, and help this poor creature to put her clothes on. Don't you see she has risked her death to keep your brats warm and dry?" And I took possession of the staring little chubby-faces rather roughly.

"See," I said, turning to the sobbing suppliant; "I've got them quite safe. I'll keep them here, where you can see them—out of the rain, beneath this rock."

To my great relief, both women were pacified, and I could presently hear the simple Yorkshire woman talking gently. When they came over to us, I made the hapless lady take some brandy, for she had begun to shiver pitiably now; and then we hastened down the hill together to my surgery, —each mother holding the hand of one of the little ones. It is needless to tell of the pretext I used in order to get the patient quietly back to her home, of which she had an obstinate dread. It was done the same evening, and I remained in attendance on her. In a week's time she was in a high fever.

We brought her through the crisis, but her strength was irretrievably wasted. Towards the dawn of one wintry day, her flame flickered up like that of a candle in the socket. Mr. John Hardaker stood by the bedside watching her as she slept fitfully; and the nurses were talking in undertones by the fire.

"I shall find them," she murmured, with closed eyes.

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"They can't stop me now... my sweet little croodling helpless darlings! How steep it is. And the wind is cruel—oh, cruel! I think...every one is cruel in this world. To take away my wee sleeping beauties! Jack says...But why did he let them go?"

After a few moments she started up with a radiant face. "Ah!" she cried, in a shrill voice of happiness, "There they are, dancing this way to meet me! Mama's

coming! Mama's coming, darlings! Oh! look, Jack! Jack! Oh! why don't you look? Their faces shine so! Mama's coming! See, they know me."

And then the curtain of death, quickly falling, shut us out from the happy meeting.

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A TOMBOY AS DEA EX MACHINÂ.

I.—THE GODDESS DESCENDS.

MR. BOB HALIFAX, civil engineer, was watching the white ash accumulate at the end of a good cigar, which pointed steadily towards the zenith of a cloudless sky. The cigar was held between his own lips, and in order to secure its perpendicularity with elegance and comfort, he lay on his back upon a yielding couch of bent grass, discovered by him half-an-hour earlier on one of the northern spurs of Rombald's Moor. At that calm altitude, away above the smoke of the Keighley valley, the sun blazed full upon him, the fresh and pungent odour of peat was in the air, and the quiet drone of bumblebees came from the heather. Mr. Halifax was realising a halcyon fancy which, in the most agreeable way, had haunted him during the unceasing and perilous labours of a fortnight. In those days he was engaged in boring a heading for the new Great Northern line to Keighley, and the works had been flooded by the tapping of a natural reservoir

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in the tunnelled hill: since which disaster he had slept in his boots.

No one would have suspected him of such a barbarism who had seen him on that Saturday afternoon of July, in a spotless costume of flannels. From top to toe he was the exquisite. To be conscious of that refreshed him in the same way that a dip in the river Aire had done that morning. Each luxury was a sort of rite, by which he practised the religion of repose. An unfailing piety of spirit in this kind had prompted his choice of that sunny hillside for the act of esoteric worship which he was now performing. He had

seen it afar off, a radiant patch of distance, every time he had turned his back on the murky flicker of the workings and looked out, as through a telescope, from the rugged mouth of his heading; and it had cheered him as the thought of Mecca cheers, for when his slavery should be ended he had promised himself a pilgrimage. As he lay, the light laughter of girls came to his ears, sounding from the heights above him, in snatches; but it did not break his reverie. He was handsome enough, with his Norman features and a very fine bronze moustache, to be a Don Juan, but he was also old enough to own a quiet pulse, for memories, to him, were sweeter than hopes could be. The thin blue smoke went up from his burnt offering with a slow and unvarying alternation

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of little spirals and big puffs; his eyelids fell, somewhere a lark ceased to sing, and he attained the highest beatitude.

Then the tricky Queen Mab of those moorlands, spying the sleeper so content, planned a most whimsical prank. The laughter was nearer now, and wilder. Little cries of alarm punctuated it—cries not intended for the ears of Mr. Halifax, or any other impertinent wanderer on the same moor. Presently the sounds were so near that if he had been awake he might have taken alarm.

"Louie, you *are* a duffer. You've ruined my hat"

"Oh, Maud, I'm *going*! Oh-h-h! Ouch!"

"Well, I couldn't stop. Why didn't you slide faster? *My*, look at Jack! Come along: keep your hands off the ground and you'll go down as fast as anybody."

It was no team of little atomies, riding lightly over his nose with chariot of an empty hazel-nut, that invaded the slumbers of Mr. Bob Halifax. It was first a piercing scream, and then a shock which almost filled his opening eyes with tobacco ash—a crushing weight that descended upon him like an avalanche and rolled off again, with a brush and flutter of soft textures. And Jack Farnhill, with a rapid downward sweep of her hands, leapt to her feet and said demurely and instantly—her big blue eyes turned sideways upon her companions—

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"Oh, I beg pardon. I'm *awfully* sorry. I really couldn't help it"

Whereupon Mr. Halifax, who was wiping his eyes and gallantly protesting that he didn't mind it at all, heard the stifled laughter of two other young ladies, and became conscious that he was not appearing to advantage; and indeed, after a hysterical effort to check herself, the young lady who had spoken began to laugh too.

By the time he was able to open his eyes, and see that her good looks did not belie her voice, she was in the middle of a musical peal of shrill merriment, interrupted from time to time by the most comical attempts to look as if nothing had happened, and her companions, for whom the situation was less compromising, were retreating. He found it possible, and even agreeable, to laugh a little himself, and as soon as he did so she regained her composure.

"I hope you're not hurt," she said coquettishly. ["Such a big, handsome fellow—I could have kissed him," she boasted afterwards.]

He was amused at her self-possession—she could scarcely be more than sixteen—and he made her a little bow as he answered, "It is you who were likely to be hurt, I'm afraid."

"Well," she confessed, with startling candour, "you *are* pretty hard, I can tell you!"

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"Bertha!"

It was a cry of outraged propriety from an elder sister. Mr. Halifax turned round, and saluted Miss Maude Farnhill, a handsome brunette, who thereupon blushed a rich carmine.

"You must excuse my sister's rudeness," she said, advancing with her eyes upon the offender, as if to put an end to the encounter; but instinctively forestalling her, he replied with a *double* compliment which, uttered with unhesitating confidence, disarmed her jealousy completely.

"Your interest, mademoiselle, does more than atone for a fault that I really had not perceived."

Mr. Halifax was proud of his manners, which were in fact a little stiff. "What a prince!" thought Miss Farnhill, who was only three years her sister's senior, and of a romantic turn of mind. Then he made a specially courteous salutation for the benefit of Miss Louie Farnhill, whose sweet and homely face impressed him with a peculiar respect, as she stood a little way off, looking back over her shoulder. But his quick eye saw ample evidence, in the shape of untidy hair and disordered dresses, that they had all been equally guilty of the tom-boy frolic to which he owed his rude awakening; and he was ungenerous enough to take a small revenge.

"Don't let me interrupt your exercise," he said.

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Miss Farnhill cried "Oh!" and giggled; Miss Louie turned her head away and blushed. There was an awkward pause.

"Anyhow," broke in the youngest Miss Farnhill, "you might as well tell us what your name is; then we shouldn't feel so stupid."

"Bertha!" cried both sisters in a breath, though not very angrily.

"My name is Bob Halifax," he laughed; "and yours of course is Bertha"

"No, it isn't," she pouted, "unless you're angry with me. My name's Jack. And that's Maude, and that's Louie—and there's Mademoiselle Dantès besides, only we've left her behind. I say, were you asleep when I flopped on to you? I hope you were."

There was the prettiest look of dismay and horror on the elder sisters' faces, but Mr. Halifax did not seem to have heard that compromising speech. His eyes were earnestly scanning the hillside, and they rested on the figure of Mademoiselle Julie Dantès, who appeared to have lost her sprightly companions, for she had taken another direction.

"There she is!" cried the irrepressible Jack.

"That's Mademoiselle Dantès. Ohé! Julie!"

"Really, Bertha, you should ask Mr. Halifax if he wishes to make all these acquaintances," said

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Miss Farnhill, whose eyes were bent upon him in sweet apology. They were fine eyes, undoubtedly. That must have been why Mr. Bob Halifax coloured so deeply.

"On the contrary," he said eagerly, with a grave face, "nothing could be more agreeable."

"Why, of course!" said Jack, taking him by the arm. "Julie! Oh, bother it, she can't hear. Julie! Oh, come along, Mr. Halifax—pull me up the hill, will you?"

But the position became embarrassing. Turning to the others he said, "Pardon me, ladies: I have no right to intrude myself upon you for a moment. Good-bye;" and raising his peaked cap, he turned and ran down the hill.

"There!" said Miss Farnhill, nodding her dainty head. "You see. You've driven him away. Bertha."

"I didn't," quoth that young person, tugging viciously at a heather-bush.

"Of course you did."

"You say so, because you're jealous."

"Jealous of you, you mere child! How absurd you are, Jack."

"I know," persisted the naughty one. "You're always jealous. You're jealous of Ma when Pa kisses her."

"Jack!" It was Louie who interposed, reproach

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in her tone, and to the elder sister she said in a whisper:

"It was Julie who scared him away. He knows her, I'm confident." And then, as Jack ran away after the lady in question, the conversation became confidential and highly entertaining.

Mademoiselle Dantès, you must know, was the French governess of some younger children of Mr. Benjamin Farnhill, and teacher of French at Stone House Boarding School, of which Mr. Farnhill was the head master.

The behaviour of Mr. Bob Halifax, when he found himself alone again, would have interested the fair gossips vastly. His rapid walk slowed down to a saunter, and ended indecisively. Then he thrust his hand somewhere beneath the crimson tie he wore,

and drew out a locket, that was secured on his breast by a narrow ribbon; and, throwing himself down again, gazed at it long and ardently. He was even so absurd as to kiss it; and when he had done so he addressed it in endearing terms, just as if it had been a doll.

"Ah, my darling!" he said, in quite a different voice from that which they had heard. "If I only knew! only knew. Forgive me, sweetheart. But why—why did you go away? By Jupiter, I will know!" And as he uttered this impassioned exclamation

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he sprang to his feet and began to hurry back along the hillside.

But there was no one now in sight. He walked with eager step as far as the canal, which must be crossed to reach the valley, and scrutinised its banks and the adjacent field-paths as far as the eye can trace them, but to no purpose. The merry group had vanished like creatures of a dream, and, like them also, could not be recalled at will. He cursed his clumsy diffidence. He had not only declined the chance meeting for which he had been hoping against hope during three long years, but he had suffered the opportunity to pass without gaining the faintest clue to his lady-love's hiding-place.

On reflection, it seemed to him that there was a clue, but a clue so slight that it might merely tantalise him. The only out-door attire which her companions had worn consisted of the cheapest summer-hats; from which it was to be inferred that they were not far from home. It was true that Julie's careful toilette, on the other hand, was consistent with the supposition that she was a visitor; only in that case, being with them in the capacity of a friend, she would not have been so completely deserted. Did it not rather imply that she was a governess, as he had known her, and still unhappy?

Leaning on the parapet of the canal bridge, Mr.

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Halifax weighed this with other indecisive evidence in a dozen different combinations, and finally consigned it all to the dirty water and the crayfish. But when he went back to his drilling and blasting on Monday morning, his knowledge of that countryside was full enough to have qualified him as a letter-carrier or the compiler of a directory, and a

disquieting rumour was afloat among the countryfolk that there was a young swell thinking of buying Sir Richard Tufton's estates.

A week later the boys of Stone House School were talking familiarly of a fellow named Halifax that had walked into their cricket-field, who could bat like Tom Emmet, bowl faster than Billy MacIntyre, and field point as well as A. G. Steel.

II.—THE GODDESS TOILS.

IT happened soon afterwards that Master Tom Wignall, of the fourth form, was "kept in" through the dinner-hour to write 200 lines, a penal task which seemed to him in prospect as unexciting, and as hopeless of achievement, as the labour of Sisyphus. In spite of the strength and solace derived from a stringy pellet of liquorice root, chewed over for the fourth time, he was sighing heavily and wondering what form of death would be the easiest, when the

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door of the silent class-room opened, and to his intense relief Jack Farnhill popped her rosy face in, nodded mysteriously, and withdrew. He shied the tasteless pellet of liquorice at the blackboard, and began to amuse himself with a jump-jack. Presently, hearing her returning footfall, he resumed his martyrdom with a doleful face.

She sauntered up to him with her hands behind her, strode over the form boy fashion, and, sitting down by his side, threw one arm round his neck and put a baked apple dumpling to his lips.

"Hurray! you're a brick. Jack," cried Master Wignall, "But I say, I wish you wouldn't mess me about so:" and he wriggled himself out of the sisterly embrace.

The girl watched him begin to eat the stolen favour, and then said, "Lines? You silly, you're always having to do lines."

"Taint my fault."

"Shall I do some for you?"

"Go on! He'd know the difference."

"Bet you he wouldn't, then. I can write just like you."

"All right. Go ahead if you want to."

The sound of the pen, scratching away briskly, was uninterrupted for two or three minutes. The boy munched the dumpling by little pieces, and watched

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her face flushing with the voluntary exertion. When he had eaten the last crumb, and wiped his fingers surreptitiously on her gown, a lucid thought occurred to him."

"I say," he said; "I know you're spoons on me, but you never did my lines before. Bet you want something."

She wrote on with greater industry than ever, and replied carelessly, without looking up, "If I did, you wouldn't do it."

"I would if I'd time. I fetched you that kitten, that got drowned."

She had a profound conviction that it was he who drowned it too." Oh, it's easier than that," she said.

"All right. Why don't you tell me?"

Then she stopped, and looked at him earnestly, her frank and lovely face troubled with a shade of perplexity. "You wouldn't tell?" she asked.

"No"—without conviction.

"Sure? I shall know if you do."

"'Course. Why should I?"—a touch of well-simulated indignation in this reply.

"Well, I will tell you. I want you to take this letter:" and she produced from her pocket, and disentangled from a dirty handkerchief, a sealed and crumpled envelope on which he read the address, "B.

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Halifax, Esquire." His eyes went up to hers with a stare and then he snatched at it, but she was too quick for him.

"I know," he sulked. "You're spoons on him. I'll tell that, anyway."

"No, I'm not," she said, flushing; "at least, not much. But I shall be if you don't take this letter to him."

"Don't care," grunted the ungrateful little rascal.

"You won't take it?"

"Is it likely? What would the other fellows think?"

A lame excuse, but she replied to it patiently:

"They needn't see you."

The boy put his hands in his pockets and fell to kicking a nail in the floor.

"Very well," said Miss Pert, "I shall just take it myself and tell him about you."

"Oh, give it here!" burst out Master Sullen. "You never know when a fellow's joking!"

And so it came to pass that as he was leaving the cricket-field next Saturday, Mr. Halifax was accosted by a flushed and awkward boy, who handed him a very dirty envelope with the observation, "Here! I expect you dropped it," and ran away as if he had stolen it. Mr. Halifax read the superscription, and wondered. The envelope contained the following characteristic epistle:

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"Stone House,

"To Mr. BOB HALIFAX:

"SIR,

"I know why you come and play Cricket with our boys, but you are silly not to come and see Mlle. Dantès and make it up at once. She cried after she saw you on the moor. She pretends she doesn't *love* you, but I know she does. You better be quick and come, because I said I should write to you and she said if I did she would run away.—

"Toujours à vous,

JACK FARNHILL.

"She gave me a Kiss last night, but I am sure it was *meant* for you. Here it is, and a little one from me."

Then followed signs of osculation "as per invoice," and with them four others, of which the consignor gave no particulars.

Here was good fortune indeed. Until now he had not known that either Jack or Julie was to be found at the school, or that the former bore the surname of its proprietor,

for he had been guided wholly by conjecture. But ten minutes after the letter came into his possession, he knocked at the door of Stone House.

There was a scuffle in the hall, and a sharp sound which suggested a smack; and then the eager face of

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Jack appeared at the door, with her handsome sister the brunette in close attendance, ready to smile his welcome with an air of pretty surprise. Mr. Halifax experienced a momentary confusion.

"How are you, Mr. Halifax?" said the cadette, her eyes aglow. "You want to see Miss Dantès, don't you? Step into this room, please, and I'll tell her you're come." And she bounced upstairs.

How provoking these children are! Here, for example, was Miss Farnhill, well aware that she looked bewitching in a new pink *mousseline de laine* house-dress, and that the smoothly rounded throat which its low neck displayed so nicely, rising evenly from a fine bust, and the snow-white arms which its little sleeves left bare, were especially worthy the attention of the visitor—and that tiresome Jack must needs cut in and make her seem of no consequence.

Yet this dazzling creature bore it all like a martyr, and contrived to smile in the sweetest way as she gave Mr. Bob Halifax her soft white hand. Nay more, she kept up a conversation of the most *spirituelle* and engaging kind as she lit the gas and drew down the blinds; menial operations in which, as every lady knows, nothing but a natural elegance of pose and movement can assure the observer that they are not performed as a mere matter of habit. So you will see what a difficult *rôle* she had to play, especially

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when Mr. Halifax was fettered by a prior attachment, and took refuge in a cold and statuesque politeness that was positively stupid. For he was listening for the returning footsteps of the woman he loved—whom he had loved at first sight three years before,

on finding her installed as governess in his father's house, and who, after letting him think she returned his love, had one day disappeared without a word of farewell.

When Miss Farnhill withdrew, she saw the governess descending the stairs with Jack's arm about her waist.

"You little wretch, you are unbearable," she said, when the door had closed upon the lovers.

The little wretch put on a look of tender compassion. "*Wouldn't* he look at her nice fat arms, zen?" she retorted; and thereupon you might see the impressive spectacle of a beautiful girl in a rage. The only word Miss Farnhill could find to utter was the interjection "Oh!" but it was charged with such hot indignation and menace that her tormentor skipped upstairs to the first landing, to caper there in ostentatious delight. But a galleon in full sail may despise a mere pinnace, and Miss Farnhill hoisted signals of contempt and floated gracefully away into the "study"—where the pinnace presently appeared also, bearing a flag of truce.

Then began a time of suspense, very trying to the

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nerves. Miss Farnhill took up a book, and fell into a posture of careless grace by the side of a low table. Miss Louie Farnhill was trimming a hat, but her fingers trembled perceptibly at their task.

The *Dea ex Machinâ* whistled "Pop goes the Weasel" and beat time to it on the table with a ruler; walked about the room twisting her handkerchief into the likeness of mandrakes; and graduated through several chairs to the piano stool, where she played scales *prestissimo* with the loud pedal held down. It was too distracting, Miss Farnhill sprang up and shut the lid of the piano down upon her fingers. The *Dea* laughed, and for the next five minutes practised waltzing with a chair. Then with a cry of "Ugh! I can't stand this!" she dropped the chair with a clatter, and ran out into the garden in the dark.

Miss Farnhill laid her book down and smiled upon her sister. "Well, you were right, dear," she said. " But what impudence!"

"Impudence, dear?"

"Yes, of course—to receive him in our house without either Papa's leave or knowledge! I shall tell him at once."

"Maude! Don't you think that would be—I mean do you really think Papa would object?"

"Without his knowledge, of course he would. I never liked that woman, Louie, I must confess. She's

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too proud by half I mistrust any woman who says she likes *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Such pap!"

"But dearie—she didn't encourage him, you know."

"How *do* you know, you innocent little goose?... Oh, I'd give worlds to know what they're saying!"

"So would I," confessed Louie—the mild and homely girl.

Whatever it was, it took a dreadfully long time to say; and even when it had all been said, and even when it had all been said, and they heard the door opened, there was an unaccountable delay of quite half a minute in the hall, before Mr. Halifax took his leave. The three girls were dying of suppressed curiosity, but Jack alone ventured into the reception-room. A moment later she had darted out into the night, leaving the hall door open.

"What *is* the matter with that unbroken little donkey?" exclaimed Miss Farnhill, just as if she were not the little donkey's sister.

The young person thus classified was running down the drive at the top of her speed. "Mr. Halifax!" she cried shrilly, and then found herself close upon his tall broad figure in the darkness. "Oh, you did startle me," she laughed. "You've left my letter on the table, you bad boy. You're not a bit grateful to me, I don't believe."

He could dimly see her bright eyes and pouting lips; and, as he took the letter, out of the fulness of

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his heart he put his arm round her waist, drew her up to him, and kissed her on the mouth.

"You're an angel. Jack," he said.

III. —THE GODDESS REPENTS.

I TAKE it as a good feature of the character of Mr. Bob Halifax, that, in a moment of perplexity and profound chagrin, he should have found it in his heart to repay the the debt he owed to Jack. For though he had to thank her for the knowledge that Julie's heart was constant, he had obtained from Mademoiselle Dantès no consent to his wooing, but instead of that a very mortifying explanation.

She had left him at the supplication of his mother, enforced with tears and words of affectionate confidence, and was under a promise to avoid him by every means in her power. In vain he had assured her that his mother would instantly release her from the promise at his desire, and that in any case he was accustomed to act as his own master. Julie had listened to his passionate protestations of love with unhopeful tears, and it had at last become clear to him [why not at first, O egotist?] that her become clear to him [why not at first, O egotist?] that her pride was deeply wounded, and that he could not hope to marry her until he had enlisted his family's cordial and active interest in their union.

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In the face of such a problem, Mr. Halifax was little troubled by some disquieting news which reached him one morning by a trusty enough messenger. But at the manner in which it came he was more than a little surprised. He found Miss Bertha Farnhill, in all the dignity of a fashionable *mise*, holding a lively dispute with the watchman whose duty it was to drive away curious people from the tunnel's mouth, and who had been chosen for that duty because he was obstinate and ill-tempered.

"Now you shall see!" she cried, catching sight of him, and advanced beyond the growling janitor to offer her hand. "How do you do, Mr. Halifax? Your men are very rude," and then she drew him aside.

“Do you know, there’s been an awful row at home about—about that letter. That beastly little sneak went and told the Governor I’d been writing to you. I didn’t care a bit, only—it all came out about Julie. *I* didn’t tell him, but I think I know who did. Anyway he was awfully angry with me because he said I should ruin the discipline of the school or something; and—don’t you think you’d better speak to him, Mr. Halifax? I shouldn’t—I mean you wouldn’t like him, for Julie’s sake, to forbid you to come to our house, would you?” She spoke hurriedly, and her face was paler than usual.

The young enginner smiled. “Why, yes,” he said.

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“Of course I will. Perhaps I ought to have asked for Mr. Farnhill the other night.”

“That’s all right,” she said rather breathlessly. “I’m so glad. I thought you’d be angry. Do you work in that hole?”

“Just now, yes.”

“May I go in and look?”

He glanced at her dainty get-up and objected, “Oh, it’s far too dirty. Besides,” he laughed, “there’s dynamite. What do you say to that, Jack?”

She met his glance with a charming smile of trustfulness and said quietly, “I’d go anywhere with you.”

What was it made him think of that kiss? Not any kind of disloyalty to his heart’s queen, certainly; and indeed he did not behave to Jack at all gallantly, but sent her away without ceremony. Possibly she struck him as less of a child than she had sometimes seemed. The strange creature! To have set lightly out on a walk of six miles in order to warn him of an imaginary difficulty.

Doubtless it seemed to her a grave matter; but, after all—she would make a fine little woman some day.

A change which showed itself in Jack’s manner about this time was attributed by most of the innates of Stone House to her father’s displeasure. She grew pensive and singularly gentle. Miss Farnhill thanked

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goodness that something had been said to the minx at last—she had needed it long enough. Miss Louie agreed with her mother that Jack was not well, and ought to have a change; but when they said so, Jack betrayed such an unreasonable and childish alarm that they did not speak of it again in her hearing.

Julie, who liked to talk to her on a certain weel-worn topic, often sought her in the evenings in vain, but when she did find her caressed her with much warmth of sisterly affection. At these times, for some reason she could never explain, Jack would give way to passionate weeping and clasp her *chère amie* very tightly. Then they would gradually fall into pleasant talk, and Jack would kiss her fervidly when they said “Good night.” But Julie was greatly troubled about her, and as Jack had got into the scrape by doing her a service, it was especially painful to the tender-hearted French-woman to see her sometimes walk over to her father as he sat in his essay chair of an evening, and seating herself on his knee throw her arms round his neck and bury her face beneath his brown beard. How she took it to heart!

She did this one night when Julie was not there to see. Julie was with Mr. Bob Halifax in another room. The schoolmaster felt her clasp tighten, and took it as a mute expression of thanks for his having yielded to a certain plea which she had put in a day or two before.

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He was a portly man with a rather careworn face, but he looked young and handsome when his favourite child made love to him.

“You little match-maker!” he whispered.

She kept her face averted when she presently freed herself, and he did not see how pale she was. Then she covered his eyes with both hands, kissed him on the forehead and the mouth, and ran out of the room. He rubbed the unbidden tears away, and shook his head musingly. Somehow he often feared for her future happiness.

When Mr. Bob Halifax bade “Good night,” it was not only a sweetheart but a *fiancée* that he folded in a long embrace of happiness. The course of their true love,

smooth henceforth and prosperous, shone wide before them like the golden pathway that leads over a quiet ocean toward the morning sun.

He mounted lightly into his dogcart, staggered the man who had held his horse by the munificence of his "tip," and rattled off merrily into the darkness, defying the bad roads and caring less than nothing for the absence of gaslight. Julie listened intently to the fugitive clatter of hoofs, with a thrill of fear. But the blood in the driver's veins was dancing to that brisk tattoo.

Suddenly, in full career, he pulled the horse on his haunches with a shout. A stooping figure, dimly

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The frightened animal pranced and curvetted so restlessly that he had to turn it about before he dared to jump down. Calming it with a few pats on the neck, he went cautiously forward a step or two, and found something lying in the middle of the road.

Horribly alarmed, he took out one of the lamps to see what mischief he had done. It was a girl. She lay with outstretched arms, her cheek in the dust, her face shrouded by a veil of yellow hair.

A moment later, uttering a cry of keen distress, he lifted her in his arms and climbed back into the dogcart. But as he did so, consciousness seemed to come back to her, and struggling fiercely, with a low, bitter whimpering, she almost broke from him while he was gathering up the reins.

"Jack!" he said hoarsely, "Jack! you poor girl. Don't you know who has you? It's Bob Halifax, Jack; your chum, Bob Halifax."

He got a glimpse of her strange look, and his heart fell sick when she answered piteously, "Oh, let me go! I want to die."

The tears came with the confession, and the mad, abandoned, winsome creature sobbed as if all the grief in this big world of griefs were raging in her one little passionate breast.

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Bob Halifax was a little guilty, or he would not have understood. But the man who dips the poisoned arrow knows mayhap the right balm for the wound. He raised her hand to his lips as she lay against him, and touched it ever so lightly.

“You mustn’t say that, Jack,” he said gravely; “I should never be quite happy any more.”

She looked up at him, with a smile so faint that in the darkness it only seemed to him that her face grew calm again.

“Are you hurt, Jack?” he asked.

“I—I don’t know,” she faltered; and then another gush of tears came—but oh! so different from the first.

No, she was safe and sound.

“Now, remember, Jack,” he said, as they presently stood in the road—he holding her hand—“I saved your life. It’s mine to do as I like with, isn’t it?”

“Yes, B—Bob.”

“Very well. Promise me you won’t catch a fever, or tumble downstairs, or anything else, without consulting me first”.

She laughed an odd little laugh, with a sob in it. “All right,” she assented.

“Now let me make you presentable. Come here into the light. Why, your face is all smeared! Here, rub it clean with my handkerchief while I dust you, That’s it... There, now you’ll do. *Good-bye*, Jack, old

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man! *Toujours loyal, n’est-ce pas?* Tell Julie to kiss you when you go in; and—we won’t speak of this any more, will we? Not to any one, mind—any one.”

She answered in a trembling voice that was almost inaudible. “No, Bob. Oh! thank you so much!”

By this time he was in the dogcart again, and turning the horse round. “I can’t take you home, you know. God bless you, Jack! Good-bye.”

And in the noise of starting he did not hear whether or no she made a reply. But a month later, when there was a wedding from Stone House School, the prettiest girl in

the white bevy was Jack Farnhill, first bridesmaid, who really, if you are to believe what everybody said, looked happier even than the bride!

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LIGE MURGATROYD'S TROUBLE.

LIGE MURGATROYD, the Aireley blacksmith, was a taciturn and quite unlovable man, whose best-known characteristic was that he often took a “soop ower mich.” This sup too much always made him savage and miserable; yet every Saturday night about seven o’clock he shut up his smithy and strode off to Amos’s, without washing his hands and without doffing his apron or his square paper cap.

He entered the tap-room with not a word of greeting for anybody, and ordered his whisky with a scowl that beseemed his black-bearded face amazingly. The other frequenters got little companionship out of him, and for the most part left him alone. When he had swallowed half-dozen glasses or so—which he did in an hour and a half—frowning a good deal at the landlord the while, he would get up and walk out of the house with the silent majesty of a man who doesn’t like his company. Certainly the way he held up steadily and walked through the doorway without

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seeming to notice that there were any jambs, operated as a rebuke upon every cross-
visioned, weak-kneed tippler in the place. But when he was once in the open air and thought himself alone, the most inattentive observer he passed in the road might recognize, by favour of his touching and gratuitous freedom of speech, that it was himself to whom the rebuke was addressed, and his own company that he misprised. For he was accustomed to profess himself in good set terms, and with a clamorous and melancholy iteration, “a dammed fool.”

It was commonly said in excuse for Lige that he had seen trouble, and indeed the present writer, without the exercise of any great sagacity, divined as much very soon. He was bold enough once to uphold in the blacksmith’s presence the view that “Old

Three Laps” deserved the pity, not the scorn, of all good Yorkshiremen; whereupon Lige startled and enlightened him at once, by applying to poor Three Laps, mournful victim of a girl’s disdain, the sweeping epithet which he usually reserved for himself. Seeming somewhat exited, he added, further, that all women-folk were “trash, and a mak’ o’witches.”

He dwelt absolutely alone, and into his little house by the smithy no woman, so far as I know, ever succeeded in prying. For he did his own washing and cleaning, made his own meals, and in the middle

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of a very fraternal Airedale village lived, in short, like the Hermit of Rombald’s Moor.

There were some imaginative people who reported that he slept on sacking and had but one article of crockeryware for all his millaneous uses; but these did him an injustice. He slumbered on a mattress like any other Christian, though it is true that the mattress lay on the boards; and he used no crockery at all, because pewter lasted longer. Besides, his room downstairs at least was such a marvel of masculine propriety; cleanliness and polish, that he had to keep for ever on the watch to defeat the curiosity of old wives and young, who wanted to peep in at the window of such a unique apartment. It was highly amusing to see him scatter them with a shout of “Hey!” uttered three or four yards away, from his smithy door, with an emphasis which would have made them jump if they had seen half-a-mile off. Once a farmer’s wife out of the parish brought him a mare to be shod. Lige said nothing to her, but simply left the forge to look after itself, and the farmer’s wife to discover, by the mere lapse of time, that he was not coming back that day.

Lige’s trouble was of a kind which some men bear with fortitude, but no man bears with equanimity. He was to be married to a young woman of the village whose charms were more remarkable than her

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virtues. He had finished the house; she had bought the wedding-gown; and Lige went about his work with a smile lurking perpetually about the corners of his mouth.

One afternoon, Josh RATHERA, the village tailor, strolled up to the smithy, where Lige in his glee was wielding his hammer like another Thor, and said he had message for him.

"It's a bit parti'cler," he explained. "thraw thi hammer dahn, an' slip thi coit on, an' come ahtside a minute." Lige obeyed, wondering a little, but doubting nothing. As they walked down the road, Josh mopped his sallow face assiduously with a dirty handkerchief, and said it was fearful hot weather, and they wanted some rain, he fancied.

"Well?" said Lige, "what hes ta?"

"Well!" echoed Josh, mopping his forehead again, and edging away a bit; but something in his uneasy glance made the smith's heart sink. "Tha sees, it's i' this way," he proceeded, forced at last by Lige's silence to broach the business boldly; "shoo's been thinking' it ower, like, and shoo's axed me—shoo thowt, like, I s'ould be t' fittest to tell tha on't—breck it gently, as they say—'at we—'at shoo—er—'" And again RATHERA fell to mopping his face.

"Spit it aht, man!" said Lige.

Josh took a sidelong glance at the smith's white

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face, and jerked out: "Well, tha mud as weel be knawin' now as latter. Her an' me gate wed i' Bradforth this mornin'!"

With a hoarse shout Lige took him by the throat in his great hands, and held him for one terrible minute in a grip that made his eyeballs start. Then in the pang of his misery he forgot its author. A low moaning cry escaped him, his hold relaxed, and, shuddering, he turned giddily round, staggered a few paces, and fell on the bank by the roadside. Josh pulled himself together, and sneaked off.

That was years ago now; but the more time passed the plainer it became that Lige was a ruined man. The marriage, too, was an unhappy one, for as soon as the heartless woman brought her first babe into the world Josh RATHERA ran away, and left

her to her fate. Yet even now the man she had cheated could not pass her in the road without a grim, set face, paling beneath the tan.

Before I made friends with Lige I passed his smithy often without feeling the slightest inclination to chum with him. To tell the truth, I did not like his uncivilized appearance. His black hair was always long and unkempt, his beard bristled a defiance, and his glance, darted at me from beneath bushy brows, sparkled with distrust. Besides, I had once seen two bonny little girls standing in the road hand in hand, gazing with

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great startled eyes across at his forge, and plainly afraid to advance a step further. As soon as I came up with them they trotted along close at my heels, whispering. I bribed them with pennies to tell me why they were “flaed,” and the elder one’s lips quivered and her eyes dilated afresh as she faltered his terrible name, “Lige Murgatroyd!” That was all I could get out of either of them; but it appeared manifest that the blacksmith’s bitter mood had caused him to be dreaded as a kind of bogey-man—possibly imbued with some of the monstrous characteristics of the ogre.

One day, in the winter which followed this incident, a rosy-cheeked little woman of eight years burst boldly in upon Lige’s rancorous solitude. She appeared suddenly in the doorway of the forge, out of breath from racing with a noisy band of her playmates, and, facing him with the greatest confidence in the world, she said:

“Please will yo’ gie me one o’ yahr icicles?”

Lige looked at her from head to foot, and for a moment the issue was uncertain. Then he got up from the bench where he had been eating his dinner, stepped outside, broke off the longest icicle that was hanging from the low roof, and gave it to her. It was a veritable prize, quite half a yard long, and the little one’s eyes glistened with pleasure as she said, “Thenk yo’, Mister Murgatroy’.”

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To see a tiny face, full of childish loveliness, smiling up at him with perfect fearlessness, was a novel experience for Lige, and he began to unbend. "Well," he said—gruffly enough for that matter—"an' what's thy name then?"

"Gracie," answered the vistor with evident satisfaction, taking a suck at the icicle. "An' mi father's at Ameriker, an' he isn't comin' back nivver no more! I know he isn't, cos mi mother says so. An't doan't like schooil, I like bird nests best—nut to steyl 'em, just to lewk at, an' nivver touch 'em nut a bit! I know where ther's a reight lot when it comes summer, but I sahn't tell ye where they is. I wean't tell nut nobody. Will yo' gie me all yahr icicles when I want 'em?"

The smith laughed, but somehow, when he tried to answer, he couldn't find his voice all at once. He turned away brusquely, and began to make an aimless clatter among his irons.

"I' se off nah," cried the little maiden from the door, "I'se be lat' for school;" and she didn't come to see him for many a day, because the frost went and there were no more icicles to beg. But he found himself watching for her when the school children passed, and sometimes, as they chased one another down the road with faces aglow with excitement, he intercepted a bright and laughing glance. When that happened he

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would pause from his work, and go to the door, and look out after her till the merry troop had disappeared down the little lane that led to the schoolhouse, and their joyous cries had ceased. Anyone who had come upon him unawares at those times would have been startled by the cruel look his face wore.

But that was not the look he showed to his small acquaintance. Very soon he fell into a way of waving his arm to her, and she of looking out for the friendly sigaal, and one bright spring morning, when the sunshine glistened on every fresh wet leaf, and the air was fall of the songs of birds he shouted after her, "Nah, then, Gracie, lass! Art' nivver bahn to come an' see me?"

The other children, like aflock of sheep in a panic, stopped to gaze for an instant and then ran away at a gallop. But Gracie stood where she was, just a little shy because she couldn't think what to say, but not a whit frightened; and when he said gently,

“Come hither, doy,” she marched up to him with one hand in her pocket and one finger of the other hand in her mouth.

“What hes ta i’ thi pocket?” he asked.

She hung her head a bit, and answered unwillingly; but truthfully, “It’s a wurrum.”

Lige laughed so loudly and discordantly that when he wanted to know why she carried worms in her

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pocket she pouted and said, “I sahn’t tell yo’ then;” and with a touch of natural coquetry she shook back her flaxen ringlets and smoothed her frock down, and held her chin very high.

“All reight” said Lige, mighty indifferent. “Wo’d ta like to blaw my bellowses?”

Her yes sparkled, and she ran across the smithy floor to lay hold of the handle as she had seen Lige do.

“Nay,” said he, “fair doin’s! Tell me what that’s bahn to do wi’ thy wurrum an’ then tha can laäk [play] wi’ my bellowses”.

Whereupon the precious secret came out nonchalantly. “Bahn to gie’t t’a bird nest,” said Gracie, as she took hold of the belows. It needed every bit of her weight to pull the handle down, but she worked away with all her tiny might till the flames were dancing and she was quite out of breath. Lige, with his arms akimbo, watched her, delighted.

“That’s champion!” he cried when she stooped. “We’s mak’ a reight blacksmith on her.”

After that she lifted his biggest hammer to show how strong she was, and, being much applauded, tried to lift his anvil too. Then he fell to asking questions, some of which it puzzled him a good deal to answer; and just before she ran away again she looked up archly and said:

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“I like ye.”

“Does ta?” said Lige, embarrassed by this unexpected avowal.

“M,” nodded Gracie, soberly; and with that, catching sight of one of her playmates who had ventured back for her, she trotted gaily off. From that day they were fast friends; and when the holidays came she brought her dolly with her—a wooden trunk swathed in rags, with a featureless knob for a head—and sang it to sleep in the smithy. Lige, with a tact which did him infinite credit, found means to earn her gratitude as well as to safeguard her constancy. By dint of industrious digging in the early mornings, he managed always to have a little canister of worms ready for her. Furnished with these, she delighted to play the Lady Bountiful among her birds’ nests, feeding the eager nestlings with her own hands, while the mother birds fluttered to and fro in a condition of touching but needless anxiety. Yet he could never persuade her to tell him where those nests were.

Meanwhile Lige’s visits to Amo’s became less frequent. He was seen there scarcely once a month, and even then he did not always stay long. The villagers marked the change with no little surprise, and it came to be understood that after all Lige was getting over his trouble. One evening in the autumn, just after dark, a woman with a shawl wrapped closely

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round her stole timorously up to his door, hesitated long, and then knocked softly. The blacksmith threw it open. Peering out—for he had been sitting in the firelight, and its feeble glow did not serve to show him well who the visitor was—he presently discerned a female form, with her hands clasped and upraised.

“Lige!” she faltered.

He started back to shut the door, but she seized the post in both hands in such a way that if he had done so he must have crushed her fingers.

“D—n tha, be off!” he said, between his teeth. “What’s ta come to me for, d—n tha! Be off to thi fancy chap! Be off tuv Ameriker!”

But she clung to the door-post and sank on her kness, and wailed piteously, “Lige! Lige!”

He took hold of her wrists and flung her backwards into the road.

“Oh, Lige!” she cried again, miserably. It’s Gracie. Shoo’s *thy* lass, Lige, nut his’n. Tak’ her an’keep her! Shoo loves thee better nor me.”

The big fellow staggered. Then he bent over her quickly. “It’s a lie,” he said; “I know tha!” And he went in and locked his door.

Those who came to have their horses shod next day found the smithy door open, but the hearth cold. Lige was at Amos’s, and the neighbours opined that

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it was no use bothering him. They were right. He was drinking fiery spirit like a man consumed with thirst. He sat there from early morning till the afternoon. When he got up to go, he fell heavily on the stone floor, and lay incapable, or stunned. They lifted him up, and saw that his head was bleeding, but he did not seem to know of the hurt, and stumbled out into the sunlight.

Later on, somebody saw him holding by the corner of a wall and gazing stupidly at the schoolhouse. His face was livid and expressionless, and his clothing was befouled with the dirty sawdust of the alehouse floor. Just before sunset some platelayers picked him up dead on the railway, mangled by a luggage train that had passed.

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WHAT THE PARSON BROUGHT

WHEN the Reverend John Wilkins came to live at the Vicarage, he caused quite a flutter in Cragside. It was not that he was brilliant, or ostentatious, or fussy, but that he exemplified the saying, “A sound heart is more precious than much learning.” The parish had been for ten years or more under the cold, reproachful eye of a scholarly clergyman whose taciturnity, together with the redness of his nose, has estranged him even from a people with whom it is as easy and natural to be friendly as it is for the sun to shine. And in his place there came a sociable old gentleman, white-haired and a little

bent, who “potted in and out among them,” and would chat with any man, and who sent an inexhaustible supply of good things to the aged and ailing.

He appeared to do these things for the mere sake of doing them. He asked nobody to go to his church who was not accustomed to attend it; and the payment of tithe was voluntary. In one of the sturdiest

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strongholds of dissent, he broke down every prejudice against the Established Church in six months; and it was simply old use and wont, with a possible pious dread of the prayer-book, that prevented the worshippers of the old Bar Chapel from going now and then to hear his prosy sermons.

Nothing did more to enhance the Vicar’s popularity than his conduct with regard to a girl whom he had brought from Carlisle, the place of his previous living, and whose function in his household was almost that of an adopted daughter. As soon as he had taken his social bearings he called upon Binney Driver, to introduce her to that inflexible leader of the local Primitive Methodists, in whom, by the way, he instantly recognized a man and a brother. He said, while the millowner marvelled first and then admired, that her parents had been Methodists, and that he desired to “follow in the path upon which they would themselves, in happier circumstances, have guided her.”

“She’s nut thy kin, then?” said Binney Driver, his keen grey eyes abashing her a little by their kindly scrutiny.

He had been told that her name was Gray—Jessie Gray—and his question was natural enough. But the old parson, with an anxious air of not wanting to be questioned further, merely answered “No,” and

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fell to praising her virtues and accomplishments.

“No—but she’s a clever little woman, sir. Aren’t you, Jessie?”

His *protégée*. A pale girl with a constrained but ladylike manner, flushed to the temples at his fatherly compliment. But he patted her on the shoulder and continued.

“Of course you are, and a very good girl! Yes, Mr. Driver, she sings like an angel, and I think—I *think*, mind you—that with a leetle encouragement she might be persuaded to take a class in your Sunday School.”

At this the girl’s blush deepened, and she turned a glance of entreaty upon the old clergyman—without the least effect. Binney Driver said that he was right glad to hear it, for workers were hard to find; and added that he was still more glad to meet a parson who wasn’t a bigot. From which remark there ensued mutual banter and a firm friendship.

Either in the pleasant confusion of mind which the chat occasioned him, or in the execution of a deeply meditated stratagem, the Reverend John Wilkins left his pocket-handkerchief behind him; and when he turned back for it he drew Binney Driver aside, and said with a grave face and a particular pressure of the hand:

“A sad case, Mr. Driver—a cruel, cruel misfortune!”

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Don’t question her. Her health is delicate, and we must help her to forget the past. Good-bye. Good-bye.”

Jessie Gray shared the popularity of the Vicar, for he sent her hither and thither with kindly gifts; and she soon won a popularity of her own. She was pretty, with quiet brown eyes and a soft, pensive look, to which her habitual pallor imparted a certain expression of sadness, and when she smiled, which she always did where there were children, you couldn’t help wondering if the angels looked any sweeter or purer. She dressed with extreme simplicity; in black.

I think the silence which continued to be observed in relation to her past, and which sundry shrewd interrogatories administered to herself by the less delicate had failed to unseal, began, after a time, to intrigue the adult population a good deal, and specially the women, some of whom drew the most fantastic and uncharitable inferences. These were forgotten upon better acquaintance, except by big handsome. Minta Smith, who drew ale at the “Angel” in a black satin gown, and who could never forgive her for being so much talked about: “Ugh! Do for goodness’ sake hold your tongues about that wretched little thing!” she used to say, with an elegance of diction

that belonged to her superiority as a town-bred girl: “She makes me *sick* with ‘er pasty face ‘an ‘er mincin’

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affections!” But it was not from qualms of this kind, that the whole masculine youth of the village was shy and “gawky” in her presence; and poor old Sal o’ Amo’s, who was bedridden and for the most part peevish, said when she heard of these backbitings, “Nay, deary me, what next? Ye all deserve a touch o’ *my* complaint—ye do fairly!”

It was well for Jessie’s peace of mind that none of these things came to her ears, nor was ever likely to do so. But there was one thing of which, being a woman, she did not long remain ignorant, and this was that Reuben Driver, the millowner’s son, admired her. She surprised a tell-tale gaze during her visit with the Vicar to his father’s house, and when she sat in the choir it was sure to meet her eyes as soon as she raised them. He listened to her voice when the hymns were sung, and himself stood mute. He was a singularly handsome lad, clean-built, straight and broad-shouldered; with firmly-moulded features, cheeks as ruddy as a girl’s, and a marvellous depth and power in his quiet blue eyes.

Music had hitherto been his greatest pleasure. He had taught himself to play the fiddle, and for a novice, he played with unusual delicacy of expression. In the stillness of a warm evening in autumn I have stood under the window of Binney Driver’s “living room” to hear him, and somehow the memory of it

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recurs often to my thoughts. But there was a violinist in the choir at Bar Chapel already, and he believed that there was not another in Craven worthy to rezin his bow, so young Reuben had to sit and sigh among the congregation. One Sunday afternoon—there was no service in the morning at Cragside—the instrumentalists had played over the introduction to an anthem, and his heart stood still when he saw Jessie Gray stand up alone. It was the chapel anniversary, the musical service was “special” on such occasions, and she was to sing a solo. The air was that fine inspiration, “How beautiful

are the feet;" and her pure and delicate voice, trembling a little in the first few bars with nervousness, but growing firm and more thrilling as she sang; fell on his ears with such passing sweetness that a great sob and a keen shiver of delight shook him, keen as a pang of remembered sorrow.

He sat in an ecstasy during the remainder of the service. When it was over, and the crowded congregation was slowly dispersing amid neighbourly greetings, Reuben, having waited near the door till his father, who was chapel steward, should have counted up and impounded the collection, was much excited to see him come out holding Jessie by the arm.

"There be some I s'ouldn't tell on't if they sang weel," he was saying as they approached, "but when

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a lass can sing them beautiful words as thou did, shoo willn't be easy made proud."

With the awkwardness of his country breeding, the young fellow walked down the steps behind them without so much as speaking, and suffered some bitterness from his tongue-tied diffidence—as if, forsooth, his idol had not read unspoken praises in his face. But as their ways lay in different directions, Binney Driver stopped as soon as they were in the road, and to his son's confusion, turned round and said,

"This is my owdest lad, and he does play 't fiddle a bit. Reuben, this here's t' young lady 'at lives wi' Parson Wilkins. I 've axed her to come down home o' Thursady at night, for a bit o'music."

And while he spoke Jessie Gray held out a timid little gloved hand, and by this simple piece of good manners completely disconcerted Reuben, who had never had occasion to shake hands in his life.

How it fared between them after that musical evening, all who have loved and been loved will picture for themselves better than I could tell. There came a Saturday afternoon just twelve months later, when Reuben Driver, with a very cheerful heart in his breast, made a trip to Leeds all alone, and spent several hours in looking at the jewellers' windows. He returned to one and another time after time, and then sought a fresh one; after which he went back to

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the first again. He was forming his taste in personal ornament, and this, as every one knows, is a difficult thing for a young fellow to do on a sudden, even if he have passed jewellers' windows every day of his life. When his taste was matured he made a purchase, and there is every reason to believe that he was content with it, for on the journey home he pulled it out of his pocket at least a dozen times, and whenever he put it back he fell to smiling. It was a tiny ring set with pearls, and it had cost about half his savings.

The next night he walked home after chapel with Jessie Gray. He did not ask first if he might do so, but took the liberty with perfect assurance: whence it may be seen that Time works wonders. It wanted a couple of hours to sunset, and strollers met them in every filed through which their path lay.

“What are yo' walking' so fast for?” said Reuben, trying to look into her eyes; and while he spoke he drew his hand out of his pocket, with the ring on his little finger.

“Was I! I didn't know,” answered Jessie, with just a tinge of pretty colour, in her cheeks. “But, indeed, I must get back home to lay uncle's supper.” Uncle was the name her benefactor had taught her to call him by. “He likes me to see to it, and he is so tired on a Sunday night always.” But she slackened her pace a little, unconsciously.

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Reuben strode along by her side in silence for a while, and took a glance or two down at the ring by way of killing time. They had talked of various things, and there was now only one subject left to him, but a lump came in his throat every time he tried to broach it. Quite suddenly, as it seemed to him, they came within sight of the parsonage.

“Jessie,” he said, in an altered voice, low and timorous, “I was at Leeds yesterda' an—an' I browt *this*. Will it—?”

That was all. The words died on his lips, Jessie Gray was looking at the ring with wide frightened eyes, and her blanched lips were quivering. For an instant she even tottered, and then, with a vehement rapidity, she burst out piteously:

“Oh! No, no, no! You mustn’t. You don’t know. Please let me go home!”—and, hurrying away, she left him motionless by the stile where they had stopped for an instant; he left him thunderstruck, and as pale as herself, a quick pain at his heart and the fair meadowlands swimming round and round him.

When his self-control returned, he went miserably home. He took down his fiddle in the unlighted kitchen, and played till the big tears fell and eased his heart. He did not conjure up vain hopes. His failure had been too astounding, too complete, to leave a single figment of his rosy dream unshattered.

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Besides, it was fitting. The consort of this Queen of Maidenhood should be a better man.

But on the morrow hope came back to him, as it will in youth. A gala for the school children was to be there with her class. About tea-time, after a restless day, he donned his Sunday clothes again and went out.

A brass band was playing in his father’s field near the chapel, and the merry-makings were in full blast. Within a ring round the band-cart, a score of couples were dancing a polka with bucolic vigour. He laughed at some men and boys running an egg and spoon race. The notes of the band came to his ears mingled with the ancient song of “Bingo,” in which the bass came out lustily; and there was a screaming game of kiss-in-the-ring going on. Old folks as well as young were pressed into the frolic, and visitors drawn to Cragside by the widespread fame of the Feast joined in it without being pressed at all.

Reuben wandered in and out among the crowd in search of a sweet face that he could not see. Nods and smiles greeted him on every hand, and yet the gala-field was to him on every hand, and yet the gala-field was to him the loneliest of places. He fell into a reverie, leaning with his hands in his pockets against one of the boundary walls,

and presently found himself scrutinizing, with a dim consciousness of recognizing some acquaintance,

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the discordant and ridiculous figure of a town fop, that had somehow planted itself there, with an appearance of being interested.

The figure was apparelled in a nankeen suit, a straw hat, a pink necktie, yellow gloves, and a pair of low shoes, which, as the trouser-legs were turned up, revealed a pair of crimson socks. It was further adorned with a malacca cane, a blonde moustache and an extinct cigarette, and its queer little eyes were fixed, with a glitter which alone betokened it a living human being, upon the kissing-ring. The result of Reuben's examination was that he moved away, seized with an unaccountable shyness; for he had finally become convinced that this very gorgeous person was the Leeds shopman who sold him his ring. The explanation of his presence there was natural enough.

He was an old admirer of Minta Smith's, and had come to pay her a visit. But to Reuben the effect of it was much as if a watch had been set upon his movements.

This foolish fancy gave place a little later to a wilder one. When he saw the Leeds shopman again, the rogue was walking side by side with Jessie Gray, his cane carried saucily under his arm, his hat a trifle tilted, and his head tenderly inclined towards her bonnet. Minta being safely engaged at the "Angel"

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for a while, his perspicuous eye had singled out Jessie for the honour of his more casual attentions.

Reuben might have seen that her face was averted, and that she time after time turned quickly about, as it to shake the fellow off; but he was not in a mood for cool discerning observation. He was conscious of nothing but a hungry rage of jealousy. The scene of the previous evening and the visit of this counterjumper, this crow in peacock's fathers, were parts of the same hateful mystery, and made each other plain!

The inherited feud between the country and the town burned in his veins too, and somewhere in the background of his thoughts there lurked the preposterous suspicion that they would talk about the ring and laugh at him.

He had unconsciously drawn nearer, when Jessie, still unable to rid herself of her persecutor, caught sight of him, and with a troubled appealing face came eagerly towards him. He looked her savagely in the eyes, and turned on his heel. The little cry of pain that escaped her did not reach him.

Reuben Driver knew nothing of the art and mystery of boxing. There is little doubt that a two minutes' round with a professional bruiser would have saddened and bewildered him strangely—much as the first crack on the head with a flail will sadden and bewilder a man, when soundly and unexpectedly

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administrated by his own hand. But what Reuben felt was that whether this cockahoop intruder were Tom Sayers or Solomon in all his glory, he would trash him before he left Cragside that night. And this resolve filled him with a great joy.

His opportunity came sooner than he looked for it, if it could not come sooner than he desired. Jessie left the gala-field, and the gentleman in nankeens followed close at her heels. Reuben, with a turbulent heat in his veins, walked after them down a narrow lane, keeping himself carefully out of sight by the aid of the high walls that enclosed it, and of its manifold turnings. They had left the gala half a mile or more behind, when he heard a quick frightened cry and then laugh. The laugh was in a man's voice: the cry in a girl's. With a hoarse shout of fury, he dashed forward at the top of his speed, and was upon them in a dozen strides.

Jessie, who stood with her back towards him, turned to look at her deliver, but he scarcely saw her. He walked up close to the exquisite, his fits clenched, and every muscle in his frame set rigid for the encounter. But the unruffled look of amusement and faint surprise which that gentleman wore at his sudden and furious appearance disarmed him completely, and all he said was.

“Nahthen!”

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“My deah fellow,” observed the fop, “you needn’t excite yourself. This—aw—this young lady and I are old friends. This—aw—this young lady and I are old friends. Ha, ha! Old fr—”

“How dare you?” said Jessie, with flashing eyes.

“Take me away, Reuben; he—I—I don’t know his name even.”

For an instant Reuben with a smile, as if to ask him whether the joke wasn’t a good one, “this virtue is—aw—touching. Ha ha! Considering that the little woman made her living on the streets in Carlisle—”

Reuben smote him full in the mouth while the word was on his lips, and some with all his virgin might. The wretch stumbled backward so that his head struck against the rough wall, and he lay there stunned. Whereupon the young champion looked quietly round at his lady-love and said very magnificently:

“That’d best walk on home, Jessie Gray. Tha doesn’t want me.”

He saw the same strange expression on her face that it had worn the night before; yet not quite the same. She met his glance without flinching, with, indeed, a sort of pride and defiance. Only her lips were livid, and oddly contracted, and she held her

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robe with a nervous clutch, as if in a great effort to maintain her self-control. He took a hesitating step towards her; and she dared back with an unchanging stare, while from her lips came one quick and perfectly toneless ejaculation:

“Don’t come near me!”

Then, slowly, and carrying herself with an unnatural rigidity of pose, she passed on.

An elegant oath uttered by the bleeding dandy was the first token of his recovered consciousness. He got up, wiped his month with a silk handkerchief, and picked up his hat and came.

“I ‘ll make you pay for this, you—bully,” he said as he edged away, and his voice was pitched in a furious whine; “I know how to deal with fellows of your kidney,

you infernal scamp! A country bully!” he cried, with an attempt to recover his habitual jocularly. “An agricultural Lothario! Oh, strike me again while you have the chance!”.

He was walking off sideways ay a discreet distance as he spoke, and he stumbled over some stones and picked himself up again without deigning to notice the mishap.

“We’ll see if we can’t—aw—purify the morals of this blanked village.”

Reuben turned on his heel and left the angry coward to dust himself down. Though it was now getting

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late, he took a path which led to the moor, where he could be alone. The sounds of revelry from the galafield became gradually fainter in his ears, and a cool breeze that rose with the coming-on of sunset fanned his cheek. He sat down among the ling in bloom, and did that which he could now do unquestioned and unmocked—gave free course to the grief that had gathered heavy about his heart. As his natural calmness returned, his gaze rested on the parsonage, whose tiny pointed gable, touched by the sunlight, he could just discern among a brown clump of beeches, that cast their shadow far across the neighbouring pastures. He sat till the daylight was spent, and the valley sank into silence and twilight came softly on, with a sense of desolation and the waning of bright hopes. He could no longer see the clump of beech-trees, and with a shudder of cold he rose to descend the hillside and go home. And for the first-time n his life the thought of home brought him no cheerfulness.

He escaped the scrutiny of kind eyes by going at once upstairs to his room, but he threw himself on the bed without undressing, and it was barely day when he awoke with a start from a dreamful slumber. He was broad awake in an instant, and, under some impulse projected from his dreams, he stole downstairs and let himself out.

The shutters were all closed in the village: in the

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fields the kine had not yet gathered at the gates as they do towards milking-time; and an early carter, going with a load of cloth-bales to market bade him good morning with a stare.

Half asleep in the cool freshness of the dazzling mornings, yet with a mind on the rack, he was far from home before he took notice of the course his feet had strayed. Surely some potent lodestar had been his guide! It seemed to be the mere sunshine that aroused him, broad and blinding as he emerged from a dusky copse; but when he looked up, and his eyes gathered power against the light, he saw Jessie Gray coming slowly towards him.

She carried in her arms a bundle, done up country fashion in a handkerchief. She had seen him first, and had stood for a moment as if irresolute whether to hide or turn back; but she had advanced—if at a slackened pace, yet with unfaltering steps. He stood still and waited for her, and as she came near she greeted him with the most piteous wan smile in the world.

“Jessie,” he said, almost roughly. “Ye’re goin’ away.” And he barred path.

His manner told so plainly the story of what he had suffered, and revealed such an unexpected force of purpose in him, that she gave back, finding no answer bold enough to make to him. For he had guessed

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aright; she meant to escape, and leave no trace by which he could ever hear of her again. He spoke hurriedly on, his voice changed by intense emotion:

“I cannot bide longer, Jessie. It’s killing me. And if ye go away I—Oh, Jessie, ye couldn’t go an’ nivver say good-bye! Ye couldn’t do that, Jessie. What is it? Are ye promised, or—I knaw ye’re far too gooid for me, but——”

The spasm of tearless grief on her face as she denied it with a slow turning of the head was dreadful to see.

“But I *love* ye so! Oh, I *love* ye, Jessie.”

“Hush!” she said, fiercely; “It was true what—that man—said!” and as if the life was torn out of her with the words, she sank swooning on the grass.

Reuben Driver stood as if turned to stone, his eyes fixed on vacancy, his cheeks bereft of every vestige of their colour, and his hands clenched by his side against the bitter agony of the stroke. At length a low moan escaped him, and slowly, with an effort, he turned his hopeless eyes to look upon the fair piece of frailty he had once deemed a very angel. A moment later, passionately weeping, he had fallen on his knees by her side, and was covering her face and neck with feverish kisses.

On a sudden he stopped, and, with a little laugh, took out the ring and slipped it on her finger.

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Then, between sobbing and laughing, he kissed her back to life again. When he saw eyelids tremble, and her lips grow rosy, he seized the delicate hand he had so richly dowered, to show it her if she should fear his kisses.

But there was no such matter. There was only a great fluttering sigh of content, such as lovers know; and then she raised her arms to draw his head down again, so that she might whisper in his ear.

“Dear Reuben!” she murmured. “I thought—it was a dream.”

And meantime the sun glistened on the dewy grass like a smile which beams from eyes that are full of tears.

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DOASE

EVEN among the rough people of Cragside, the subject of this affectionate memoir was reckoned a “character.” His affairs were intimately known to everybody, for whatever befel him he freely imparted to each of his neighbours, with an air of mystery which implied that it was a sealed book to all the rest. It was comical to see Doase’s perturbation when one of them talked openly of a secret which had been common property for a week. But such an inadvertence was rare, because Doase’s secrets were not for the most part worth remembering. They related to his dreams, and

what people had said to him, and what he had had for dinner. When a big event occurred in his life, a calamity or a joy, he published it without reserve—perhaps I should say clamorously. It was characteristic of this more candid phase that, being frightened one evening by a thunderstorm, so that he believed the sky was tumbling about his ears, he ran, loudly gibbering, out into the middle of the

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road, and knelt in the hail and the rain to cry for mercy. “Oh—oh—oh! Forgie me this time!” he roared, distracted. “This one time, an' Aw'll turn different! His suppliant figure, kneeling bareheaded in the highway, was a startling apparition when the flickering lightening revealed it for an instant, and then left him covering, all of a heap, in the booming darkness.

There was one subject on which Doase had no confidences to impart, namely, the function of Doase's dog in the domestic economy of that little ling-thatched biggin on the moor, where he sheltered himself at nights from the weather. Doase had contrived this domicile himself, out of the ruins of a sheep-fold, and the dog had been his only housemate since the woman died that he had called his wife. Moreover, although his acquaintance was large, the dog was his only friend. Every one but the dog despised him a little, and every one but Doase was more or less the dog's enemy.

This four-footed Esau, whom he had named Pincher, justified the general dislike by an odd and forbidding appearance. Always dirty, and often scarred with the scandalous tokens of public riot, he carried himself with a vicious jauntiness that defied rebuke or chastisement; yet he was so ugly that the faintest delicacy of feeling would have sunk his abject tail

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between his legs long for ever. In the matter of breed, he belonged, I am afraid, to the scum and the dregs of canine society. When they made fun of him at Molly's alehouse, the joke was to get Doase to say whether he took the wretched cur to be an Airedale terrier or a badger. For my part, knowing little about dogs, I could never decide which

he resembled the more. That he was unlike any other dog alive I am, however, very certain.

But at such times Doase would sound the praises of his soon companion doughtily. "Nay, he 's nut a fancy dog," he admitted with a critical air. "He doesn't lewk mich, maybe. Bud he's a gooid dog to me. An' ther's nowt 'at he cannot do, when he gawms what Aw want. Aw believe he's moor sense nor me. Aw do. An' he s'll feight ony dog ye'll finnd. Ony dog, big or little. Wha, he'll fotch a bit o' paper off o 't' coach wheel if Aw nobbud lewk at him. An' another thing he can do, 'at ye've seen no dog else do, Aw'se wager—he can run through a horse's legs awther gallopin' or trottin'. Aye for seur he will Ther's nobbud a canter 'at bothers him. An' a deal o' moor things he can do, 'at him 'an me knaws on, cannot ta, lad?"

Doase's enumeration was all too short—Pincher was the most accomplished poacher in the parish. Doase had only to shut him out at night, and in half an hour

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at the most he would be scratching at the door with a rabbit in his mouth. Indeed, the dog kept the man rather than the man the dog, for Doase had no regular work, and lived only as it pleased Providence to suffer him. And as it was Doase's habit to share everything with his dog, Pincher had acquired a liking for mild ale which made his depravity and his better qualities alike seem almost human. Sometimes, bundled out of Molly's at closing time, they went to sleep under a wall on the way home, equally stupefied. People looked at them lying there, and judged it prudent not to disturb either one or the other, lest Pincher, who was hasty, should misconstrue the friendly action and avenge it.

Since Doase went home years ago with a misshapen pup in his breast pocket, I don't think he had ever been without his dog. His fidelity to the savage ragamuffin was in part—I only say in part- the cause of his way of life being what pious people called "outward." Once they persuaded him to go to chapel, and his dog went with him, trimmed up for the occasion like a French poodle. Pincher gave himself such airs in his Sunday suit, and looked such a guy, that discipline was impossible among the Sunday

scholars, and the superintendent had to suggest that it would be seemlier to leave the dog at home. Doase was never seen at chapel again.

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All that came of this miscarriage of a good intention was that Pincher got into more rows with his kindred than ever, and that his master carried him home one day from Skipton Market with a fore-paw so badly mauled by a bull-terrier with whom he had foregathered, that he was a cripple for weeks. It was edifying to see how Doase nursed him, stopping at home with him till he could hobble about again. They both “clemmed” during that term of unforeseen adversity, but Pincher looked the better man of the two when it was over, and Doase had the bigger appetite.

The habitués of Molly’s contemplating these inseparables, conceived and executed a practical joke at their expense. That limb of mischief, Weasel, brought into the alehouse kitchen a rat in a sack, and wagered with Doase a pint of ale that his dog wouldn’t go inside the sack and worry the rodent in the dark. Pincher, quite untroubled, darted without hesitation, and was immediately secured, borne off, furiously barking, and fastened up in Weasel’s hen-coop. The success of the stratagem was hailed with a roar of laughter.

“Howd on! What are ye aimin’ at?” cried Doase, and he sprang to the door with such unusual vivacity that they had almost let him escape. But he was instantly in the grip of half-a- dozen bullies who

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had joined in the planning of this pleasant little surprise.

“D—yo’, let me goa!” he screamed. “What are yo’ hoddin’ me for?” and he struggled so fiercely that his coat was torn across the back. “He’s bahn to drownd him! Let me goa! Yo’ willn’t let him drownd Pincher?” His utterance changed to a wail, and, still struggling, he burst into a passion of tears.

“Shut up, yo’ fool,” said a man who ws holding one of his arms. “He’ll noan harm thi dog. He fancies him as mich as thee. Folk ‘ud think ther’ murder agate.”

Doase only bellowed louder for is liberty.

“Witta hod thi din?” cried his tormentor, half laughing like the rest. “He’s nobbud ta’en him up t’ road a bit to lowse him and see him run.”

The passion of Doase’s alarm appeared to be pacified by this explanation, and they let him wipe his tears off on his coat-sleeve; but he continued his lamentations, and his anger grew in the exact measure in which his fright abated. “Ye’se noan do this agean, “he soobed;” Aw’ll tell yo’! Ye dar’n’t touch him if he were free, noan on yo’. By gow, “Aw’ll set him at yo’! Ye’se knaw abaht it; ye sall that!”

They began to feel sheepish when things took this turn. They had aroused an unexpected vehemence in

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a creature supposed to be of the most lamblike nature, and it seemed exceedingly likely that he would carry out his threat, which appealed, I make no doubt, to the imagination of the dullest.

“Dunnot be a gawmless foil,” said the pacificator, loosening his hold. “Tha’s won thi wager, hesn’t ta? Fill him a pint, Molly. Here, Aw’ll stand it mysen.”

But Doase shook himself free of the others and darted out into the road, where, half distracted by indecision, he ran first this way and then that, uttering imprecations and an inarticulate clamour of distress. When he caught sight of Weasel returning, he rushed upon him with fury in his face and gesture.

“Wheer is he?” he demanded hoarsely. “Dost’ hear? Is he drownded?”

“Drownded?” laughed Weasel, whom his manner daunted nevertheless. “What s’ould Aw drownd him for, thinks ta? he bantered.

The assurance of Pincher’s safety came from Pincher himself, for at this moment he came bounding over the fence of Weasel’s garden with uncommon alacrity. He had torn the sack asunder and forced a loose board in the hencoop. He carried one of Weasel’s favourite bantams in his mouth; and, with a sort of passing wink at his master; he trotted into the alehouse. A cry of rage from the outraged

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owner and a hilarious shout from within greeted this farcical turning of the tables. Doase found Pincher snarling under the langsettle. He took the fowl out of the dog's mouth and offered it to Weasel.

“Nay, it 's fettle, “said that worthy, moodily, after a scrutiny. “Keep it, lad. Aw willn't hev it. Gie't to thi dog if tha willn't eyt it.”

But that experience was Pincher's ruin. People began to consult with each other soon afterwards on mysterious disappearances of their feathered property, and suspicion presently fell on Doase's poaching dog. Doase, questioned on the subject, entered a plea of not guilty, and defended his canine friend very stoutly. But a crisis came when, one fine morning, Weasel found his stock of fowls strewn about the floor of the hencoop, wantonly killed by some thief who had taken away only one of them—by a dog evidently, for there were his footmarks. Great and general was the indignation at Molly's when the story was told. A dog of that kind was no more to be suffered to run wild than a pestilence. They went up to Doase's together, entered in his absence, and found the missing fowl on the floor in a corner. The case against Pincher was complete. Solemnly his judges walked in a body to a neighbouring farmstead, where Weasel borrowed a gun. Some time next morning the sentence of death was carried out, and Pincher's body

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was flung ignominiously among the bushes which line the old lime-pits of the Scour.

That afternoon—it was a Saturday, and Molly's was crowded and noisy—Weasel came running in with the news that Doase had found his dog and was burying it. This was a *bonne bouche*, and the company received it with positive enthusiasm. “Wheer is he?” cried half- a-dozen of them at once.

“Ea, bud that's wheer it pases!” said Weasel, looking round to watch the effect of his words. “He 's berrin' it i' Binney Driver' field, just agean t' wall o' t' Methody berrin'-grahnd.”

There was a roar of laughter. “Let's go aht an' see't,” cried one man.

“Ay, come on!” was the eager response.

“Wha,” said another man, “he’ll be t’ parson an’ t’ gravedigger an’ t’ moorner an’ all!”

“Begow he will! Sup yer ale up, lads!”

And they hurried out and up the village, making such an unusual hubbub that women with work in their hands and old men in their shirt-sleeves came to the door to look out, and a troop of tattered and joyous children gathered at their heels. The men approached by way of the burial-ground, creeping up behind the wall till they located Doase by the noise of his spade.

He was singing as he worked, with a cheerful intonation

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“She said while—the sorrow—
Was big at her heart,
Oh, remem—ber your Shelah—
When—far, far away;
An’ be kind, my dear Pat,
To—your poor dog Tray.
“She said while—the sorrow
Was big at—

“Nay it runs i’ mi head ‘at—it’s different. Ther’s women folk ‘at—knaus it, but—Aw nivver sall... This is a wet soil to lig in.” And he sighed deeply, as a child does after weeping.

“Hear yo’?” whispered Weasel, “he’s agate o’ t’ service;” and he took off his hat with an affectation of great solemnity, and looked over. When Doase glanced up, there were a dozen grinning faces in a row.

But he went on with his digging and his song, as if he had not seen them. The carcase of the dog lay beside the grave, shot through the head.

“When the roads were—so long—
An’ the—nights were so cold,
An’ Pat and his dog was—
Growed weary and—old—

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“Eh! That’s a gurt ston! It’ll ‘a rolled dahn off o’ t’ crag; for seur it will. Umph!

“Reight snodly we slept
I’ my owd—coat so gray,
An’ he licked me—for kindness—
My poor dog Tray.”

Then he stopped, to wipe his brow, and they saw that his face was ashen pale, in spite of his exertions. The big drops of sweat glistened on it, and his eyes glowed with an unnatural brightness. It was plain that the faint spark of reason which Doase had owned was now blown quite out. “Aw dunnot know it reightly,” he said, in a voice that might have issued from the feeble chest of an old man. “Pincher ‘d know it, if he could but sing. But it’s strange, he’s wanderin’, somewheer.”

The men glanced at one another with sobered faces, and Weasel put his hat on. Two or three of them stood back from the wall, and with affected unconcern sauntered off among the tombstones.

“Aw’ll sing it yo’ some day, when Aw think on ‘t,” he went on more calmly. “*Tha* knows Pincher!” He was speaking to Weasel, who alone, with an unacostumed sternness on his wizard face, seemed to pay him any attention. “*Tha* once gav’ him a bird. Him an’ me’s a mak’ o’mates.”

And then, after turning over a few more spadefuls

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and shaping the little pit in a seemly fashion, he took off his jacket and wrapped the dog’s carcase in it and so laid it in the earth. Having done which, he looked up a little

doubtfully, and his eyes fell with a puzzled and wistful gaze on the bundle he had made. "Does ta knaw," he said presently, "this job goes agean me. Noa parson nor noabody to cry ower him. Aw could cry, mysen, rarely. Sitha! Send them chaps away an' Aw'll tell tha summat... Ther's *a gurt hoil i' his head!* Aw'll cover him up. T'flies mud get in it an' breed maggots. Eh! Bud he's a peart 'un, as handsome as a bonny wench. Ther's them' 'at 'll freat, if they knaw 'at he ligs 'i t' cowd grund."

They left him to finish the burial alone, and at the gate of the churchyard each man took his own way, saying nothing. Years after, one of them told that as they separated he saw Doase from the road patting the little mound he had made, and that while he was doing this he fell of a heap by the wall.

The crazy man become something of a nuisance at Molly's. His vacant look, when he strayed into the kitchen and made himself a place on the langsatle, acted as a damper on the conversation. "Hev' yo' seen Pincher onywheer abaht to-day?" he would ask. "No? Nivver heed then. He'll be popppin' in i' nah, He knaws where it's warm as weel's another." They gave him a sup of ale at such times, and told him

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some lie to set him off elsewhere on his untiring search. I cannot understand how he lived during the next few months. His breadwinner was gone, and the peat-smoke curled no longer above his solitary hut on the moor. People often called him into their houses and gave him a meal, but what is everybody's care is nobody's care, and as he never seemed to remember that he was hungry till food was set before him, it was natural that he should be a good deal neglected. One day, as it was nearing Christmas, we remembered that we hadn't seen him for a day or two, and as it had come on bitterly cold after a light fall of snow, some of us went up the hill to his hut. The door was open, and the floor, as far as to the fireless hearth, glittered with driven flakes. Doase was not there. But on the way back, somebody had an inspiration, and, climbing over into Binney Driver's field to look for traces of him about Pincher's grave, found him dead in a shroud of snow.

It *seemed* a kindly thing that Dose should have died so, though there were tears in our eyes at the sight; for we said to one another that at last he had found his mate.

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A TALE OF SHAME

DOAD APPLETREE, was one of Binney Driver's good works. Formerly, like Doase, he had led a very outward life, that is to say, he had been a drunkard and a reputed wife-beater. But that stage of his career had closed with the death of his unhappy helpmeet, Peg o' th' Hill Top, which befel one Sunday night, in a premature childbed.

Doad had been scandalously drunk overnight, and Peg's demise might have had an ugly sequel for him, but for Binney Driver's intervention. That worthy, who ran the weaving shed at which Doad "addled his ale-brass," took him quietly into the store-room, locked him up between whitewashed walls and on a stone floor for a day and a night, and very early on Monday morning went to see him. There the two men were closeted for some hours, and the hand-loom weavers, when they came to work at six o'clock, found the outer door locked. There was a light in the store-room, and after knocking and shaking the door awhile

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without avail, they made out the sound of voices, and straightway, by a process of insight peculiar to men living in small communities, they divined what would be afoot. Consequently they betrayed no surprise when, the door being at last opened from within, they caught a glimpse of Doad's pale, scared face, as he stood meekly in a corner of the store-room. Indeed, they had sufficient presence of mind to return with more than common heartiness the millowner's grave "Good morning, lads."

What had passed in the course of that strange interview I can but partially divine, and Doad never told. It is certain, however, that Binney Driver's method with hardened sinners was as potent as that of the Irish Whisperer is said to have been with wild horses, for from that day forward Doad Appletree was a changed man.

When I knew him he was much older. He had graduated from weaver to overlooker, but he was still a widower. With the savings of a temperate middle age he had built himself a house, as a score of other villagers since his somewhat impecunious day have done. It is from the free sandstone crags of the parish common, whose broad skirts of heather and bent grass spread almost down to the village, that they get the stone, quarrying and shaping it for the most part for themselves. Doad's house was a cosy, strongly-built

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dwelling of two low storeys, with a few square feet of garden railed in from the high road, and a window of small panes, from which a bank of geraniums in perpetual flower looked out over a low white curtain, stretched across.

He lived with a little niece named Phoebe, a woman of fourteen years of age, who did all the work of the house, including the bread-making and the washing, and was so intensely busy and thoughtful whenever one called that it was difficult to get a word out of her, though sometimes she would smile a little. In the simple living-room there was a kitchen range, a mass of bright mahogany furniture, and a white "dresser," that is to say, a long deal table which stood beneath the window. The stone floor was covered with cocoa-nut matting, and the walls with a garish paper. In virtue of these vanities, and of his sober, righteous, and godly life, Doad had attained to the high privilege of entertaining the local preachers turn about with his employer.

You could not help liking him. He was fat and good-tempered. His rosy face, smiling over a tea-table laden with "fatty-cakes" and muffins, currant bread and marmalade, was a shining emblem of Yorkshire hospitality. His frankness was such that I was his firm friend within a week, and knew his inmost heart within a fortnight; and I found nothing in him

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that was not noble. His sole grief was the memory of his wild days, which marred his big forehead with furrows oftener than it need have done; his sole delight, to talk of the one child who was his wife's dying gift to him.

I know more of Maggie than of any other person I have not seen. It was no wonder he loved her. His clumsy hands had darned her stockings and sewn on her buttons. He had often sat up far into the night to perform such feminine duties. He had chosen her frocks until she grew old enough to have a "will of her own" about them. They say that she was a bonny big wench, with merry brown eyes that courted your glance frankly, and a trick of trowing her head back when she laughed. I did not see her because she was in service at a gentleman's house in Bradford at the time I write of; but that didn't prevent Doad from sounding her praises without ceasing.

"Shoo's been writin' home agean," he would say;—and it was characteristic of his ingenuous speech that he led off in this way without thinking it needful to explain who "she" was. "Stop a minute, an' Aw'll show yo' t' leter. Oh, shoo's a gradely penman. Ther's mony 'at's been capt [surprised] wi't. Aye, shoo went to Dick Bentley schooil dahn at Cross Hills for three or four year, like a lady."

She had other accomplishments, too, by his account.

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If John o' Jackie wife's cheesecakes were praised, he would fidget in his chair and observe that "Maggie eused to could mak' a Cheesecake;" and when a man commended in his hearing the way in which his missis had cooked "a bit o' roastin' beef," Doad would be seen to shake his head musingly, ans the man would know that he was thinking of Maggie. We never learned precisely what sort of place she had found. We seemed to gather that in the Bradford gentleman's family there was some menial office a little more confidential and good deal less irksome than that of housekeeper, and that she had naturally fallen into it. Nor, to tell the truth, did some of us quite understand why she had chosen to leave home, or why—at all events during the twelve months or ore of my intimacy with him—she never came to see her father.

It seems that when at last she did come home, she came unannounced and in trouble. One night, she came unannounced and in trouble. One night, as Doad sat alone

by his fireside spelling out his "Saint's Rest" by the light of a candle, a fluttering tap sounded on the door, and as he opened it she fell forward into his arms.

His heart gave a great bound, and the roots of his hair stiffened with a nameless fear. Why did she not speak? Why had she not looked at him? He let her sink from his loosened clasp into a chair, and gazed at her stupidly. Her head fallen back so

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that her cheek rested on one shoulder; and her arms hung limp.

As in a nightmare, and without conviction, he took note of her altered face and figure, her extreme pallor, the blue hollows beneath her closed eye-lids, the stylish hat and jacket she wore, the little showy brooch at her throat, and the gloves. Then he realized that she had fainted, and the need of doing something to revive her aroused him.

As he looked wildly about for a glass—some water—he knew not what—a strange cry burst from him, and the tears made him blind. He stumbled over a chair, found a jug with water in it, and moistening his trembling fingers began to pass them across her forehead sobbing aloud.

After a while she sighed, and moved her head, and opened her eyes alittle; but as soon as she saw him, bending over her, she sprang up and pushed him away, with an instinctive movement more terrible to see than the collapse which had frightened him.

"He's going to kill me!" she said, in a quic, breathless way. "Oh, why did I come home?" Why did I come home? She was crouching and shuddering.

Doad looked at her with his mouth open, and a burning flush on his face. And when she sidled toward the door he intercepted her with a great stride, dropping the jug and hurling her backwards with such

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unconscious force that she gave a cry of alarm, and fell to whimpering, with her hands raised as if toward off a blow.

“What for s’ouldn’t ta come hoam?” he said. “Ther’s nowt no different I’ thi hoam.”

She fell on her knees, trying to get hold of his hand, but he snatched it away and stood back from her, so that she pitched forward and lay on the floors, her check touching the rough matting. As she did so she ceased to make any sound.

Doad was pitiless. He stepped over to the window and adjusted the blind so that no one might see that picture of grief and shame.

“What for s’ouldn’t ta come hoam? “he repeated, doggelly.” Eh? It’ll nut be grand eniff for a fine lady, happen. But Aw bigged it, let me tell tha. Aw bigged it. An’ by the livin’ God Aw’m sorry Aw did!”

His face was white, and he kept clenching his hands. He turned about and made his way unsteadily to the big easy chair where he had been sitting.

“Gowd broches an’ gloves!” he went on, and suddenly strode back to take hold of her left hand for an instant. “Kid gloves, an’ gewgaws; and pretty playthings!” He flung her hand roughly away.

“Come!” he said savagely, after a pause. “Tha says nowt. Aht wi’ it! What’s his dammed name?”

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By—, Aw’ll bray his foul face in wi’ a stone! Snod devil! Dog faced, grinnin’ devil!” The fierce hapzard epithets burst from him in gasps, and he struk the dresser with his great fist, such a blow that the blood began presently to ooze from his knuckles.

“Aht wi’t!” he roared again, standing over her.

The girl lay motionless, not even sobbing.

“Tha willn’t tell’t?”

She made no sign. For a moment it seemd doubtful what he would do. He was panting like a wild beast, and his face had changed. Then he threw up his arms, and began to weep aloud like a passionate schoolboy. “My lass!” he repeated constantly, in the bitter egotism of his grief;” my lass!”

He was sitting in his armchair, hiding his face and sobbing monotonously, when he felt her hand laid on his arm. She stood by him with dry eyes and grey lips, saying in

the dialect she had used as a little child, "Dunnot tak on, father. If ye tak' on like that I'se kill mysen."

"Aye," he said, not looking up, "better do that nor tak' his part agean thi father. Bud tha willn't do't. That'rt ower ta'en [infatuated] wi' thi fancy man.

"But, father," she pleade, her lips trembling as she caressed him timidly, "Ye dunnot knaw him. He—he promised to marry me, an'—I think he will, father."

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"Marry!" shouted Doad, in another crisis of rage. "Marry! An' tha thinks! Wha, he gies tha gowd brooches an' kid gloves. Wheer's t' ring, then? Gawyon, tha'rt no better nor a babby, wi'all thi clevering. Marry! What for did ta leave thi place, then?"

"I was miserable, father. I couldn't bear them looking at me, they've been so—so kind. I don't know what they'll think of me"—the gracious tears had come again on her cheeks now—"I came away without telling them I was going."

Doad was not listening. He had turned to lean on his arm against the mantel, and was moaning, "My lass! My lass!" in the same hopeless way.

"Sitha!" he cried, facing about suddenly "Aw'm thi father. Aw nursed tha, an' fended tha, an'browt tha up like a lady. Aw kept steady an'religious for thee, tho' God knaws it cost me a tewin'; an' Aw bigged this house at we're in. An' nah ther's nowt no more 'at Aw can do—bud for one thing. Bud for one thing." His face was set hard, and he ceased to look at her as he spoke. "What says ta abaht thi place?" he asked sharply, after a pause.

"My place? They—I didn't—they didn't know I was coming—coming home."

"An' tha willn't tell me t' name o' this chap— at's bahn to wed tha?"

She hung her head.

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"Come," he said, with a touch of tenderness, "he's played tha a scurvy trick."

She continued silent.

“Ne’er heed,” he concluded, “tha’ll go back to thi place, then, that’s all. Nay, Aw’s tak’ tha back mysen i’ t’ mornin’. We can go afore ther’s owt stirrin’. Time eniff to come hoam when they turn tha aht.”

Even this did not unlock her reserve. Doas was right; she loved the man who had undone her. But her look was very pitiful to see.

“ ‘Way wi’ tha to bed,” her father said, as he sat down again in his chair by the fire. “Tha can lig i’ my rawm. Phoebe’s i’ t’ other. Aw’s manage dahn here.”

Suddenly she threw her arms about his neck, clipping him tighly and sobbing; and Doad let her hang on his breast, and stroked her hair. “That’s reight, my lass,” he said. “It’ll do tha gooid. Aw’ll see tha reighted, nivver fear. Nay, Aw’m noan so grieved wi’ tha.” And after a while, comforted and very weary, she went up to her father’s bed and slept like a child.

Till the day broke, and showed grey on the blind, Doad sat in his chair, and smoking a churchwarden pipe looked his grief in the face. He had lived for Maggie, and his task was almost done—that was the

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sum of his thoughts. He got up from before a fireless grate, and awoke her. “We’s hae to be makin’ a move,” he said. “Aye, Aw’m bahn wi’ tha. Tha’ll want me to put things reight, aw judge.”

Doad was not to be seen again in Cragside for a long time. He told Phoebe, whom he did not rouse, till they were just setting forth, that he should be away for a day or two; and he left a misspelt letter, the fruit of much labour in the small hours, for Binney Driver—the contents of which, as they were never divulged by that worthy, I can only conjecture. The only thing certain about them is that they did not disclose his plans.

He kept the secret of these for exactly a fortnight; at the end of which time he was taken in custody by a Bradford policeman, who charged him with “loitering with a suspicious purpose.” His name did not then appear, for he refused to give it; and all that was known of him when he went before the magistrates was that he had had in his possession a new revolver, fully charged, but no money whatever, that the policeman

who brought him in had seen him hanging about a suburban road for several evenings, and that he seemed weak and dazed. The magistrates, however, were struck with the naïve simplicity of his manner, which, joined with his country accent and appearance, was grotesquely inconsistent with a charge that is

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commonly preferred against none but “habitual rogues and vagabonds;” and they would have been minded to set him free if he had but told his name and where he came from. But his reticence in that regard was in itself, of course, suspicious; and when asked what he had meant to do with the revolver, he said outright that he had been “waitin’ for some’ dy, to shooit him.”

Thereupon they had to remand him in custody, and next day he was visited by a couple of doctors, who, being skilful enough to provoke him to intense excitement but not to guess his motive or make him reveal it, certified him to be a dangerous lunatic. In that character he was doomed; and when, as the result of inquiries pursued by the police in the neighbourhood to which his dialect showed him to belong, he was a week later identified, no one could do anything for him. We gathered afterwards that he had been taken to an asylum for lunatics at York.

Meanwhile his long and unanticipated absence from Cragside had been an enigma, all the more perplexing and noticeable because his character and the common course of life in the village were alike tranquil. The story of his madness only deepened the mystery. It was heard with grave faces. The awful nature of such a calamity made all the more incredible the fact that it should have befallen a man so intimately known

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and so well loved. Certain foolish gossips, I believe, discussed on each other’s doorsteps, with bated breath and gaping eyes, a theory that he had been about to take his daughter’s life.

“Nay, nivver!” said Weasel’s wife—which meant, “How dreadful!”—“It’ll be like wi’ mad dogs. They say ‘at they do bite first them ‘at they know best.”

But this unnatural suggestion was generally scouted. Dave Berry, the carrier, whose judgement carried weight, was felt to be nearer the truth when he said, that if Doad meant to shoot anybody it was “some’dy’at sair needed shooitin’ ”—so near it, indeed, that as every one took it for granted that his famous daughter was in some way concerned, people began to say that it was plain now why she hadn’t come home for so long, and to prophesy, with shrugs and pursed lips, that she would never be seen in Cragside again.

Then, of course, some of the women thought of Phoebe. She must be alone in the house.

“Eh! ye’ll nivver bide i’ t’ house bi yersel,” said one, by way of opening a gossip with that self-reliant little person.

“Nay, for seur,” another joined in, “shoo’ll be goin’ hoam tuv her father.”

They had come down in a body, and invaded the living-room where they stood with arms akimbo or

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folded beneath dirty aprons, taking stock of the furniture and what else there was, which most of them saw for the first time. But Phoebe, who had glanced up from her work without speaking when they entered, went on with it as if she had no ears; and they presently retreated, a good deal ruffled. Binney Driver had been there before them, and had given the small housewife some money, patting her on the head and saying that she was a brave little woman, and that her uncle would soon be back again. I do not know whether he was Doad’s banker; or whether he made the grant out of his own pocket; but he repeated the visit and replenished Phoebe’s exchequer every Saturday for six months, and would have done so still longer, no doubt, had not Maggie come home and taken charge.

Maggie came with a baby in her arms, a wedding ring on her finger, and such tokens of mourning as she could afford to display. Everything but the baby was part of a pious fraud, for which let who will condemn her. A worse punishment than any that had gone before awaited her in the knowledge of her father’s case, which she had not heard of till now. She, at any rate, did not doubt that his reason was shattered. She

remembered too well the grim look that sat on his face when he left her at the gate, after making excuses to her mistress, and how he said nothing more of

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either forgiveness or comfort. The very room in which she sat with her baby accused her, and she shuddered and grew sick with remorse even as she held the child to the breast. Oh! If he ever came back, what would she not do for him!

Happily, for such as she, there is some heart's-ease in labour, and necessity drove Maggie to seek it. She thought for awhile of weaning her baby and going to the spinning; but with some knowledge of plain dressmaking, and a pretty taste in trimming hats, she found it possible to earn a living at home.

In the spring of the following year it began to be known that Doad was at liberty, and that Dave Berry had seen him. Why had he not come home? The curiosity of Cragside was intense, and revived the suspicion of a quarrel between him and his daughter, a suspicion which Dave did not share, but which his account of the meeting did something to foster.

It seems that he lighted on Doad trudging along the high road. He would not have noticed him but for the start Doad gave when he saw the carrier's cart and David on the top of a load of cloth; for he was greatly changed, having not only grown thinner and greyer, but lost his colour. The carrier made him climb up beside him and ride back to Bradford—refusing to tell him any news till he did so.

“Tha doesn't think tey'll tak' me agean,” faltered

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Doad, thinking of the Bradford police; and his voice had aged not less than his appearance.

“Nut they, man. They willn't know tha.”

When he had him at his elbow Dave Berry began to chat. But at the first mention of home and his daughter, Doad betrayed a singular uneasiness; and presently, in a visible and unaccountable fright, asked the carrier to stop, and let him get down. Dave

Berry came to the very sapient conclusion that he was “queer,” and determined that he shouldn’t get down till they were back in Cragside “Aw’ll git dahn,” repeated Doad, timorously.

“How’s that?” said he, shaking up the reins. “Tha’rt bahn home. Tha needs fettling’ up, lad.”

The old man began to cry a little; and Dave took hold of his coat for fear he should jump down.

“Tha’rt nobbud midlin’, Aw tell tha,” he insisted, with a cheerful obstinacy. “They’ll ha’ been ooinin’ [ill-treating] tha, Aw judge. Hevn’t tha, nah?”

“Aye, Aw’ve nut been comfortable,” said Doad, simply. “An’ tha needn’t say nowt,” he added, with an air of mystery, “but shoo hed me put I’ Bedlam, lad. I’ Bedlam, ameng mad folk! Aye, tha stares,”

“Who art-a talkin’ abaht?”

“Who? Who dost-a think? Who can Aw be talkin’ on bud her?”

“Nut Maggie!”

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“Aye, just. My lass! Tak heed o’ thy lasses Dave Berry. Aw’m tellin’ tha. Git shut on ‘em lad.” He was shaking from head to foot.

“That’rt talkin’ shoddy,” said the carrier, roughly cutting short the crazy words. “It’re two doctors ‘at said that’rt mad. They cannot send fowk to Bendlam baht doctors.”

“Aw knaw.” Answered Doad, cunningly, meaning, that he knew better. “Stop thi horse an’ Aw’ll git dahn. Aw’ve hed eniff o’ yond shop.”

A phlegmatic man at most times, the carrier lost his temper. “Aw tell tha tha’rt badly,” he said again. “Aw’s se tak’ tha to my house an’ fettle tha up for a week or two, an’ then we’ll tak on t’ agean. Hes ta runned away, like?”

“Nay, they loosed me.”

“Varra weel, then, what’s ta talkin’ abaht?”

And as they were now entering the heart of the town, and the roar of the traffic made talking difficult, Doad was the more easily bullied into silence. The carrier

flattered himself that his firmness had wrought a good thing but while he was unloading his cart, Doad, after standing by awhile in a gloomy way, disappeared on a sudden, and completely. "He're gone a like a moudiwarp [mole]," said Dave, telling the tale.

And that was all the news of him they were to have in Cragside for four years to come. Not long

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after it came, I found out that Maggie was doing some light work for Binney Driver, in place of Bald Susannah, a crippled hag who had lately died, after being kept off the poor rate for nine or ten years by her employer. It was the most menial work of a small handloom weaving shed, such as unpacking cases of yarn, sweeping the floors and running errands for the overlookers; but it was the only work which Binney Driver could find for a woman to do, and it left her the afternoons and evenings. Still, I was surprised that she should need too accept it, and "axin" about, "I learned something I might have known long before if I had been of a gossiping turn. The women had boycotted her.

The boycott had set in after a strange dramatic scene, which developed itself suddenly at the chapel gates one Sunday afternoon just as chapel had "loosed." Maggie, in coming out, passed an eager group of women who were "talking her over," and by a cruel chance heard the very thing said of her with which she most reproached herself. "Sent her awn father to t' Sylum," were the fragmentary words she caught, "so's shoo could hae t' house tuv hersel'."

There was a general outcry of virtuous amaze and resentment, and right upon it Maggie stood in the midst of them, her eyes flashing.

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"That's not true, Mally, and you know it's not!" she said, confronting Weasel's wife, who had spoken; and then burst into tears.

Some of them slipped away, but the woman she addressed, a victim at home yet a shrew abroad, stood her ground. "O, do Aw?" she retorted cynically. "Hah if thi father telled it?"

Then the other passers-by intervened, and Mally, flying into a fury, scandalized the congregation by shouting at the top of her voice:

“Hengin’s too gooid for ‘er! Jezebel! Stone’er Jezebel!”

It made such a commotion as happens when a man falls in a fit; but the crowd melted as Binney Driver’s venerable figure was seen at the gates, for there was nobody in Cragside who did not fear the grave majesty of his rebuke, when the kind eyes opened wide under a lowering brow, and the smile went out of his face.

A woman is very brave when she fights for her child. Maggie was living a miserable lie for hers; and she suffered torments in outfacing a calumny. She could endure it just so long as she was not compelled to see her darling want food. You mothers who read will not wonder at this. He was one of the bonniest children I ever looked upon; for God, at least, sets no brand upon a child that is born out of

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wedlock. His round, bright face, liker his grandfather’s even than his mother’s, shone with intelligence and good temper; and he was as bold as a lion.

Dave Berry took a great fancy to him, and used to set him on his horse’s back, with a little switch in his chubby hand; and Binney Driver, having seen him one day thus proudly mounted, bought him in Bradford a wooden horse on wheels. His *ménage* on the rough causeway—of which every flag was deeply hollowed or titled—was an exhilarating thing to see, for he came many a cropper. And did he cry? Not a bit of it. He just shouted “Whoa, hoss!” in what was supposed to be a man’s voice, and held on to the bridle like a cowboy with a buck-jumper.

One day, soon after he had been put into trousers the carrier’s cart stopped opposite Doad’s house, and Dave Berry lifted both him and his wooden steed into it. Then he pushed open the door and cried out to Maggie:

“Aw’m bahn to tak’ this man to Bradforth.”

The mother, looking up, saw through the window the gleeful face of the tiny passenger, who was holding by the side of the cart and shouting, “Mamma! Mamma! Look at me.”

“Nay,” she cried, dropping her work as she started up, “I’m sure you’re not.”

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“Ah, bud Aw am,” he said, smiling, and stretched his arms across the doorway.

“Not like that,” protested Maggie, giving way as she contemplated the kindly and resolute giant, but thinking of her boy’s dirty face and blouse.

“Just!” said Dave; and in spite of all protests he drove off with him. “Bradforth’s a rare shop,” he said, facetiously, “so Aw can gain a bit for tha wi’ him, happen!”

But at the village of Steeton, which is not a third of the way to Bradford, he stopped the cart, and lifting the lad out, carried him on his arm up a steep and narrow little street, unpaved and smelling of slops, to a sordid house, from which the thud and rattle of a hand-loom made itself heard above the isolated noises of the village. He pushed open the latched door without ceremony, and at the sound of his voice the weaver glanced round and stopped his work.

It was Doad Appletree. He sat in the crippled posture which the hand-loom exacted from its votaries, his left hand clutching the batten and his feet on the alternating treadles; and he turned his head only, to peer at the interrupters over his shoulder. Nor, when he recognized Dave Berry, did his eyes light up at all, as they would have done in the old times. They were not only dull, but sunken, so that in looking sidelong against the light they had an aspect of cunning

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and suspicion. His mouth was drawn, and the skin of his face much wrinkled. I do not think that the people of Steeton thought him a lovable old man. The woman who lived next door, and who believed him to be a miser, said afterwards, that since he came to live there, nearly two years before, he had spoken to nobody except the shopman from whom he bought his bread and bacon, and that he slept all day on Sundays.

“Nahthen!” said Dave, with noisy cheerfulness, “hah’rt-a framin’ by nah, like? Can ta tak’ care o’ thi for me whol’ neet [until night]?”

Doad coughed, and looked round at his loom before replying. Then he said, tentatively, “Hah’s this?”

“Nay, nowt partic’lar,” said the carter, setting the child down. “Nivver heed an that’rt thrang [busy]. Nobbud Aw cannot tak’ him back home yeet, an’ Aw dunnot want to carry him all t’ way to Bradforth egzactly. He mud run away an’ loss hissen, tha knaws.”

“My hoss!” said the boy, piping up as soon as there was a break in the colloquy. “Have thoo got a hoss, g’an ‘pa?”

Doad’s face twitched and lengthened at that appaelation; but Dave Berry was looking fondly down at the little visitor who made himself thus quickly at home. He would not see the old man’s uneasiness.

“That’s reight, young ‘un,” he said. “Ther’s nowt

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like relations, is ther’? All t’owd men i’ Cragside’s his gran’fathers.” And he gave a great guffaw at his own adroitness. “Can ta keep him aht o’ mischief, thinks ta?” he said finally, in a tone which implied that Doad had already given consent, but that he himself was loath to leave the lad.

“Nay, nut Aw!” said the old weaver quickly.

“Well, do thi best, choose how,” the carier cried, not heeding his answer a bit. “Show ‘im how tha can ride, doy;” and with that he shut the door, shouting “Gooid day” from the outside.

Doad picked up his shuttle without looking at the child, and started the ramshackle loom again. The hand-loom weaver, especially in those later days when he had to race with steam-looms for a pittance, was jealous of the odds and ends of time. Doad had grudged the carrier’s interruption, brief as it was, and when it left him with somebody’s stray brat to look after, he was angry. There is such a thing as buying life at the cost of all its beauty. What leisure has a poor devil to thank God for children, or any other delight, when he must work early and late, taking his meals where he sits, to earn 7s. or 8s. a week? Plunged again into the sordid reverie which the opening of his door had broken, Doad forgot the child utterly; till a fluttering sigh startled him into looking round.

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The rosy little chap was standing just where Dave had left him, holding a forgotten bridle in one hand, and looking at the loom with wide eyes.

“Hallo!” he said, interrogatively.

Doad was confused, like a bashful boy who is spoken to by a woman; and he resumed his work with an access of the former irritation. But presently he had to stop in order to” piece” a broken thread; and immediately the child spoke again.

“Hallo, g’an pa!” he cried in triumph from the closet bed in the corner; into which he had climbed on a voyage of discovery; and his chubby red face was so full of merriment that Doad was fain to take a good look at him.

“What’s ta call me grandpa for?” he asked, rememebering his first suspicion.

The cherub looked at him with the charming and meaningless roguery of a spoilt child, and answered, “Because thoo are a g’an ‘pa.”

Doad was not reassured. He read a confirmation of his thought in the tricky face, and so inferred a degree of intelligent duplicity in the boy that alarmed him. He felt obliged to cover one question with others.

“Well, an’ what’s thi name, then?” he asked boldly; but his hands wer unsteady, and he lost the end of the thread.

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“Nam’s Ftheddie,” said the boy, with satisfaction

“Freddie what?”

“Ftheddie!” he repeated dogmatically. “Is this thoor bed?”

“Aye,” said Doad, somewhat taken aback by such an abrupt change of the subject.

“I’ve got a bed, but it isn’t as big as this.”

“Seurly,” Doad assented, mechanically.

“When I’m in bed I dtheam. I dtheamed”—very mysteriously, this—” about a plate that flied up an’ bthoke the sky in two! An’ it went through an’ the sky shut up, an’ it couldn’t get back... no never! N”—shaking his round little head—” it couldn’t.

An' I dtheamed about a cork that than away on its head. It had legs on its head, an' than."

Doad was listening. His suspicion had melted away.

"I had a vethhy good sleep." Added the little chap, nodding.

"Aw think soa!" cried Doad; and his own enthusiasm startled him.

"I don't know how sthong thoo are, g'an'pa. Could thoo lift this bed? I s'pose thoo could lift that table: this bed's too heavy for thoo. *I* could throw it *thight* away—that's what I could do."

"Could ta, nah!" exclaimed Doad. The unwonted tears were in his eyes now.

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"I could do anythin'," the prodigy added, by way of explanation. "Do thoo like lickle boys, g'an 'pa? Pthaps thoo like lickle girls best."

With a curious, uncertain cry, the old weaver bent forward toward his batten, and let his head rest on his hand. He had once listened to such prattle from a little girl he loved.

"What makes thoo shake up'an down?" asked Freddie. He had got down from the bed, and crept up close to his new relation, to get a sly peep at his face.

Doad turned toward him, his face still wet with the streaming tears, and took his little gradson on his knee. "Theer!" he said, laughing softly. "Art-a hungry, doy?" He pulled a paper parcel out of his pocket. "Eh! he's a big man, is this! A reight strang, gradely big man! He can eyt bread an' drip, I 'se warrant... Wha, tha's gitten a pair o'britchtes wi' buttons on 'em, like Owd Kit Patch! An' a pocket? Aye, ther's a pocket, for seur! Let's see, then. Let's see what we can finnd to line it wi'. Nahthen! what witta do wi' that?" And he produced a halfpenny.

"Spend it," said Freddie, promptly.

Doad laughed almost heartily." He'll spend it! Bigow he will!" he cried. "Eh, that'rt a capper!"

And so the first friendship that had come to soften the old man's heart since he lost his daughter nearly five years ago was formed and ratified. When Dave

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Berry came back again, he found him sitting on the doorstep, chuckling at the antics of his small playmate, who, straddling across the wooden horse, was whipping it into a furious gallop up the hill. The old man had not thought of his loom for hours.

“He’s a fair champion! “he declared; “Aw cannot wark for him. Whose lad will he be?”

“Nay, whose thinks ta?” answered the artful peacemaker, toying with the situation.

Doad reflected, smiling. “It runs i’ my head ‘at he favours [resembles] somebody,” he mused; “bud Aw cannot think who ‘tis.”

“They do say i’ Cragside,” the carrier said, presently, with much deliberation, “‘at he favours thee.”

The smile died out of the old man’s face as his eyes wandered to the heedless and happy child, and his mouth twitched. He rose, and glanced in at his open door, and moved a step or two away from it, tottering. “Tak’ me hoam, Dave,” he said. “Aw think... Aw’ve been a bit wrang.....i’ my head.”

The picture which Maggie saw as she gazed down the high road, watching anxiously for her darling’s return, was lighted from the west, behind her, by the calm glow of sunset. Two men rode on the front of the slow and creaking cart, and one of them, whose face was haggard with a great joy, held the golden boy on his knee

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A GHOST SLAYER

THERE is no printer’s error in the title of this story. The word, I wish to say indubitably, is “slayer,” from to slay—to put to death by violence.

The story relates to that barbarous age, hardly reckoned yet as part of the past, when the march of scientific invention had not reached the spirit world. At times, by a happy blunder of empirical research, some dilettante ghost would succeed in banging a door, imitating with some fidelity the clanking of chains, emptying a plate-rack, altering

the colour of a candle, or even effecting a momentary and imperfect materialization. To the same extent that these little accidents gave delight to their authors, they came upon people still in the flesh as a surprise. The weak thing about them was that they conveyed so little. Since then, of course, keeping pace with the times, the dim investigators of the under-world have in turn perfected a rudimentary sign-language of knocks, a very perfect and ingenious method of manipulating

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a bit of slate pencil, and several other processes, the nature of which, in the absence of patent rights, they prefer to keep secret—lest unauthorized imitators should make money out of them. We miss the old, sweet flavour of romance; but henceforth the function of the “medium” is not less easy and simple than it is honourable.

Not so in the times of which I write. It required a special talent to prophesy with facility and precision on the spontaneous howling of a dog in the dark. Anyone can see a spirit hand nowadays; some have even been privileged to grasp one, and to recognize its smooth and waxy texture: but the seer who, in those days, could sometimes discern a poor formless, impalpable ghost where other men saw nothing, possessed a rare and precious gift.

Such a gist had Weasel. And nobody respected him much for any other characteristic. He had his faults, like the greatest men. He was very worldly, or, as they say in Crag-side, “leet gi’en;” he took more whiskey than is good for any man; and his love of practical joking was a thing to be regretted. But the mantle worn long ago by the fearsome Witch of Endor had come down to him in a direct line of apostolic succession. There was not a boggart in all the country-side, from the Coach and Six, with the headless coachman and postillions, to the Lonesome Babby,

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that wailed in a leafless wood before the first snow fell, with which he was not on nodding terms. And when the spirit of prophecy came upon him, and he spake of the things which he had heard and seen, a bleak and mournful sense of awe—a

consciousness of wintry desolation with thirty degrees of frost—stole over the festivities in Molly's alehouse kitchen.

He had a pretty gift of descriptive story-telling. His dramatic effects were rapid and staggering, and the sincerity of his own fright was convincing. Nevertheless he always managed to convey, by some unobtrusive fragment of innocent detail, that he had acted more bravely than his listeners knew that they would have done in the same unusual circumstances.

It even appeared that he had carried irreverent boldness to the rash pitch of airy jocularity. He had spoken flippantly to the sheeted dead about the weather, and lightly reminded certain of them of a tarnished past, of which, being a kind of legendary historian, he knew rather more than was pleasant. I adeed there was one unquiet spirit towards whom he was guilty of a piece of wanton brutality so shocking, that, as I heard of it by his own confession, I shall take the liberty of recording it, in justice to the poor thing's memory.

When he got married—which happened to him late in life, and after a scandalous bachelorhood—he did

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so under the persuasion of Binney Driver, who refused to look upon his concubinage with any tolerance, and who overcame his last objection by offering him a house and home rent free. It is true that the house was haunted (by a disagreeable old woman in spectacles and a red shawl, who, though bent on no conceivable errand, carried an eternal marketing basket), that the windows had been stoned out, and that the roof let the weather in through a gap made by the fallen chimney. But Binney Driver was ready to put the place in repair, and Wesel held in derision the doddering, grandmotherly spectre.

“Shoo'll quit,” he said, “when shoo sees ahr Susannah.”

So he got in a few sticks of furniture, made himself hilariously drunk before bedtime, and bade the neighbourhood good-night several times from the bedroom window before he tumbled in between the blankets.

From the statement he made to a gaping crowd next morning, it would appear that his rest was not undisturbed. "Owd Betty Rathera" awoke him on the stroke of midnight by a sly attempt to filch the bed-clothes. She had little green, shining eyes, that peered at you viciously, and a shrivelled mouth that was continually in motion, and long fingers with rheumatic knobs on the knuckles. Well, he sprang out of

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bed and routed her at the first onset; and then he awoke Susannah to tell her of his cheap and glorious victory. However, at Susannah's urgent entreaty, they pulled the bed-clothes over their heads as it they were afraid, and tucked them well in, so that they would be sure to "feel her if shoo melled [interfered] agean;" and no sooner had they done so than they were holding on with all their might against a vivacious and irresistible tugging. But when Weasel made to spring after her again, she slipped away out of the room "wi' a scutter like a rat runnin'."

"Aw'll fix tha!" said Weasel, as he leaned a weaver's heavy beam against the door; and after that they got off to sleep.

He awoke suddenly, and found himself sitting bolt upright. The bed-clothes were clean gone this time, and there in the doorway stood Owd Betty Rathera, grinning at him with a mocking gleam in her green eyes, and pointing to the beam laid on one side, and the bed-clothes trailing from her basket. It was too much: the thing would presently develop into a persecution. Weasel reached the door at a bound, seized the beam, and, in a frenzy of terror, dashed it down the stone stairs in her wake.

"Hit her? Aye, for seur it hit her," he added, in reply to a question which his calculated silence had provoked. "Wha, ther' a blue rick [smoke] come up

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an' filled t' cham'er, an' Aw hed to oppen t' window to let aht a strang smell o' sulphur' at ommost choaked ahr Susannah! We saw nowt no moor of Owd Betty efter that, an' willn't, Aw'se wager." Then, after a reflective pause, he spoke in a low uneasy voice these fearful words: "Bud some way, we nivver gate warm agean all t' neet. T'air

smelled o' moulds—clammy-like." Nor did they get warm on subsequent nights, as it would seem—till Binney Driver said a prayer in the room, and gave them another pair of blankets.

Alas, poor ghost! In this way a grievous felony was piously condoned.

Weasel was more of a hero than ever after that. It is not every man who has killed his ghost. For awhile, it may be, there were wiseacres who cast doubts upon the story, on the ground that it was well known that you couldn't harm a ghost, any more than you could damage your own shadow. Dave Berry, a disrespectful man, went so far as to scoff at it quietly. "He'll be tellin' next," said that humourist, "'at he's puzzled one wi' henbane." But as, according to Susannah's testimony, the phantom no longer troubled the house, and as Owd Betty Rathera had been known to "walk" any time these ten years, the voice of envy was gradually silenced. Weasel sat in the chimney nook at Molly's, and drank out of every man's pot. He was led to discourse so often of the Cornshaw

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Screamer, of Dick Swash with the halter, of Cheepie, and of all the accredited ghosts for miles around, that he began to find it needful, with the view of some day varying the monotony, to darkly hint at the possibility of there being others.

His prestige was still at its height when, one wild night in autumn, he and a company of stout carousers came roaring home from Glusburn. They might have kept to the high road, but Dave Berry had "dared" them to walk through the ancient park where the apparition of the Coach and Six was wont to ride; and, in spite of the vivid picture of its gruesome terrors which Weasel had offered—as if by way of encouragement—they had felt pot-valiant enough to brave the danger. One of them said flatly that there was no such thing: nobody but Weasel had ever seen it.

"Bud tha's seen it, Weasel," said Dave Berry.

"Say nowt!" responded the seer, "say nowt! Wait till we git by th' owd mistal wheer t'—hic!—t' mooin cannot shine through. Aw knaw. See 'at it doesn't—hic!—ride ower ye, that's all. Them 'at it rides ower'll dee afore they're a—hic! Damn that sour

ale!—Dee afore they're a year owder. It rade ower my father t' week afore he hinged hissen—Aw mind him t—tellin' on 't.”

“Bud tha'd nut dee, wo'd ta?” asked Dave Berry.

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Weasel lurched up alongside to dig him in the ribs. “Say nowt!” he hiccupped again.

“Wha, deng me if he bean't flaid!” cried another, with a great laugh; and they nearly came to blows over that mortal insult—for Weasel, though now past the prime of his strength, was afraid, at all events, of nothing that was made of flesh and blood.

The night was black, and full of clamour. The sun had set among driving clouds, and the wind had gathered fury as “the dead of the night's high noon” drew near. Blast upon blast came hurtling down from the hills. The fallen leaves went scurrying by them along the gravel path, or caught up in eddies, flicked sharply against the strollers' faces. Somewhere in the deep and gloomy park an iron gate kept clanking. Between the gusts the big trees moaned unceasingly, and they heard the bleating of frightened sheep, and the swish and rattle of a swollen beck, coursing down its perilous channel close by. Occasionally the harvest lightening gleamed faintly for a moment, and when it flickered out a wall of darkness rose up before them, barring the way. A bat, wheeling blindly at one of these times, struck Weasel's calumniator pat on the neck, and, clinging for an instant, administered a shock to his bravado.

A sober man, with a cheerful heart in his bosom, might have admired the storm. I have known men,

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blessed with strong animal spirits and clear consciences, who would shout for sheer joy when they heard the elements brawl so. But upon these tipsy revellers the effect was different. Once within the park, they had not been beaten about for ten minutes before their fiery courage was miraculously tamed. Without being conscious of it, they had ceased to sing, or shout, or blaspheme. Weasel had given himself up to a bitter

melancholy, and another man, having fallen over a tree-root, refused to be helped up again, and maintained that it was bed-time. But by the patient efforts of Dave Berry, his slothfulness was at last overcome, and they resumed the expedition arm in arm.

The tempest rose toward its height. A black squall charged down the valley with a slogan in its throat, and when it burst among the old beech-trees their lustiest branches snapped off. The men could hear it give yell upon yell as it raced away triumphant. "By gow!" shouted Dave Berry, dragged backwards by the swaying line of his companions, "next time one o' them comes we'se do better to tak' it liggin'!" Just then a feeble moonbeam shone out from a rift in the clouds, and revealed, within a dozen paces, the mouth of that tortuous and gloomy avenue where the old mistal is; and as they drew back, hesitating, the fiercest blast of all swept them asunder. A giant beech was

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rent from its roots with a long and strident detonation, and fell crashing behind them.

While they stood shaking with terror, Weasel uttered something between a scream and a sob, and sank to the ground with one arm across his face. They were sober enough by this time, but perfectly unable to move a step.

"Ho'd thi din!" cried Dave Berry, thickly; "ther's noise enew baht thy blether." But the others were glancing fearfully round, and Weasel, grovelling and fairly whimpering, had seized the nearest round his knees.

"Theer!" he gasped, with a rapid and tremulous gesture directed towards the gloomy place ahead.

They gazed with straining eye-balls, but saw nothing more than the waving branches and the blackness "Ther's nowt theer, "bawled Dave Berry. "It's behind tha. Ther's a tree fa'en."

"Aw tell yo' Aw seed it," whinned the exorcist in a shrill and palpitating falsetto. "Aw've seed t' Coach an' Six, an' Aw'm a deead man!" An inhuman, melancholy cry that of an owl shaken from her roost, perhaps—made itself heard above their heads, and simultaneously the moonlight vanished.

They were scared past the shame of confessing it. They huddled together in the dark, clutching one another's garments and uttering incoherent

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lamentations. But Weasel's palsied gibbering rose loudest.

"A gurt yoller coach, an' men wi' bleedin' necks—eh, dear! Eh, dear! Reight ower t' bank it drave, an'dahn t' beck-hoil. Their heads rollin'abaht inside it—all starin' an laughin", starin an' laughin' at me! Eh, Aw'm a deead man. It's a judgement on me. Eh, dear! Eh, dear!"

A chorus of pious responses went up after each phrase.

"Does—does ony on yo' know a prayer-piece?" asked one man, and his teeth chattered as he spoke.

"Weasel knaws one, likely," said Dave Berry.

"Nay, nay—Aw know noan, Aw know noan. Lewk sharp an' say one, for God's mercy sake, some on yo'! It'll be back agean, Aw know it will. It com' aht o' t' mistal."

There was an embarrassed silence. This sudden and unexpected examination in religious knowledge was altogether too severe. Then, in a lull of the wind, Weasel's voice was heard again, fervently muttering. "Our Father—Father which art i' heaven. Our Father which art i' heaven— i' heaven—"

"Nay, Weasel," laughed Dave Berry; and then they all laughed.

It did them good. They got up from their knees and made the park echo with peal after peal of

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hysterical laughter. Weasel, after gazing at them sullenly for a time, took the infection of their merriment.

"Ye—ye're just as flaid as a pack o' childer," he said, when they had done laughing.

"Wha, didn't ta see nowt, then?" asked one simpleton, tricked by his sudden change of tone.

"Did *tha* see nowt?"

"Nay."

“What browt tha dahn o’ thi knees, then?”

“Well, ye said—”

“Aw said ye’d be flaid, an’ ye’re as white as a sheet this minute.”

Which sundry others felt to be true of themselves also, for the conversation was bringing back a twinge of their banished fear. Only Dave Berry stood a step or two apart, with a queer smile on his big face.

The storm was already abating. It had satisfied its rage; and by one of those surprising changes that often attend the cessation of high winds, the full moon rode smoothly out from behind the last cloud and lighted them home.

“Aw say, Weasel,” said Dave Berry, as they came out upon the highway; and he had so much the air of having a discovery to impart that they all stopped to hear it.

“Well?”

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“Well, tha mud ha’ thravn that tree at it if we’d nobbud thowt on ‘t!”

But the version which survives in Cragside of that awful experience, on which a scoffer could so lightly jest, is not Dave Berry’s.

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THE ANGEL BARMAID

CRAGSIDE was still in a very primitive stage of its development in 1862. When Minta Smith came as barmaid to the Angel alehouse, the effect of her appearance on the male population was much the same as that of local triplets might have been on the gentler sex. A barmaid was an equally rare phenomenon with the *lusus naturæ* in question—a thing heard of but not yet seen, speculated upon as a humorous possibility, but so unlikely that the heart of the boldest had not desired it.

The excitement caused by it was the greater because her advent had been unannounced and unpresaged. Molly, the old landlady, sprung her upon the village as a surprise, counting upon this dazzling innovation to retrieve the fallen fortunes of the

house. When she married into it, twenty-five years before, the Angel was at the height of its vogue as a coaching station, but its prosperity

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had of late been rudely shaken by the steam-engine, and sapped by the Livesey temperance movement. Poor Molly! Her own buxom charms had been the admiration of every traveller that knew the Colne Road, and the despair of the parish. Little wonder that she had been vain enough to think that they, and they alone, had kept the Angel in good feather; little doubt that the hiring of Minta Smith was a pathetic circumstance of her life.

The adventurous Weasel was the first to behold the charming novelty after she was installed. Dropping in for a pick-me-up just before the Monday morning, he crunched his way up the low, sanded lobby, with a laconic cry of "Nah then!" That cry had never failed any time this twenty year to produce an instantaneous tankard of half-and half, just as if he had said "Hey, presto!" and waved a silver wand. As he advanced, he looked into the rooms on each side in search of company; and when, seeing nobody there, he arrived at the bar, he put out his hand for the familiar pewter measure. It gave him an unpleasant shock to miss it; but when his eye lighted upon Minta, he started back with a mock theatrical gesture. Then he took off his hat to make an obeisance, put it back on the side of his head, winked with a grave face, whistled contemplatively a stave or two, and finally leaned his elbow on the bar and scrutinized her

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with a leisurely satisfaction through a mimic eye-glass formed with his thumb and forefinger.

Minta said, "Well, sir!" in such a pert, brisk way that you would have thought there were a dozen other customers clamouring to be supplied. But Weasel, with a provoking effrontery, completed his inspection before he designed to reply.

Her well-developed figure was enclosed within a bodice of black satin, which, fitting like a glove, showed off at their full value her ample bosom and her rounded

shoulders and arms. Her face, softening into a smile at his odd behaviour, was a bewitching picture of youth and health; but she sustained his gaze with a composure which could only have been acquired by experience. Weasel, perceiving this immediately which, was conscious of a chill of respect that qualified the frankness of his admiration. Nevertheless her toilette was a coquettish one. A red rose nestled on the slope of her bosom, and another was prettily poised among the ingenious coils of her abundant black hair; while a little pink apron, edged with narrow lace, gave her a certain aspect of homely neatness. In the course of half-an-hour's gallant conversation with the young lady Weasel quite renewed his youth, and sallying forth with his weather-beaten face wrinkled into a magnificent smile, he advertised her with such enthusiasm that

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a little later he had brought back half-a-dozen cronies.

Their condition, as they stood about the bar, eyeing her like yokels in a penny show, was generally one of bashful trepidation. Her gracious mien, and the practised dexterity with which she executed their orders before they had fairly made up their minds what to drink, were qualities that produced an uncomfortable silence. Presently they filed off one by one into the adjoining kitchen, and there settled down, each in his wonted seat on the langsettle. Miss Minta Smith, whose ears for this purpose need not have been keen, had then the further satisfaction of hearing the avowal of their first impressions. There was still a grin on Weasel's face, as he looked round triumphantly and demanded:

“What did Aw tell yo'?”

“Aye, shoo's a gradely wench enew,” assented somebody, after an interval in which they had struggled with but partial success to preserve a judicial demeanour. Then the others chimed in.

“Ea, shoo'll do!”

“Ben here's fair flaed on her.”

“Nay, not Aw. Aw could gam' wi' her as weel's another. Bud shoo's a—a thowt flash for me.”

“Ger-aht wi' tha! Gaw-yon! What's tha know abaht wenches?”

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“Tak’ no noatice on him. He’ll be creepin’ up tul her when he gits her by hersen.”

They called for ale so often during the next hour that the kitchen began to be as noisy as it was on Saturday nights, and whenever Minta reappeared she was greeted with a raking fire of gallantries. At first it had been a decorous “Thenk yo,” or “Ere’s toward yo’, Miss; ” then by easy stages they had reached the point of shy osculatory chirpings; from which they had passed with alarming suddenness to barefaced ogling and winking, enforced by amatory compliments of the most bewildering originality. But Minta had gone serenely to and fro as if the chirpings were a freemasonry to which she had never been initiated; had confronted the oglings with a steady gaze, and a pleasant, unchanging smile; and had laughed at the compliments, while, with an air of perfect indifference, she caressed the rose in her bosom. But when Weasel, by way of proving his rights upon her as a prior acquaintance, slipped his arm about her jimpy waist, she twisted herself out of that vain-glorious embrace with a saucy and a cool No, thank you, sir!”—and backed into the arms of Willie Simpson, the sexton, who was sauntering reflectively into the room.

Willie Simpson was a notorious bachelor; and he gave such a gasp of surprise, and got out of the way

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with such a clumsy alacrity, that they roared. Unruffled by this reception, he advanced with a serious face upon a vacant stool, which he reached in two ungainly strides; and, sitting down with some deliberation, like a man whose back is stiff, he looked placidly round upon the now half-tipsy company. He moreover produced and filled a cutty pipe, and with the match in his fingers waited till they had done laughing before putting the pipe in his mouth. The operation of lighting it, which was followed by a grunt of sensuous satisfaction and a sigh, carried him through the first outbreak of chaff, and

then he sat, his elbows on his knees, looking up cannily now and again out of the corners of his eyes.

It was the custom to laugh at Willie Simpson, and he was too easy-going to mind it. They used to say he had foregone the blessed state of matrimony until his present age of forty-five or thereabouts because he was too mean to pay for it. There was at least some ground for this disparaging belief, for he would never let anyone see that he had money in his pockets, and if he lost a modest bet of half-a-crown—and he was a gambler by instinct, losing oftener than he won—he had a way of paying sixpence and owing the “level money”. His hope was understood to be that with the lapse of time the balance of his debt might be forgotten. Those who said so based their insinuation

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upon the factitious consternation with which he always received their gentle reminders. These were adroitly administrated on Saturday nights, when his week’s wage was known to be in his pockets; and the fun was to see how they plunged him in a rueful reverie, and how the issue was that, after many dubious headshakings, he drew his hand inch by inch from his fob, letting letting it slide back once or twice in the process, and produced the money with a sigh that inflated his pursed lips, and escaped like a soft whistle which had miscarried.

“Tha’s been missin’ a cheap show, lad,” “said Weasel speaking loud and thick. “A wench like a pictur’! Oh, tha seed nowt on her, “he added, seeing a depreatory look on Simpson’s face, which he took to have reference to the incident at the door; “like a pictur’, shoo is!”

“T’ new barnaid, like?” asked he of the cutty pipe.

“Oh, tha’d heerd what shoo wor, then?” chaffed Weasel.

“Ea, Aw’d heerd in a way. Aw hugged [carried] her box up fro’ t’ station yesterneet,”

“Hollou! Hollou!” shouted sundry others, in various tones of significance.

“Hah mich did ta addle [earn], Willie?” asked Weasel slily.

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“Nah ye’re wantin’ to know summat,” was the diplomatic reply; “bud that’s her businness, an’ mine.” However, Minta came in again at this moment, and shamed and atoshished them all by bursting out, “Why, he wouldn’t take anything; and I say it’s too bad of him! I’m sure it’s four miles from the station, and dreadfully uphill.” Whereat Willie Simpson was seen to blush.

In such wise, like Burn’s “Bonnie Leslie” when she “gaed owre the border, ” did Miss Araminta Smith come to Cragside “to spread her conquests further.” The fire she lit in every breast was fanned rather than douted by the rumou presently puffed abroad, that she was the recipient of letters addressed in a man’s handwriting. These arrived with conspicuous regularity, and were answered with equal constancy. That was as it should be, and so they all said, feeling very miserable about it. And they all said, feeling very miserable about it. And they watched with the jaundiced eyes of a vigilance committee the behaviour of the gay young spark, in splendid apparel, who called at the Angel one Parish Feast, and was found seated in the bar monopolizing Minta’s arm-chair, and simpering with an air of quizzical superiority upon the rustic callers. Quite apart from Minta’s grievance, a lad in nankeens, who wore a pink necktie, crimson socks and ladies’ shoes, and who yet regarded sensible folk as merely curious and amusing, was not to be

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endured on any grounds. Willie Simpson wandered to and fro in a state of perplexity and gloom. The cronies of the alehouse sat round the langsettle trying to feel as at other times, but preserving an unbroken silence and steadily growing redder in the face.

“Say t’ word,” said Weasel to Minta, when she came into the kitchen. She was flushed and rumped, and there had been faint sounds as of a scuffle in the bar; “say t’word, an’ he’ll nivver be seen no moor i’ *this* parish.”

Minta Smith opened her eyes in mild astonishment, and stood still for a moment with the tray in her hands before setting down the fiery libations they had ordered. “Well, I’m sure!” she said, with a little laugh. “You’d better mind you don’t get into trouble. I wonder what your wife would think about you.”

She looked round on the company, expecting the generous approval with which her repartee had always been honoured; but nobody laughed. So she put down the glasses very sharply, and sailed out of the kitchen humming an air.

Nevertheless, when, a week later, she had two days "off" and came back with a wedding-ring on her finger, her popularity came back also, in a moment. They swarmed about her with all manner of sly questionings and gamesome insinuations. Weasel, being a Benedict, assumed at once a more intimate

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and protectorial manner; and Willie Simpson's natural shyness took on a complexion of mournful deference that was pitiful to see.

They go nothing out of her except that her "man" was in a jeweller's shop, and that his name was Hopkins. But Molly, who had followed the whole comedy with a clairvoyant instinct, told some of them in a whisper that Minta had lent her his "picture," and after a seemly amount of pressing, and under pledge of the strictest secrecy, she showed it them in a corner of the kitchen by the window. There was a general exclamation.

"Nay!"

"Nivver!"

"Well, Aw'm done!"

And Willie Simpson uttered his phantom whistle. They had recognized the perky and supercilious face of the fantastic mannikin they hated.

II.

The village never quite recovered from the shock of this preposterous surprise. The marriage was too painfully an outrage upon the self-respect of every unmarried male inhabitant. Minta lost some of her friends and defenders, if she retained most of her admirers. And it was no palliation of her offence

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that she should have seemed very happy. That she was as happy as she seemed I am prepared to believe. You could not doubt it, she grew so quiet and thoughtful, with a softness in her black eyes and a smile lingering about her mouth. Her husband always came to stay with her over the week-ends, and on Saturdays, when expecting him, she was not worth her salt. She forgot orders right and left, or got them hopelessly confused, and then apologized for her stupidity with such a sweet meekness that the customer who found himself served without a blunder was even a little disappointed. And if you went out to the bar to see why your bread and cheese tarried, you might sometimes catch her blushing at the little mirror which hung from the pewter-shelf, and patting her hair, or quizzing a new and piquant adjustment of her unfailing red roses.

But longer ere the summer was out a little rift within the lute of her marriage-joy began to be suspected. There were Monday mornings when she was paler than unusual, and the light of her eye was dull. It was so much what might have been reasonably looked for that I don't think anyone spoke of it: but one afternoon something occurred to publish the mischief to the whole village.

In the middle of a week, when Minta did not expect him, Mr. Fred Hopkins was assisted to descend

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before the Angel door from a dogcart, whose friendly driver had brought him up from the station. He was not so beautiful as he was wont to appear. The condition of his suit of summer tweeds made it plain to the politest eyes that he had been down in the summer dust.

He stumbled over the hollow flag-stones—pitfalls for the sober, it is true—made his way to the bar, and, after gazing blankly around for Minta, who was just then somewhere else, reeled into the kitchen and brought up cleverly against the wooden table. This antique piece of furniture was happily in the nature of a fixture, and out of the half-dozen tankards which it bore, only one was upset. But this was Weasel's, and a laugh of blithe anticipation went round when its ownership was discovered

“Nah then!” said the ex-poacher, with an air of aggressive friendliness; “Hah art-a? Chaps, here’s a gentleman comed to pay his fooit-ale.” And seizing Mr. Fred Hopkins by a limp hand, he shook it much as if it were a bell-rope.

This hand-shake was an ironical tribute to the visitor’s “respectability.” For everyday purposes hand-shaking is not practised in Crag-side. Mr. Hopkins gathered from the merriment it caused that he was mocked, and reaching for the nearest tankard with his disengaged hand he slung it against the wall,

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doubtless under the impression that Weasel’s head was there or thereabouts. The beer splashed the faces of the nearest men, and they jumped up cursing.

The cries of anger and the stir of feet brought Minta upon the scene, and she found herself confronted by Mr. Fred Hopkins, who had turned away with a lordly swagger.

“Oh, Fred!” She shrank from him. He was so palpably, so unheroically drunk. But he reached out for the rose in Minta’s tasteful chevelure, and tore it out with such force as to loosen a tress of her hair.

“Where d’ you ge’ that? he demanded.

She snatched the rose up from the floor, and darting at him over her shoulder an indignant “How dare you?” she swept out of the kitchen, her cheeks flushed, and the tears trembling on her eyelashes. With an oath the fellow lurched forward to follow her—and fell over Weasel’s legs, which somehow got in the way.

Weasel must have been unconscious of harm, for he sat by the door whistling softly to the black oak rafters, apparently in a beatitude of antiquarian meditation; but the faces of the onlookers were lighted up with a strange and subtle joy.

“You blank ruffian!” cried the exquisite, when he had gathered himself up again. “You di’ that on purp—hic!—purpose.”

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Weasel, pretending to think that the accusation was levelled at somebody else, looked as innocent as a schoolboy with a catapult in his pocket.

“I mean you, you blank clodhopper!” persisted his accuser, pointing with his finger.

“Aye?” queried Weasel. “Tha nivver says! What’s wrang wi’ me, like?”

“I’m goin’ fight you,” said the other. “Stan’ up! Blank me ’f I don’ b’lieve ‘s you that gives my wife roses. Stan’ up, y’hound!”

But Weasel sat still, unmoved at the spectacle of his fury. It is even probable that he breathed with a larger inspiration under the flattering touch of this second and surprising imputation. And when the disturber, continuing for his part to breathe out threatenings and slaughter, took off his coat and began to undo his vest, he said, rather flippantly.

“That’s reight. Go an’ wesh thysen. Go an’ pump o’ thi head.”

Some laughed, but most of them looked uneasy, fearing to be cheated of a fight afer all.

“All ri’, said Mr. Fred Hopkins thickly. “You’re coward! A coward! I say you’re blank coward, blank you!” And he waved his arm and tried to snap his fingers. His voice had risen to a shout.

On Weasel’s grizzled forehead a faint flush began to spread itself—his cheeks were a russet brown and

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never did flush—and a dangerous glitter came into his eye. He put his pipe in his pocket, got up, and, to everybody’s astonishment, walked gravely out of the house.

With a short laugh of triumph Minta’s husband tossed up his arms and turned to the others.

“Man’s gone!” he observed. “Can’t fight. Now see me do the han’some. I’m goin’ pay my footin’ like gen’leman. Course I am. Minta! Come here, blank you! Give these other gentlemen s’more booze. He, he! I’ve got half-crown my pocket, an’ I’m out work. Make selves drunk.” And he dropped his hat on the langsettle and sat down upon it.

But this courtesy was not of the right kind for Yorkshiremen. They sat sullen, and Willie Simpson at last took possession of the paraded half-crown and gave it to Minta. Presently, too, Mr. Fred Hopkins grew sleepy, and was put to bed. Weasel, who had made occasion to visit a friend domiciled on the other side of the road, and to sit chatting with him very affably, heard this piece of news half an hour later, and thereupon strolled away up the village with a calm countenance.

That night, when Molly locked her door upon the last customer, and began to put out the candles, duties always performed by her own hands for fear of accidents, she came upon Minta in the kitchen, sitting by

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“Nay, my wench,” said she, caressingly, “tha munnot cry. Wha, there's nowt to be mended wi' cryin'. He can stop here, tha knaws, an' welcome—till he git another job, or summat.”

Minta did not seem to hear. It was not her husband's loss of a situation that chiefly troubled her.

“Ye can talk it ower i' t' morn,” pursued the dame, who, with all her softness of heart, was somewhat dull of discernment; noa daht ye'll hit o'some way o'doin'. Nobbud—I think ye'd just do better nut to wear t' flowers whol he's here.”

“I will wear them! “cried the girl, starting up with wet cheeks and flashing eyes. “I don't care what he says. It's an honestest man than him as gives 'em me. Oh, I wish I'd never seen him! The drunken brute! To tear at my hair like he did, in a room full of people. I hate him!”

Molly, an easy-going creature, was both shocked and vaguely affronted by this outburst. She saw in it only an unlovable side of Minta's character, and was blind to its revelation of the strength of that odd platonic friendship which she had formed with the boorish but untiring donor of her roses.

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Nor did Mints herself realize the extent to which her grateful feeling towards Willie Simpson—for it was he—involved a deeper resentment of the brutality shown by her husband. I do not care to wonder whether her fidelity could have consciously withstood the proof if any one had told her of the long journeys made by this meek admirer in quest of his matutinal offerings. His shyness, his care for her reputation, and his dread of competition had all something to do with his choice of remote hunting-grounds. It had been supposed that her husband sent the flowers: good; he must let no one suspect otherwise. But it was not very easy to obtain a constant supply of roses, and these invariably red roses, without firing the curiosity of somebody. He changed his direction every morning, and concealed his purpose under the pretext of having dropped in casually for a neighbourly talk. “He hadn’t been so weel,” he said; “doctor telled him he mud git about more and straighten his back. How were crops?” The roses he took unbidden, and as matter of course, presuming—as a rule justifiably—upon the friendliness engendered by his presence and upon the vanity of the rose-grower. Sometimes this sociable practice was stretched to a length which can only be characterized as ideal. Where conventional usage would have had him leave a card, he took a rose, and

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people who were out in the fields or still in bed at the fugitive moment of his vist, learned at last how to know that he had called. The arrangement pleased him well, it accorded with his taciturn habit, for it saved him a world of circumlocution. I daresay that in course of time it may, in the judgement of some at least of his extensive acquaintance, have begun to seem perfunctory.

Only one man in Cragside knew his secret; and that man was bound to silence by the sure and light-borne obligation of self-interest. In one of his early preregrinations Willie Simpson had come upon Weasel releasing a struggling rabbit from a wire snare, and had stood quietly in ambush while Weasel broke the creature’s neck, and put it in his pocket. Then, without showing, himself, he had shouted like ten men, “Hey! Put that

dahn!" and so come out into the open. In the course of a fit of uproarious laughter with which he regaled himself in respect of Weasel's warlike attitude of alarm, his hat fell off, and two dainty half-blown roses tumbled out of it among the grass unnoticed.

"Eh! he cried, in a long exultant monosyllable, eloquent of varied meaning. "Hah leets [happens] this? Aw thowt tha nivver did no powchin, nah. Swear'd off it, did ta nut?"

"Thee sam [pick] thi hat up an' say nowt," answered

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Weasel, surly-wise; and the sly cavalier grasped the situation instantly.

I don't know whether the unspoken league and covenant then and there concluded, and faithfully observed from that time forward, fostered the instinctive dislike with which the poacher regarded Mr. Fred Hopkins. The affirmative hypothesis, at all events, is needless if admissible. On the second morrow after the arrival of that precious wastrel at the alehouse, Minta appeared with a black eye, and her husband sauntered about the premises as if he had entered upon possession of them in right of that disfigurement. Molly, revolted, appealed to Weasel, as she had sometimes done before when she needed a champion.

"For gracious' sake ge rid o' that fancy man o' Minta's!" she said. "Aw cannot thoil [endure] t' seet on 'im."

"Reight!" quoth Weasel, tuning a pirouette on his toe, and then growing serious on a sudden; "Aw've a craw o' my awn to pluck wi' that." And he walked into the kitchen and knocked Mr. Hopkins's hat off.

That gentleman was stretching his legs before the fire, and had not looked round when Weasel entered. He did so now, having sprung to his feet to do it. I cannot say whether it was the unexpectedness of the affront, or the moleskin waistcoat and faded puce neektie which Weasel wore, or the gleam of devilment

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in Weasel's eyes which guided his judgement in the choice of a form of protest; but I believe that what he said was:

“Do—do you know that this is an insult, sir?”

“Oh, is't?” said Weasel. “Tha can tak' it that way iv ta likes. But Aw want this chair.” And he sat down in it.

“Confound your impudence, ” bellowed Mr. Fred Hopkins. “I'll—”

“Thee shut up! ” said Wesael. “Tha'll do nowt bud what Aw tell tha. Ther's a chap waitin' for thee dahn t' road a bit, an' he says tha'rt to loss noa time. Nay, he's noa policeman, tha nedden't be flaed. Tha's sen him afore oft enow, *Aw'll* wager.

“What do you mean, you lout? I've nothing to fear from any man.”

“Reight, ” said Weasel drily, and produced his pipe and roll.

Mr. Hopkins picked up his hat. He dusted the sand off it, and intimidated that he would settle “this account” later on.

Weasel's posture was an exact copy of the man's whom he had supplanted. He made no reply to the threat, but, his face averted toward the fire, he indulgent in a quiet grin.

“Where is this man? I—was expecting him,” Mr. Hopkins asked and explained.

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“Wha,” answered Weasel, with an air of polite conscientiousness; “ye mun walk dahn t'road five or six minutes, till ye see a steehoil [stile] an' wait theer for him. If he bean't theer he'll come.”

Mr. Hopkins was no sooner out of the house by the front door than Weasel left it by the back. He scaled the wall of the stable-yard and plunged across a field under the shelter of another wall, as far as where it ended in a beck-course. Picking his way along the rough margin of the stream with the nimbleness and familiarity of a boy, he followed a direction parallel with that of the road, till he came to some steppingstones which carried a footpath across the beck; and then he struck off along the footpath toward the stile he had indicated. His dupe, who reached the rendezvous more leisurely, and after some cautious circumspection, found him waiting there.

“What fool’s trick is this? He demanded. It was an elegance of diction which, with others he has been seen to employ, he may have acquired in the service of ungrateful employers.

“Noan,” said Weasel, with a hardness of manner and voice that was new to his adversary. “Tha’d liefer come aht o’ t’ house nor be chucked aht, Aw judge.”

“Look ‘ere,” growded the young fellow, knitting his brows, but paling as he spoke, “I’ve ‘ad enough o’

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your nonsense, mister. If I didn’t know you were loony, I’d show you a bit o’ Tom Sayers, my man. You clear off now! I don’t want any bother with an old man.”

He turned about with a gesture of angry impatience to go back to the alehouse; but Weasel, with a sudden bound, caught him by the collar in a powerful gripe, forcing his knuckles into the jeerer’s neck. His prisoner struggled fiercely, but, taken at an utter disadvantage, he struggled in vain. At last Weasel flung him off with an oath.

“Aw like fair do’s,” he said. “Come on. That’rt nobbud a young chap, but Aw eused to could feight a bit:” with which modest exordium he began to take his coat off.

His antagonist was too furious to reciprocate this clemency. He struck at Weasel while the latter’s arms were embarrassed, and but for an adroit movement of the head, which let the blow pass harmless over his shoulder, Molly’s emissary would have made an ill beginning with his mission. A second blow caught him full on the breast, but simultaneously he stopped the treacherous onslaught with a “left-hand counter” which took Mr. Fred Hopkins in the abdomen.

Then the figh began in earnest. David Berry, passing with a load of yarn, reined up his cart to watch it, but besides that phlegmatic humourist there

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was no witness of the conflict. It appeared to him, as well it might, an unequal duel. A shrunken little grey-haired man of fifty, and a strapping young fellow of half his age! The quick thud of their blows and the quicker trampling of their feet were the only

sounds audible from the drowsy valley, and a little cloud of dust rose about them in the motionless summer air. But it was all over in three minutes, and the victor nodded grimly to Dave Berry, and picked up this coat.

“Aw’ve seen nowt,” said the carter, winking, and touched up his horse; “bud, Aw say, Weasel, when we were lads tha’d ha’ ended that sooiner.”

The explanations and apologies which followed need not here be set down. It is sufficient that Mr. Fred Hopkins was afterwards missing from Cragside. And the considerations which determined him to stay away are to be best gathered from the following letter, which Minta received from him a week later, bearing the Liverpool postmark:

“To Areminta Smith,

“That is your name now. I have had enough off you and am off to America, you needn’t try to find me for you wont nor nobody else neither, thanks for the money, its just enough to see me clear off and a bit to boot, whishing you luck, you can tell the ugly

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vilan you set on to kill me its fortunate for him I am going where I can’t reach him with a revolver, Fredk Hopkins.

“P, S? you’re a nice *cup of tea*, arnt you.”

III.

Of course, Minta cried her eyes red over this pitiful scrawl. Her tears fell thickest when she found Willie Simpson’s posy next morning, standing in a glass of water in one corner of the bar, where she had learned to look for it when she did not see him. But she wore the flowers. And before the winter was gone she had regained wonderfully her maidenly beauty and brightness—her old frank way of laughing, the free and careless play of her eyes in talk, the trick of blushing when people said pretty thigs to her, and the surprising readiness of her saucy answers when they presumed too far.

It was about this time, indeed, that the Scotch packman who sometimes came our way paid her the eccentric compliment of singing a song in her praise. He was a bald, peering, wizened body in his sixities, bent and worn with continued tramping, and afflicted with a chronic running from the nose; but after three or four glasses of hot whisky he could still be lively.

“Bide juist whaur ye are, ma wean,” he cried one Saturday night to Minta, “an ‘A’ll sing ye a sang a’

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to yersel’.” It was her twenty-second birthday, and the company was larger and merrier than usual. “A’ll wet ma whistle a wee, an’ then—Lord! A could sing this sang when A was a bit callan, juist beginning to keek at the lasses!”

At another time it might have put too great a strain upon one’s fancy to conceive of his doing any such thing; bu he infected everybody with his quaint enthusiasm, as he piped out with an abundance of odd gesture some verses from one of Burns’s lyrics:

“In auld Cragside there lives a lass—

Could I describe her shape and mien!

Our lasses a’ she far excels,

An’ she has twa sparklin’, roguish e’en.

“Her cheeks are like yon crimson gem,

The pride of a’ the flowery scene,

Just opening on its thorny stem—

An’ she’s twa sparklin’, roguish e’en.

“Her lips are like yon cherries ripe,

That sunny walls from Boreas screen;

They tempt the taste and charm the sight—

An’ she’s twa sparklin’, roguish e’en.”

“Her voice is like the evening thrush,
That sings on Cessnock banks unseen,
While his mate sits nestling in the bush—
An’ she’s twa sparklin’, roguish e’en.”

Minta shrank back into the doorway after the first verse, smiling and blushing in a delightful confusion:

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and the ancient Lovelace got up from his seat to stand face to face with her, and wave his glass. There was riotous applause when he had finished, but he sat down perplexed and disheartened because there were other verses which he couldn’t remember.

Willie Simpson said, “Varra gooid, varra gooid! Bud—it’s’ouldn’t be ‘roguish e’en’; it’s s’ould be’ honest e’en;’ ” and on this subject at least Willie was allowed to have his own way, for his secret was now a secret no longer.

Minta herself had divulged it; and as Weasel sided with him the rest had accepted it philosophically. Indeed, she had lately begun on Sunday afternoons to share his seat sometimes on the bench near the porch, where they might be seen using one servicebook like a couple of children; and, the service over, she would wait in the churchyard till he had locked the doors, so that he might walk home with her down the village.

I like best to think of him as he looked about this time, and for a twelvemonth or so afterward. His mild familiar gaze,—for it was always a gaze, and not a glance—rested upon you so pleasantly that you forgot his ponderous bulk, his ungainliness, and his corduroys. His strongly charactered face, too, which he kept free of any hirsute adornment, was not without a masculine kind of beauty; while his voice, a

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rich and resonant bass, exactly expressed his magnificent physique and temper. He was a harmless giant.

But it was not without scandal that a married woman should be willing to receive his very constant attentions. Minta had not a friend beside Molly among the women folk, and I suppose that with anyone but the Reverend John Wilkins in care of the souls of Crag-side parish, Willie Simpson's affair of the heart, innocent and open though it was, would have cost him the loss of his place. The reverend gentleman had indeed thought it his duty to speak faithfully to his sexton, but had listened to his defence, and believed him.

"Very well," he had said; "God forbid that I should judge you. But you must know, Willie, man, you can never marry her."

To which the sexton, with a puzzled look, had replied in all simplicity, "Wha nou! Shoo *is* wed."

One morning, some eighteen months after the incubus of Mr. Fred Hopkins had vanished from their dream, Willie called on the parson, and, with an apologetic stolidity of features, produced from his breast-pocket a sheet of notepaper, which had been folded into a triangular shape.

"It's been thrust aneath my door some time i' t'

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neet," he said, "an' it lewks like what ye mud say a letter. A deal o' fine penmanship. Aw thowt ye'd happen read it aht for me."

"Certainly, Simpson," smiled the old gentleman, disengaging himself promptly from a rug of healds which he was patiently stitching together for the cure of his cold feet. "Ceratinly. As soon as I can find my spectacles, I will do my best to do so."

Willie looked a good deal relieved; but he fidgeted so much with his hat, and stood so awkwardly in one place near the door, that the parson, still seeking his spectacles, became conscious of his *gêne*, and asked archly, "Do you know what this letter is about, Simpson?"

"Well, sir," said Willie, jerking his head sideways at the window, as he might have done in allusion to somebody who was waiting for him in the garden, "partly Aw do, an' partly Aw've gawmed [divined] it. You see, Minta theer, it's her day off, as they

say; an' shoo'll ha' changed her mind ower goin' to Bradforth. We were bahn theeer to-day, her an' me."

"H'm! said the little vicar, who was by this time adjusting his spectacles. "Ah!"—and he brought the letter into focus. "Yes, I see. But we should have called this a *billet doux* in my time, Simpson."

He peered at the sexton with such a genial significance, that Willie answered cordially, "Soa ye wo'd

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sir; soa ye wo'd," though he had never heard the term before.

Still beaming, the parson began to run his eye down the page preparatory to reading aloud; and Willie tried to get a foretaste of its contents by watching his face.

Apparently they did not please him, for the single furrow in his brow grew suddenly sharp, and a stern red flush mantled for a moment to the roots of his white hair.

"It'll nut be fro' her, happen," said Willie.

The letter fluttered in the old man's fingers. He turned slowly about, and walked away towards his desk in the corner.

"Aw'm main sorry, sir," said Willie hurriedly, "if it be owt bud what's—Ye see Aw didn't knaw her hand o'write. Aw've nivver seen it afore—to leuk at, fairly."

The good man uttered a kind of groan, and made a gesture of almost piteous excitement. Then he lifted his head for a moment as in the act of prayer; and Willie, standing watching him in silence and bewilderment, turned very pale.

"Simpson man," he said at last in a voice which he was hardly able to control—and he came back towards him with great eyes bent upon him strangely—"there are times when God permits great afflictions to visit

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us, for our greater good and His own glory. Whom the Lord loveth, Simpson, He chasteneth." He laid his hand on the huge man's shoulder.

Willie's mouth came open with an aspect of fright, and his gaze wandered hopelessly back to Minta's letter. He seemed to be about to speak, but the words were slow to come.

"When God's hand is upon us, Simpson," the venerable man went on—

But Willie gripped his arm, and said in a quiet way, "Aw think, if yo'd nobbud read me what shoo says, like. Aw'st feel—more mysen."

The Reverend John Wilkins had lived too long among the strong northern people to be surprised at a speech like that, and he did as he was bidden, though the tears coursed down his cheeks the while, and dimmed his spectacles. This was the letter:

"DEAR FRIEND,

"You must try not to think of me any more. You have been very good to poor Me, but we cannot be friends any more in this world. *He* is coming back. I got a letter this morning from him. I cannot bear the thoughts of it. It is too horrible. I have made up my mind he shall not see me again, and when you read this I shall be out all trouble. Do not grive too much for me, dear Old Man; it is best

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for us both. You have made me very happy, but I don't deserve it. I am going to drown myself. I thought you would like to have my body now that I am dead; and bury me yourself, so if you would you can get them to look in the mill dam at Cornshaw. Good-bye, love. I do love you, even if it is a sin. I am not sorrowful, because I know you love me, and I shall lie very near you while you work every day; and dear, I think if you come to my grave and whisper into the ground perhaps I shall hear you. Good-bye, good bye! From your sweetheart, for I am your own true sweetheart,

"MINTA."

The quavering voice of the old clergyman ceased in the silence of the dim study. Outside there were birds twittering in the sunshine. Willie rose to go. "Thank yo', sir," he said, and waited for the letter. As he put it in his pocket he half turned back.

“Aw reckon Aw’d better just do as shoo wants done. Ye’ll happen be so gooid as...let me have a bit o’ grund i’ t’ corner, sir... wheer it slopes rather awk’ardly, an’ noabody——”

The old clergyman put out his hand as if warding off a blow. “Man!” he burst out, his face twitching oddly, “you forget. If that letter be true, she—she cannot be buried here at all!”

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Willie’s head dropped. “Aw’ve heerd o’ that,” he said submissively. “Gooid day, sir, and thanck yo’.” And with that he let himself out.

The water was drained off from the mill-pond, and Minta’s dead body was got out with hayforks from the slime near the big waterwheel. Willie took it up in his arms all dripping, and bore it off to the alehouse, three-quarters of a mile away. The powerful man with the girl lying limp across his breast was a terrible figure as he strode along with a haggard, expressionless face, while a crowd of children trotted at his heels, frightened and fascinated.

When he had carried her upstairs, and laid her on her own bed, Molly, who had shown him the room, and some other women, who had followed out of curiosity with proffers of help, were so scared by the despair written on his face that they presently left him alone with the dead. Quite an hour later the woman whom Molly sent for to lay out the corpse found him sitting upright and motionless on a chair near the head of the bed; and when she spoke to him he got up without looking again at the body, and shambled downstairs. In the afternnon, one of a group of men who sat in the kitchen talking about the drowning caught sight of his face in the lobby; but he did not come in. Later on he found Weasel alone, and sat down awhile in his old seat by the fire. Neither

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man looked at the other, and for a long time neither spoke.

It was Willie who broke the silenece. “Bill o’ Doad’s [the constable] wor here leukin’ at her,” he said. “He says ‘at t’ Crowner ’ll hae to knaw.”

“Aye, he telled me.”

The silence continued. Willie’s shaking hand, which he had rested on the table, was moving incessantly to and fro on the lines of the wood.

“T’ watter were sair mucky,” he said at last. “Aw fancied it mud ha’ been another, till Aw’d wiped her face a bit. Shoo’d ollus leuked so fresh, like. Roses i’ her cheeks, and her neck clean white.”

He was trembling in every limb, and his utterance had grown indistinct, like a drunken man’s. When he spoke again his voice was a whisper, with now and then a strange sound in it.

“Some way, Aw cannot think on her bein’.....bein’ act’ally deead.....but for what’s liggin’ up i’ t’ chamber. Eh! Shoo’re fearful cowd.” He bent forward toward Weasel’s ear. “It’s a strange thing what ther’ wor.....betwixt that lass an’ me. When Aw ligged her dahn.....on her bed.....hoddin’ her cloise like... ther’ a feelin’ com’ ower me ‘at... at Aw couldn’t lowse [free] mysen. Aye.... It fretened me a deecal.....Does ta think’at shoo’d be.....be wantin’ me?”

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“Nay,” said Weasel, his teeth chattering, “It’s a fearsome thing.”

Willie was rubbing his hands slowly together before the roaring fire. “Aw’m fearful starved [cold],” he said. “Aw cannot git warm sin’ Aw felt her agean me.”

Weasel fetched some brandy and made him drink it neat. “Tha mun stir abaht more, lad,” he cried. “What! Shoo’s nut thi wife. Tha’ll mak’ thysen poorly, talkin’ an’ freatin’.”

“No,” replied Willie, “shoo’re nut my wife. An’ nah, it seems shoo’s nowt no more.” And suddenly the giant shook with childish sobs.

But the importunate business of the inquest he endured better than we had expected. The Crowner was kind, and suppressed all but the essential passage of the suicide’s letter. By the grave side, however, in the terrible moment when the body was lowered into the earth, Willie fell his length among the feet of the bystanders.

They lifted him, with a sudden bustle, on to a flat stone near by, and undid his neckcloth and threw water on his face, but it was nearly half-an-hour before the swoon

passed. Meanwhile the belief that he, too, was dead got abroad, and the tiny burial-ground of the Primitive Methodists on a spur of the crag hill, where Minta's rejected body had been granted a

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refuge, was almost filled by an awe-stricken crowd. Willie, at least, was one of themselves, and that he should die so "unprepared," as if by the very act of God, seemed to them to be peculiarly terrible. Was it not a plain sign? The corpse of that Jezebel had no place there, among their own dead who were asleep in Chris. A murmur like that went about among them as they waited helplessly for the doctor, while one and another pushed to the front now and then, to gaze with a superstitious fear upon the huge and pathetic figure on the slab.

When the trance released him and he began to stir, some of them made ready to lead him away and home; but he drew his arms free and went into the neighbouring cottage of Amos Bradley, his brother gravedigger, and there stayed till the last of them had gone.

Then he came out to fill in the earth himself. He had persuaded Amos to let him dig the grave, and he would not hear of anyone else "lifting a shool to it." That he should have been wilful about it was natural, but afterwards it was affirmed that he had had as unsuspected motive in this, a motive which might have been suggested to his mind by the extreme looseness of the sandy soil. People are prone to believe the strange and terrible. The sides of the pit were supported with strong planks, and it was necessary, in

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any case, that from time to time he should go down into it to remove these planks, as he filled in the sand to their successive levels. Amos thought that he was longer at work than he need have been, and went out to see if he needed help.

The pit had closed in upon the living and the dead; and they disinterred him only to commit his body more decently to the same resting-place. His features were not

distorted, like those of a man who had struggled hard for life; and I think that, whether he brought it about of set purpose or not, this death was very welcome to him.

We never heard of Mr. Fred Hopkins again. I suspect that he had read of his wife's suicide in some newspaper, or heard it talked about on nearing Cragside; and such men as he are prudent.

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A HEAP OF QUARTZ.

OVER against Cragside there is a saddle backed hill, whose pommel, in a certain phase of sunset light, seems jewelled with a brilliant carbuncle. The gem is a poor counterfeit. Wayfarers who climb the hill to scrutinize it find nothing more curious than a mound of crystal quartz, formed by a bygone generation of lead-miners, and looking very dingy and colourless at close hand. But it is more than a meaningless pile of rocky fragments. It is a romantic monument, accidental but significant, and brings to the memory a clownish figure, somewhat a laughing-stock even in this rude corner of the earth, but worthy to be revered by all true hearts.

You cannot look down the shaft of the abandoned mine. It has been fenced about for the safety of the moorland sheep and of children who sometimes stray that way when bilberries are ripe; and indeed I do not know if the shaft be open, or blocked with the débris of years. A stout wooden cross-tree, which

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once carried a pulley, spans it still, and some rusted fragments of ironwork, oddly shaped and not very intelligible, lie scattered about. They were once thrown down carelessly on the level summit of the mound, but it is partially grass-grown, and in course of time they have become embedded. There are gaunt heaps of bones bleaching, and the skull of a ram. The pewits and curlews cry wildly as they circle overhead. You are an intruder, and they would persuade you that to linger there is perilous.

The mine was gainless to its owner, but for a time a handful of men made a living by working in it, while the nearest alehouse keeper made something more than a living by looking on. They were a godless set, drinking themselves drunk on Saturdays and Sundays, and distracting the local Dogberry, an easy-going man, with dog-fights and cock-fights planned and carried out under his very nose.

I think he was chiefly incensed against a certain "Bowey Thick 'un," who was not only the ugliest man he had ever seen, but who had the impudence to tease him about the superficial area of his feet—which were larger than Bowey's. He dare not avenge these petty insults by any show of severity, because Bowey, with a pair of legs as strong as a Gothic arch [which they resembled], a short stout body, and the arms and hands of a gorilla was not only a powerful man,

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but a terror in fight; and because, whether sober or incapable, he was always accompanied by a monstrous bull-terrier bitch, as fierce and powerful as himself. But such insults were hard to bear. One day, for example, having stood still to observe, from the prudent distance of the breath of the road, the singular effect of "fourpenny" on Bowey's legs, he was made sport of by that incorrigible person before witnesses.

"Nah, Bowey, lad" he cried, in a perfectly unofficial way, "what's hinderin' tha? What's ta tryin' to do, like?"

Bowey, who had not seen him, hiccoughed an answer without looking across. "Tryin' step ower thy feet," he said, and passed on, chuckling.

Nothing is so insupportable as ridicule, and in twenty-four hours the story of this lively bit of repartee was all over the village, never to be forgotten while the subject of it should continue to live there. Hence, when Bowey and five others were entombed in the mine by the falling in of the shaft, it was something to the constable's credit that he organized the rescue party, and worked as hard as the best of them to disinter his arch-enemy among the rest.

Yet only a monster could have done less. Bowey's wife, a frail creature, whom he boasted of when sober, only to ill-use her brutally when drunk, tore away with her hands at the huge pile of quartz till she was

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bedrabbled with her own blood, and had to be led away, shrieking; other women, with none of their own kin in peril, were crying silently as they stood around with frightened faces; and there was one woman who had a child in the pit, a fair-faced lad of eleven years, and never uttered a moan after the first shuddering cry she had given on hearing the news—but would have leaped headlong into the crater-like hollow where the shaft had been, if a watchful bystander had not seen the madness in her eyes and seized her on the brink. It was at this time that people began to talk about the blood-red gleam of the mine-head at sunset.

There is a man who came through the peril, Old Joe Ackroyd, from whom I heard the story—how those who were imprisoned endured the living death to which they were doomed. He is no word-painter. He “only speaks right on.” You would go about in vain to make him tell you anything of the swift terror that smote his mates and him with a kind of palsy when they heard the boom and crash of falling rocks go through the workings. He well remembers it, but words fail him. You gather that they were plunged in utter darkness by the “drought” that blew their candles out, that a curious “flinty smell” mingled in their nostrils with the fume of smouldering wicks, and that after the thunderous roar ceased none of them

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moved for a while. It may be furthered conjectured with great probability that, except Ackroyd himself, who is and was a pious man, they were startled by the first explosion of sound into various blasphemous exclamations. But that is a detail of the kind to which the Recording Angel is said to be merciful.

Joe Ackroyd, actuated by force of habit no less than his companions, breathed a prayer; and then, stumbling and splashing, they hurried to the foot of the shaft, bruising themselves against the rough-hewn walls and the low uneven roof of their burrow. Somebody asked for a match, and Ackroyd found one in his waistcoat pocket. A candle

was re-lighted, and through the dusty darkness thus feebly illuminated, they looked upon their fate.

Rats in a hole! There had been a wide chamber at the bottom of the shaft, but, as they judged, they were not within ten or fifteen yards of that; and a hopeless mass of quartzite and limestone blocks stretched gloomily back and upward from their feet to the roof, where the light could not penetrate.

They looked at one another with ghastly faces of consternation. "They were like men," says Ackroyd, "with a rope round their necks." But one of them, known for his idleness no less than for his ponderous strength, cried out, "Mind yersens!" and began to throw behind him the smaller fragments.

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Bowey Thick'un seized him by the naked shoulder. "Yo'fooil!" he said, phlegmatically. "Tha'll hev it all down on us, that way. If that theer be ever shifted, it'll be thro' aboon [from above]." And he blew out the candle-flame.

"What's ta done that for?" cried several, in a panic; and the man who held the candle asked, "How if ther' bean't another match?"

"We cannot eyt matches," answered Bowey.

He was scrambling up among the debris. At the top he remained quiet a while, shifting his position every now and then. He was trying to discover some glimmer of daylight. They left it to him, talking in an undertone till they heard him coming down again. Somebody was just then saying, in a tone of apprehensive cheerfulness, that it needn't be so much of a fall to fill the shaft bottom.

"No," said Bowey, drily. "A hunderd an' fifty ton'll do it as weel's a landslip. Bud tis hill 'at we're buried under baht funeral service is as rotten as owd timber."

They knew it to be true. Whenever there was rainy weather above ground, water dropped from the roof and settled in pools; while among the heather the irregular ridges of outcropping limestone, worn into holes by the frost, looked as spongy as coral. The winter just gone by had been a severe one, and

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the hill had doubtless been frozen to an unusual depth of its fissured crust.

“What’s t’use o’ talkin’!” snapped the man who had attempted to move the débris—Kit Harpur was his name—“Awther we s’ll hear ‘em workin’ to get at us, or we s’ant’t. That’ll settle t’ thickness on ‘t.” He was right, obviously.

“Hes ta ony brass on thee?” asked Bowey, quizzically.

“*Aw* dunno. A shillin’ or two, maybe. What’s *brass* gooid for?”

“Aw’ll lig tha six to one ‘at my bitch doesn’t feight next Sunda’. Nahthen! I’ florins. What says ta?”

It was Tuesday afternoon; but the other made no reply to Bowey’s offer more definite than a grunt. “Bigow!” the giver of odds added presently, ruefully and half in soliloquy, “it’s even money ’at shoo nivver feights agean. Tha gawmless [silly] bitch ‘ll pine hersen to death afore we’re aht o’ this.”

Until then, in the absolute darkness, they had forgotten the boy, but now he began to cry. At first, he did no more than “snivel” quietly, but when some of them essayed to soothe him his grief worked itself up into a passion, and he bellowed dismally for his mother. They had to let the fit have its way with him. But it became distracting, and Bowey cried out to him roughly, and with an oath, to stop that

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blether. It might be “Bowey’s way,” but the rest resented it, and Ackroyd moved over to the lad to put his arm round him.

“Theer, theer!” he said, “Ther’s nowt to roar abaht. Thi mother’ll be waitin’ for tha at top when they git us aht.”

That was just what the lad wanted to hear, and after this he bore up bravely. The men sat listening, till, worn out with the continued strain upon a single faculty, they dozed, and fell asleep.

Men will sleep through the night that comes before the executioner. But to all men under sentence of death the waking is terrible. These men awoke to lifeless silence, impenetrable darkness. The man who awoke first aroused the other: to be conscious alone was insufferable. Yet they lay as silent awake as asleep.

“I think,” said Ackroyd, telling me the story, “I think ‘at they all gav’ up heart then. We reckoned ‘at it mud be ten or twelve hour sin’ we were buried [probably an over-estimate], an’ still we could hear nowt stirrin’. Ther’ no more bettin’ an’ jokin’ at efter that. We started a little Bethil aman werséns. They’re ready enew to pray an’ sing. I’ll tell yo’.

“An’ that’s one reason why I believe i’ fastin’, for all ther’s few ‘at does it i’ these days. God’s Word commands it plain enew, an’ it tak’s a deal o’ mischief

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aht of a man. But as I were sayin’, we prayed then, an’ sang too, as weel’s we could; nut ‘at they *could* sing—ony on ‘em but me an’ t’ lad—but hymns is easy to pick up. I mind ‘at they seemed to like best ‘Theer is a fountain filled wi’ blood.’ Aye, we sang that ower an’ ower agean, wi’ quiet spells between times.

“Bud we s’d niver ha’ thowt o’ t’ cannels but for this Bowey chap. It seems ‘at he’d been in at a firedamp do afore, an’ they’d drunk t’ oil fro’ their lamps, so he ‘d thowt o’ t’ cannles first thing, an’ that’re why he blew out Abe o’ Peters’s. We sammed [gathered] together all we could finnd, and shared ‘em out, fower to ivvery one. Yo’d think we could hardly fancy ‘em, but this Bowey said ‘at they’re varra nourishin’, an’ I do believe they’re that. Well, as near as we could reckon, we ate one ivvery day till they’re done. We’d ha’ been rare an’ fain o’ some more, choose-how [at all events].

“Aye, an’ ther’ a queer thing happened anent them cannles. T’ day efter we’d finished ‘em, as we thowt, we heeard some chewin-like, an’ kit Harpur gate hod o’ t’ lad.

“ ‘Damn tha, thou little scamp!’ he says, ‘spit that out! Spit it out!’ he shouts, an’ I judge ‘at he near throttled him. ‘What’s ta gotten?’

“It’s cannles he ‘re eytin’, for all he’d cried a spell

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ower hevin’ nowt no more to eyt. Kit turned his pockets out, an’ he’d three left.

“ ‘A gradely thing,’ says Kit, he says, ‘efter we’ve gi’en him a full man’s share!’ an’ he shaked him so ‘at t’ lad fair screamed.

“This Bowey, he’d been ligg’in’ down i’ a dry spot a bit off, an’ he com’ plungin’ tow-ard us, an’ shoutin’. They’d been his awn cannles! He’d etten nowt hissen, an’ saved ‘em for t’ lad.

“Well, they’re varra near bein’ a feightin’ do, but we could mak’ nowt on ’t; nobbud we sent this lad away so’s we s’ouldn’t hear him chewin’.

“I’d forgotten about t’ cannles till I heerd o’ this London chap [? Merlatti] fastin’, an’ ’at he said it’re easier to do bout nor to be content wi’ little—efter t’ first day or two, onyway. But I ‘ve thowt sin’ then ‘at this Bowey knew on ’t. Happen if he’d telled us, we s’ouldn’t ha’ believed him.

“He’re a main bad ‘un, this Bowey, for he drank a deal an’ sware a deal, an’ even then he didn’t reight sing an’ pray like another man, bud just sat by, an’ hearkened like. I truly think ‘at he’d nivver heerd nowt about Jesus, nobbud i’ t’ way o’ swearin’, for he axed me a lot o’ strange questions. He hedn’t mich of a head on him for religion, choose-how.

“But this hymn ‘at I telled yo’ we sung so oft, about ‘Drawn from Emanuel’s veins’, hed a mak’ o’

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power on him, an’ last, wi’ turnin’ it ower i’ his head an’ that, he spake up an’ he says, quiet-like.

“ ‘Black puddin’s is made wi’ blood,’ he says.

“Ther’ noan on us said aye or nay, as far as I can tell. We’re far spent at that time, an’ we’d used to let him do varra near all t’ talkin’.

“ ‘Ther’ *is* some wood, ‘he says, ‘an’ Aw’ve a dinnercan. If we could finnd a match an’ mak’ a fire to boil t’ can on, Aw mud cut mysen. Aw’m stronger nor some o’ ye.’

“Nay, he’re in his natural sense, for all Kit Harpur persuaded ‘em ‘at he won’t. Nay, ye’re wrang about that.

“It’s allus struck me ‘at it’re one o’ God’s wonderful ways o’dealin’ wi’ men, aye, an’ I ‘ve preyched mony a sarmon on it; but I’re blind to t’ at that time. Blind, I wor. I can tell o’ makkin’ him gie me his knife up, an’ all t’ others as weel. Aye, an’ gurt Kit Harpur were main stupid [obstinate] ower ’t. He said it’re like sayin’ tul ‘em ‘at they mud be tempted to kill him. But I prevailed; an’ when I’d gotten t’ knives I flang ‘em down a hoil ‘at ther’ wor, wi’ watter in it.

“Do I think ‘at they *mud* ha’ killed him? Aye, marry! I’d fun t’wood garthered all together, an’ I heerd tell ‘at Abe o’Peter’s hed matches. Ye’ve nivver been clemmed [hungered] to that length, I doubt.

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“We gate varra queer at t’ finish. Ther’s a thing ‘at I’ve nivver telled noab’dy, to this minute, for it flaed [frightened] us a deal at t’ time, wonderin’ whether fowk ‘ould gaum [suspect] owt. Nay, I believe ‘at we nivver hardly spak’ on ’t one tuv another—”

And he went on to tell me a strangely tragical story of a young Scotchman who was with them in the mine, and who, as they remembered after some time, had lost his sweetheart a little while before.

She had died rather suddenly of the black jaundice, though, until the malady seized her, she had been a picture of blooming health. Hughie Crawford, his name was. They were getting too weak either to sing or to pray, when Bowey reminded them of his trouble by a jest.

“We’re gittin’ as sulky as Hughie theer,” said he. “This ‘ll nivver do. We’ve noan lost *our* lasses yet.”

“Sulky” was a rough word for it, and Bowey never forgave himself for that jest. When the rescuers were heard, and the feeble prisoners gathered themselves together and lay down listlessly to wait for liberty and life, Hugh Crawford was missed. Bowey went groping in search of him—and brought him out insensible, with a broken skull. The lad died soon after, the doctors much amazed that he should have lived “so long after the accident.”

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“Aye,” sighed the man who told me the story,” we said nowt on ‘t. Ther’ no ‘casion to stir up trouble. But we all gaumed ‘at when he heerd t’ sounds o’ them ‘at com’ to lowse us, he’d crawled off into t’ workin’s an’ brayed his head agean a shou’der o’ quartz.

“Yes, he’re a gradely lad, wor Hugh Crawford, an weel liked. Bowey’s woman put oyster-shells round his grave.”

“They wor ten days,” said Ackroyd after a pause, “afore they gate us out. Ther’d ha’ been more deead nor wor but for t’ mine bein’ so weet, for ye see thirst is a thing ‘at kills quicker nor hunger. Aye, an’ t’ air kept fresh. We began to wonder at that tow-ard t’ end, an’ I think we were no easier i’ mind for noticin’ it. We knew then ‘at ther’ mun be a crack i’ t’ grund somewheer, an’ t’ lad fancied he could smell t’ peat, an’ hear bees buzzin’ i’ t’ sunshine. An’ for all that ther’d nivver then been a sign o’ life through t’ shaft.

“Aye, it’re slaw deein’. An’ t’ slowest part wor efter we first heerd ‘em workin’. I can tell o’ liggin o’ my back an’ seein’ t’ first peep o’ dayleet come through. I knew nowt at efter that till I fan mysen i’ my bed, an’ t’ childer leukin’ at me an’ cryin’.”

I suppose I ought to tell of the great scene at the pit’s mouth, when the survivors, sorry relics of humanity, were drawn up one by one, unconscious or

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indifferent, from the jaws of death. But in doing so I should colour a plain tale with my own pigments, for I cannot meet with any one who was a witness of the rescue. I know that they were got out alive, and I have heard that Bowey Thick’un was the last to be brought to the surface, and the liveliest. When deposited on the ground in the middle of a knot of excited onlookers, he got up and began to joke with them as at other times. There was shout upon shout of laughter. Then somebody said:

“Bowey, ther’s thi woman here, comin’. I judge shoo hes some broth or summat.”

He elbowed his way through them, with his sunken eyes aglow.

“Hes shoo browt that——bitch?” he cried; and reeling wide, he pitched forward on his face in a dead faint.

Whereupon the bitch, a feeble and palpitating skeleton, crawled from among the débris and joyfully licked his hand.

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DICK DENHOLME.

It would have puzzled you to guess why George Oakworth, master of the National School at Cragside, extended the patronage of his friendship to Dick Denholme, drunkard and law-breaker. He was a handsome, pale, intellectual youth of twenty-four or twenty-five years, with a taste for botanizing and geological speculation; while Dick, fifteen years his senior, was a man of no taste whatever, unless the taste for ale be counted—a being whose rough and dissolute aspect spoke with such unblushing effrontery of his flagrant knavishness, that a little dissimulation might have passed, in him, for a kind of negative virtue.

Yet the relationship which subsisted between them a that of the most intimate comrades. They lived in the same cottage; they spent their Saturdays in long excursions: and it was understood that all who desired to quarrel with the young teacher might hope to indulge themselves also in the hostility of Dick

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Denholme. The opinion was boldly hazarded by some that if the truth could be told George Oakworth was no better than he ought to be, because a man is known by the company he keeps. There were others who pointed out that the schoolmaster, out of motives of personal timidity, had merely possessed himself of a stout defender. Not only were both these views mistaken ones, but when the friendship was struck up it was Dick who took the initiative.

Abandoning a hopeful career and the meretricious insincerities of a big city, George Oakworth had sought oblivion and honest dealing in a village community. The

first week of his duties at the National School was disturbed by an incident which, trivial in itself, sufficed to shape for a while his course of life. He had begun with a gentle hand, hoping to interest the boys rather than to govern them; and although some at times had fallen happily asleep, and others—on the back benches—had exhibited a mortifying preference for the furtive game called “noughts and crosses,” he had persevered with heroic good temper. But one restless morning, the sharp crack of an explosive paper pellet sounded on the wall behind him, and the school burst out laughing. His face flushed, and his practised eye travelled at once to the delinquent, an overgrown and lubberly youth named Puggy Cullingworth, who was accustomed to slaver

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on his copy-book, and whom his father had sent to school at an age when it was no longer possible to teach him anything.

Puggy sat at the end of a bench. Advancing upon him slowly, the teacher administrated a box on the ear which smote, as the lightning smites, before it was seen, and which set a big bell booming in his head.

The school felt that the incident had only commenced, and was thrilled with a gleeful expectancy. Puggy had long been admired for his amazing effrontery and unmanageable dullness. He could fight any three small boys of the normal school age, and it was well known that old Scaife, who kept the school when he first came to it, did not dare to frown at him. Consequently, when the effeminate new master, pale and unsuspecting, advanced upon the raw-boned hero and struck him, an impressive silence brooded in the room. And the wide-eyed onlookers were right. The incident had not terminated. When the young boor sprang to his feet with a cry of rage, the dominie gripped him by the slack of his waistcoat, kneading his fists into the rebel’s abdomen, and rushed him down the schoolroom till his back struck the wall, with a crash that knocked all the breath out of his body and all the expression out of his face.

“You big baby!” he cried hoarsely. “Go to your seat. If you had been more of a man I’d have

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trashed you!” And turning to the rest he added, with a quietness of manner that was equally appalling with his fury: “I wish to treat this school as a seminary of gentlemen; but I will be treated as a gentleman myself.”

Which was very fine, but rather above the heads of his juvenile audience, whose hearts were beating fast at the spectacle of his vivid and awful example. Moreover, a clamorous bellowing of inarticulate threats and protests burst the next moment from the humbled booby, and could not be subdued. Master Puggy Cullingworth was put out of doors, and drifted homewards while a blessed state of receptivity came upon the smaller fry, and his dismal ululations died away gruesomely into far distance.

Nevertheless, when the school assembled the next day, the master noted a certain restlessness among his pupils, the symptom of suppressed anxiety. He got more stupid answers than usual, and on several occasions, at the sound of passing footsteps in the road, all eyes were turned towards the door. In vain he rattled on the desk with his ruler: he only made the little wretches nervous.

At last curiosity got the better of him: “Does anyone know,” he asked, “why Cullingworth is not at school this morning?”

All hands went up.

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“Well?” he said, pointing to the youngest volunteer, a dumpy red-headed child with honest big blue eyes.

“Please, teacher,” that innocent lisped, “ ‘ cause his father’s comin’ to slug yo’ for what yo’ did yusterda’ .”

“Very well,” said the master. “Slates away now; and get out your history cards.” But in spite of his *sang froid* the feverish apprehensiveness increased, and at last, when a trampling of feet made itself heard on the playground gravel, with the sound of loud voices, the children mounted the forms to look out of the windows.

“Silence!” cried the master, in a sharp metallic voice. “Keep your places!”

The door was opened, and as if pushed into the room by the pressure of those behind them, several hulking fellows made a trailing step or two forward from the threshold, and paused sheepishly. All but the foremost man took off their caps, and he was scowling royally.

“Well, gentlemen,” said the schoolmaster, hasting to speak first, “to what may I attribute this intrusion?”

Ephraim Cullingworth—whom he had recognised by his unmistakable likeness to the absent scapegrace—strode out and answered him. “None o’ thi dammed impidence!” he shouted. “Wilt-a tak’ it standin’ or liggin’?”

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Mr. Oakworth’s behaviour was admirable. “One moment, gentlemen, please,” he said—his eyes had flashed and then turned grave—“I am placed here in charge of your children, and, whatever they may hear elsewhere, I cannot have bad language in the schoolroom. We will discuss this affair outside.”

A murmur of approval passed through the crowd. Walking quickly past his antagonist, he stood with the key in his hand while that individual, sulky and irresolute as if he suspected a trick, hesitated before following the rest into the playground. Then, putting the key in his pocket, he handed his coat to the nearest bystander—who happened to be Dick Denholme—and said briefly, for every one’s hearing:

“I suppose you know what fair play is in Cragside?”

“Comed to see it gi’en,” Dick answered with a grin. The ring was formed, and the stripling offered his hand to his burly adversary.

“Keep that for my lad,” he said, “an’ frame tha [get ready]!”

The result of the fight was a complete surprise. Less than five minutes sufficed, amid a scene of unbridled enthusiasm, to demonstrate the master’s supremacy. His challenger lay groaning, unable to respond to the call of “Time,” and he resumed his coat, breathing hard but without a scratch. A shrill

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shout went up within the school-house, whose windows were thronged with wide-eyed faces pressed against the glass.

Dick Denholme spoke up like the funny man in a melodrama. "Nowthen!" he cried, above the din of voices, "ther' some on yo' talkin' o' what ye'd do. Are ye bahn to get agate? He's here, is t'lad, an' just i' fettle [in "form"]. He willn't keep yo' waitin'... What, ye're back'ard i' comin' forrard? Well, then, he s'll feight wi' his coit on. Six to one bar one—is't a fair wager?"

But the victorious dominie cut short this flattering stream of banter. "Excuse me," he said, stiffly. "I think we have wasted too much time already. Be good enough to clear the playground as soon as your man can go with you." And he went in without further parley, leaving them to straggle away with as much dignity as they could muster.

If he had cared to think of it, George Oaksworth might have found in this *rencontre* the means of becoming popular; but as it was, he only made the acquaintance of Dick. That uncomely outlaw was so seized with admiration of his skill as a boxer, that he regularly waylaid him on the road home, and kept him in conversation with queer stories of village life. The sequel the reader knows. It should be added, however, that old Mrs. Denholme, who soon afterwards

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became the teacher's landlady, made him so comfortable, and so plainly looked upon him as her ne'er-do-weel's good angel, that he found himself very much at home; and further, that Dick had fewer occasions for over-indulgence in malt liquor than aforesaid, and began to respect himself accordingly.

In one particular only did Dick find the schoolmaster an uncongenial friend. He could never bring him to talk sympathetically of affairs of the heart. Yet he made to him a most intimate confession, which until then had never passed his lips.

"Ye willn't hardly believe it," he said—they were lying one afternoon among the sunny heather of the parish common—"but there's a lass i' Cragside parish 'at 'ould wed me to-morn if Aw could but keep teetotal. Aye, there is. Aw'm a gaumless [stupid] foil, mate that's what Aw am. Shoo's t' grandest lass i' four parishes, an'Aw do

believe shoo fancies me! But—well, tha knaws. Aw git droughen wi' all my mates but thee.”

George Oakworsth, prone on his back with his hat titled over his eyes, listened to this touching avowal in absolute silence. Most people would have divined that, in a man so youthful, this kind of taciturnity pointed to a recent disappointment; but Dick, in his innocence, admired it despairingly as a mark of superiority.

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“Tha thinks Aw'm soft, mebbe,” he said, raising himself on his elbow from a similar position of repose; “but tha's nivver seen her. Eh, lad! shoo's like a fine mornin' i' t' springtime. It maks a man's blood dance just to look at her!” And his eyes flashed at the mere recollection.

But the teacher's cynicism ws not long to be left undisturbed. On a summer evening of the very next week, as he struck into a wonted filed-path on his way homewards, he came face to face with a romantic adventure. Walking with his gaze bent upon the ground, he became conscious of a female figure standing right in his path, and mechanically raised his eys. For an instant he faltered in his stride; the girl's glance was upon him as if she would speak, and in the whole course of his life he had not beheld so superb a creature.

Her clear beauty of complexion, and the lusty health and strength which confessed itself in every generous line of her queenly figure, were the features which first amazed him. She was clad in a homely print gown, which might have fitted her when it was new, but which she had so outgrown that its seams were bursting on the rounded arms, and it was only held across the ample bosom by a few precarious buttons. Her smooth and lustrous brown hair was auburn where it was touched by the sunlight, and

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set on the back of her graceful head she wore a huge straw sun-hat, in an advanced stage of dilapidation.

“You mustn’t go this way,” she said, and advanced her hands as if she would push him back; for he had been about to pass her when she found her tongue.

The teacher smiled, and raised his hat with a townbred courtesy. “Why not?” said he, glad of the chance to stop and feast his eyes upon such fresh and salient loveliness. What ripe, sweet lips she had, and how tender was the blue of her lustrous eyes!

“Eh, you mus’n’t, Mr. Oakworth. They’ve planned to fettle you down yonder. I heard ’em planning it yesternight, when they were drunk, and they’re drunk to-day. They’ll do it, for sure.” And then she became conscious of his too eager gaze, and of her own astonishing boldness, and blushed to the roots of her hair, and looked the picture of modest distress.

“I think I dare face them with you to stand by me,” said the graceless rogue. “Are you going that way?”

“Me! Nay, I’m going home again, as quick’s my legs ‘ll carry me!” And with a Parthian glance, that seemed to rest upon him a thought longer than it might have done, she tripped away along the path by which she had come.

Without the presence of mind to cry “Good-bye!”

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or “Thank you!” George Oakworth stood very stupidly looking after her, and then—turned back to follow. Once she glanced over her shoulder, perhaps to see if he had heeded her warning; but whether she suspected his manoeuvre, or was merely satisfied, she looked behind no more. Her pace quickened presently into a run, so rapid that, himself walking, he could not keep her in sight; and coming soon afterwards to a place where the road divided, he had to abandon the pursuit.

It was within a month of this adventure that Mrs. Denholme’s lodger, in explanation of a sudden change in his habits, volunteered the remark that he thought it bad for his health to sit up reading so late as he had been used to do, because it deprived him of the morning air. Nature, he declared, never looked so beautiful as when the dew was still on the grass and the smell of the cool earth was in the air; and the simple soul, who almost loved him, told him that he looked a vast deal better for early rising

already—"pearter" was the word she employed. All she wished was that he could persuade "that idle lad" to get up earlier, too. Deary me! He lay abed sometimes till nine o'clock, when the best of the day was gone.

Stealing silently downstairs one balmy morning at four o'clock, or thereabouts, Mr. Oakworth discovered

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the cause of Dick's apparent slothfulness. A couple of hares which he had not noticed overnight lay on the slopstone; and Dick was out in the yard in his stockinged feet, laboriously scraping a coat of fresh soil from his hobnailed boots. Palpably, he had not yet been in bed. As their eyes met the poacher started, but Mr. Oakworth, merely shaking his head, turned and went indoors again. On several occasions he had seen his boon companion come in of an evening with similar spoils, which he was understood to have "won in a raffle;" and Dick's luck in raffles was so extraordinary that he had thought it prudent not to pry too closely into the method of their manipulation. It did not occur to him that on this occasion, at all events, his own behaviour must appear a little curious in the eyes of Dick, trained as he was by his way of life in habits of acute observation.

He hurried through the fields with the rapid stride of a man who either has too much in view, or is too familiar with his path, to spare a glance for objects by the way. Dipping after awhile into a copse of beech and birch and mountain ash, he picked his way confidently through the hazel and briar undergrowth, and, crossing the head of a gorge which the trees concealed, he arrived behind a high stone wall on the farther side, whence, from a distance of twenty or thirty yards, one looked upon Ephraim Cullingworth's farm.

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His approach in this fashion had been masked until the last moment, but oh! *étourderie!* it had been observable from the window of his own abode up to the moment of his entering the wood.

He stood impatiently waiting, tearing up the long tangle-grass about his feet and strewing it on the bushes. For odd moments he drowsed in pleasant reveries, vaguely smiling; and then fell to again on the grass and the leaves with a vehemence that startled the big thrushes into flight. Besides which, he sighed often, and turned pale and red by turns, and otherwise behaved in a manner most eccentric. Ten minutes passed, or something less or more (time, we know, is not counted by the clock alone), ere the little and upright figure of Maggie Cullingworth, first seen by him on a certain evening which the reader wots of, appeared in the trellised porch of the kitchengarden, and moved sweetly hitherward into the home pasture.

She was carelessly swinging a basket, and thinking, you are to suppose, of nothing at all, which, as Hamlet said, is a fair thought for maids to think. To and fro she went, gathering mushrooms to line her basket; and behind the stone wall a pair of ardent, longing eyes watched her till she was hidden by an envious knoll. And thereupon the owner of those eyes turned aside down the darksome glen, and made his way

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unseen to a dense thicket of holly, where in the dim depth of it there was a natural alcove, softly carpeted with dry leaves. And here he waited again, his head in a whirl.

A rustle among the branches, and his wood-nymph came peeping. But as he stepped eagerly forward she beat a quick retreat, and stood laughing at him from behind a hazel-bush, and shaking her lovely head. He, the rascal, approaching her with a look of tame supplication, made a sudden dash, and caught her round the waist to snatch kiss; but adroitly, with a moist palm laid upon his mouth, she baulked the proffered embrace, and still laughed upon him over her rosy arm. The tantalizing situation! Her face so near his own that he could perceive the most marvellous new and gleaming beauties in it, her glorious blue eyes looking right into his, and dancing with frank enjoyment of his baffled ardour.

“O, Maggie!” he said, with a quick-piercing pang. “You promised”—and let her go.

“Now, then!” quoth Maggie, “you’ve spilled all my mushrooms.”

He began to pick them up, but she would not let him do so much as that for her, and hastened to do it herself, manoeuvring all the time against another surprise.

“Well?” she asked when they had finished, and

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she stood facing him, with one hand on her hip; “is that all? Where’s your gathering?”

He had to confess that he had forgotten to look for any.

Maggie tossed her head. “Oh, Mr. Oakworth!” she said, mimicking his doleful manner exactly, “you promised!”

This rustic goddess, with her liberal manners and her virtue ever on the *qui vive*, put him quite out of countenance. His glance rested upon her with an expression she had not hitherto seen in him an expression grave and piercing, before which her eyes fell and the beat of heart quickened. How pure and womanly she seemed to him to be in that moment.

“Come,” he said softly, “we’ll look for them together.”

She understood, and did not meet his glance. This open love was of a new complexion. They walked side by side down the glen to the pasture, neither speaking a word. Once or twice her keen, familiar ear detected a crackling of fallen twigs in the underwood on the opposite slope. She would have been all eyes at the sound a few minutes ago, but now she gave it no heed.

The quiet happiness which on that bright morning began to flow into George Oakworth’s life was balm to an old raw wound. But, while it healed this sore,

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it mingled as vinegar upon nitre with certain dregs of memory, and set them in a ferment. Into the fair heaven of an innocent love he entered, as many a man does whose youth has been spent in some big city, with trembling and with bitter self-reproach. He said to himself, as many a man does, that he was in no wise worthy of this chaste and beautiful being with whom a heedless fate had graced his pathway. But he lacked, like all such men, that sublimity of heroism which would have refused the boon. It may be

that he prized it too much the more highly. There was at least one unimportant person who would have approved his reasons, whatever they were. "Puggy" Cullingworth in those days found him perfectly delightful, and passed in one short week from his habitual mood of hate, vented behind the teacher's back in surreptitious moppings and mowings, to a condition of hero-worship that did him credit.

But in his roseate egotism the schoolmaster neglected Dick; and that affronted patron fell tragically away from grace. He was drunk daily, and never merry in his cups. Their long and intimate rambles were ended; their pleated ties of friendship had somehow come all undone; Dick's budding self-respect and his comrade's fostering interest had vanished together—and Dick was a lost man.

Coming home one Friday evening, glad that his

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labours for that week were over, the insouciant lover found his landlady shedding quiet tears as she went about her work. In some strange way he was irritated; but when he had eaten the meal that she spread for him, and had sat awhile smoking in the twilight, his heart smote him, for he realized on a sudden that she must then have been sitting for some time in silence and semi-darkness in the little scullery behind the living-room. He arose and looked. There she was indeed, her thin hands lying open on her lap, her jaw fallen, and her dim eyes gazing out of the tiny window upon the last grey streaks of daylight in the western sky. He was shaken by a gruesome apprehension on perceiving her so. She made no sign, and it struck him that she would look like that if she were dead.

"Mother!" he said, in a voice that sounded strange to himself. It was a name he had called her by sometimes, half in jest and half in affection, and now it came inevitably to his lips.

She turned her head, and rose hastily, to put away the tea-things.

"No, not that," he smiled holding out his hand; "there's no hurry. But what's the matter to-night, mother?"

She potted back into the kitchen, and fumbled with the lock of a drawer, and took out something

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from a corner of the drawer. “Reyk me down t’ lamp, wilt-a,” she said, “an’ Aw’ll let tha see?”

He took it down from the high mantelshelf; and, when she had lighted it, she laid before him on the bleached harden cloth a framed pencil-sketch, yellow with age behind the glass that had been put over it to keep the flies off. It was the portrait of a chubby boy, with his hair combed smoothly down to his eyebrows, and a comical look of speechless weariness on his face.

“Aw wor thinkin’ o’ times goan,” she said, “an’ they moidered me a bit. Ye’d hardly fancy ‘at he wor iver like that, wo’d ye?”

“Eh, but Aw mind it weel. His uncle James did that pictur’, one Sunday o’ t’ efternoon, an’ Aw can mind t’ little lad poolin’ a button off his jacket, thro’ bein’ forced to sit quiet so lang. Aw’ve kept it i’ that drawer sin’ his father deed, for he took a mislikin’ tul ‘t when he growed up, an’ Aw’re flaed [afraid] he’d burn it. Aye, he’re a grand little lad. He used to say. ‘Mother, when Aw grow up a big man. Aw willn’t git droughen like my father. Then Aw can win [earn] summat, cannot Aw?’ But some way he—he’s ne’er done mich.”

The frail old woman pushed up her spectacles and wiped her eyes.

“But there’s some ‘ats waur,” she resumed, more

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cheerfully. “Aw s’ould be thankful. He’s rare an’ fond of his shiftless owd mother. Aw’m little use now. If Aw could think—if he didn’t seem—eh dear!”

Suddenly she began to weep without restraint, rocking her body to and fro in the chair, and gripping her shrunken arms.

“Aw fancied, when ye com’,” she went on, “‘at he mud git steadier like, an’ he did mend; but latterly—Aw cannot tell what to think on ’t. He used to drink just wi’ his mates like, as it leeted [happened] they com’ together. But there’s summat strange: he’s

not been out o'liquor for three wik, an' this nooinin'—they browt him home, an' he—he didn't know me.”

The teacher was alarmed, and profoundly touched. Three weeks drunk, and he not to know it! “We must have a doctor to him,” he said—and unwittingly added the last straw to the burden of the mother's grief, for in Cragside a doctor is not often called in except in grave cases.

He had much ado to assuage her fright, for Dick proved to be comatose and horribly livid; and when he got back from my surgery he found her trembling from head to foot. But when, having used the stomach-pump and applied other restoratives, I gave her some medicine, and said that the rascal would be

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all right by Monday if he would be kept in the house, she took courage again, though crying a little after I left her.

A period of delirium followed. George Oakworth undertook the duties of nurse, and sat with his friend for three nights and two days. He found him pitifully changed—unshaven and dirty, yellow-skinned and haggard. He saw him cower, and boggle, and desperately fight, beset by phantom horrors; and, still more monstrous, he saw the abject palsy of mind and body which succeeded to the phrenzy. It was his part to oppose an unyielding resistance to the tricks and entreaties by which the miserable sufferer, with incessant iteration, sought to regain his liberty and renew his debauch. Only in the small hours of Monday morning, when Dick sank at last into a healthy slumber, did he cease from the horrid vigil. Then, absolutely worn out, he fell asleep instantly where he sat.

He was roused by a click of the latch on the bedroom door; but roused so imperfectly that he did not at once connect the sound wit any cause. But it was broad morning, and starting up in fear of being late at school, he saw that Dick was gone. He bounded downstairs. As he entered the kitchen Dick was hurriedly closing a drawer where both of them knew that the table-knives kept.

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George Oakworth strode over to him. "You fool!" he said.

The poor devil turned to him meekly, and moved towards the staircase again. "It'll bide [keep]," he muttered.

"Nonsense, man!" cried the young fellow, sick with dismay; "I shall want you for best man one of these days."

Dick had the piteous gaze of a wounded animal. His eyes wandered. "He doesn't know," he gasped.

"Cheer up, old man," urged his nurse and preserver. "What is it I don't know? Tell me."

"Say nowt, mate," answered Dick, feebly, steadying himself by the wall and avoiding his questioner's eyes; "but—it's my lass 'at ye're courtin'."

Mrs. Denholme, coming downstairs an hour later to begin the labours of the little household, found George Oakworth lying on the big sofa, his hands under his head and his eyes fixed upon the ceiling. If her sight had been good she would perhaps have been struck by his excessive pallor; but he bade her good morning pleasantly, almost tenderly, and filled her with joy by announcing confidently that her son was himself again.

"I don't think," he said, "he'll drink like that any more."

While she busied herself lighting a fire, he went up

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to speak to the convalescent. Dick, who was sitting on the bedside, looked up shamefacedly as he entered the room.

"Good-bye, old chap," said the teacher, holding out his hand.

Dick started to his feet. "Ye—ye munnot do that!" he cried.

But the hand was still extended, and the teacher was even smiling.

"Aw willn't hev it!" he burst out, hysterical; "ye're a better man nor me."

So George Oakworth laid hold on the coarse first that was clenched on his comrade's knee, and grasped it warmly with both hands. "It's you that don't know," he said; "good-bye, and—God bless you!"

A man feels like a coward at such times, and the schoolmaster got out of the house without saying a farewell to Dick's mother. He could write for his boxes when he should need his books again. Again! Would he ever have the courage to begin life a third time? Was it worth while?

He must leave some message for Maggie, to make Dick's happiness sure if he could. What a fool he had been! The first time, that was comprehensible; he had been green, eager, and careless, and the woman had been—well, none of these. But a second time!

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His cheeks burned and his ears tingled. A country wench had now the laugh of him; a wench that carried the perfume of hay and of cows about her. How it pierced through him to think of it, and her breath like the faint scent of violets, and her smile, so loyal, and artless, and full of the promise of sweet things, that he could never look at her longer than a moment or so.

Last time her saw her he had nearly kissed her. They were together by a brook, in close concealment among the nut trees, she sitting and he lying at her elbow, gazing on the pure outline of her face, the pretty coral of her little ear, and the rounded neck. The temptation came upon him to snatch a kiss just there, where the skin is whitest. Why didn't he do it? A kiss—a thing very sweet to think on, and borne lightly by the conscience. Heavens, what would he not give to be tempted so again? All over and past. The chance to touch her hand as he walked by her side, and her gown when the briars caught it, the gentle melody of her voice in simple talk, the soft magic of her yes when she said, "Good-bye, it's milking-time" —even the sight of her tripping away across the dewy grass.

Here was the place where he once had her in his arms for an instant—only once and let her go so easily:

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let her go as if she were not a prize for the gods. She had been there that morning without doubt, two hours ago at most. Was that her voice calling the dog? Ah, if he had but kept the tryst, instead of falling asleep like a fool. But Dick! The thought of Dick made him shiver with a thrill of horror which before he had not felt.

He found a pencil and a bit of paper; and, still shaking, he wrote some formal words of parting:

“DEAR MISS CULLINGWORTH,”

“I am going away, for I have no right to see you agin. I was never worthy to be your friend, but I assure you I did not know till this morning about Dick. Make him happy. He loves you more than he loves his life. Good-bye. There have been no pleasanter times in all my life than those walks and talks with you. Good-bye. For you there are happier things in store, but I hope you will sometimes spare a kind thought of remembrance for one who is for ever—Your Devoted Admirer.”

He folded the note, and fixed it with his scarf-pin upon the trunk of an oak-tree by the mouth of their holly-grove. It pleased him a little to think of the scarf-pin as a keepsake. It had been his mother’s gift to him and there was no woman else more worthy to keep it than this rustic maiden for whom his heart

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was bleeding. He must have been mad to think of her one instant as false, as like—

He had barely time to hide, warned by the familiar click of a gate, before she came in sight of the spot where he had been standing. He crouched among the bushes, trembling at the thought of being found there; and oh! The dolorous pang that pierced him when a little cry of joy announced that she had seen the note.

In the moments of dizzy throbbing confusion and heart-sickness that followed, he was vaguely conscious of hearing a moan, and something like a fall; but when he came to himself, starting and beginning to listen intently, he wondered whether it was possible that he could have made those sounds. But if not, if it was Maggie, and she was lying there—Heavens! did she love him, then, and so much—so strangely? He came out

from his hiding-place and stood with white face and listless hands, distracted with indecision. He could not leave her so, but to go to her was never to leave her again!

A heavy hand clapped him on the shoulder, and shook him much as an electric discharge shakes one.

“Dick!”

Of all men in the world the least welcome. His eyes restless with a hidden intent, and his manner betraying a frightful affectation of gaiety.

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“Aye, Dick!” he said, with a short laugh that sounded cynical and fierce.” Dost think Aw didn’t know wheer ye do yo’r sweetheartin’?”

The schoolmaster made a gesture of desperation. “For God’s sake,” he burst out, “don’t let’s quarrel here. Go and see to that poor girl. I dare not.”

Dick laughed again as the younger man began to speak; but at the allusion to Maggie, though he could not have undertood it, his face grew suddenly grave, and his lips moved queerly.

“Nay,” he replied, speaking quickly and between gasps, “that’s what Aw’ve comed for. Ye know nowt what ye’re doin’...If it be agean her will—an’ thee goin’ away, mate, fro’ Craggside...Damm it, we’re mates, lad—we’ve been like mates, choose how!”

The schoolmaster looked at him, comprehending nothing yet.

“Sitha, Aw willn’t hev it! Dost hear? Aw tell tha Aw cannot thoil ‘t!” He was shouting, and his face was like that of a furious man.

There was a rustle in the thicket of holly, and Maggie, a vision of loveliness among the dark leaves, stood gazing out upon the two men, very pale and wild-eyed. A moment later, with a tremulous cry of mingled fright and joy, she had thrown herself upon the schoolmaster’s breast, and was whispering eagerly,

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“You won’t go now. Oh, say you won’t go! I should die, I think.”

He clasped her passionately, with a great sob and the blindness of sudden tears.

“Tha sees!” blurted Dick unheeded; “shoo’re noan o’ my lass. Dunnot stand theeer like a stuck sheep! Dang tha, tha maks me wild!” And he plunged headlong down the side of the gorge.

Dick’s match-making was disconcerted for awhile by the unappeasable sulkiness of Ephraim Cullingworth, Maggie’s turbulent and raffish father. But she came of age a few months later, and one bright morning in the winter they were married quite happily without his consent. The merry-makings at George Oakworth’s new home near the school-house were presided over by Dick, in his predestined and voluntary capacity of best man. At their height they were interrupted by the sudden appearance of the malcontent, who came noisily in without knocking, and waved aside the outraged Chairman, who had started up with a prodigious look of ferocity.

“It’s all reight,” he said, with a bearish unceremoniousness which was meant to pass for good humour; “ ‘course it is. But tha’s gotten a rare wench for thi wife, George Oakworth. Hesn’t ta now? By——, shoo’s t’ bonniest i’ ten parishes!

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Well, gie’s thi hand. Aw wodn’t ha’ let her goa, but dang it! tha’s ta’en her—an’ tha knows how to keep her, Aw judge.”

Saying which he made a show of “sparring,” and burst out laughing at himself and at the joyfulness of their welcome.

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IKE SLOWIT’S QUARREL

SLITHERY GAP awoke one morning to the perception that it was in a state of siege. It had been in that plight for a week, but had failed to realize it because commerce with the rest of the world was small; and now that they all knew about it, the philosophic population of the hamlet discussed the situation with much interest, but without the least alarm.

Since the calamity was so light, their fortitude was not very surprising. And it was not only light but common. It happened whenever the clouds came down upon the neighbouring hills and roofed in the narrow valley of which Slithery Gap was the lowest point or sump; happened not because the hills were thereby made impassable (they were almost that at all times), but because there was sure to be rain then, and the brook, which at other times trickled across the high road unobserved, would presently become an unfordable torrent. Indeed, you might say of the residents of Slightery Gap, that during most of the year a

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state of siege was their normal condition, and that if one of them ventured abroad it was at his peril. That they should be deeply interested in the fact of their isolation on this single occasion was therefore the most remarkable thing about it.

This interest was directed wholly upon its cause. Ike Slowit (or, to write it after the manner of the orthographers, Isaac Slaithwaite) and his son Jim Slowit, who with two horses and a waggon supplied to Slithery Gap some of the conveniences of a railway, had "fallen out and taken the sulks," with the result that their weekly journey to Halifax had not been made. A consignment of yarn was lying at the weaving-shed ready for transport, and commissions of all kinds awaited the carriers at every house in the village; but their waggon stood in the shed, their horses were out grazing, and they themselves were no one knew where. What need to quarrel they had, and why a mere family matter should interfere with Ike's business, no one knew either.

A hurried council of war had despatched two female emissaries to Ike's abode, with instructions to present themselves to his wife in a friendly manner, and extract from her as much information of the rupture as she possessed. But Mrs. Slaithwaite, a sickly and peevish little woman at the best of times; had received them with mistrust; had listened with some

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asperity of mien, but without remark, to their diplomatic approaches; and, being at last bluntly questioned, had answered that it was none of her business, and so she knew nothing about it. The only opinion they had brought away was that she took her son's part against her husband. That was plain, for when one of them had ventured to remark—by way of condolence, of course—that lads were bad to deal with nowadays, she had tossed her head and sniffed. That the quarrel had run already for a week was known from the observations of a neighbour of Ike's, whose curiosity had been sharpened by an old grudge. During that time, she declared, they had never been at home together except to sleep.

The day was almost spent; and curiosity had wearied, conjecture done its worst, when a knot of loungers, standing about the door of the Reed and Heald beerhouse, recognized in a slouching figure that staggered towards them out of the shadows, the elder Slowit. They hailed him with much cordiality, and hauled him indoors as if he had been a crony. He made no demur, suffering himself to be slapped on the back, and set up in a corner of the langsettle.

He was dazed and pallid, and he did not appear to be conscious of the exhilaration which his entrance has caused, and which was out of proportion to his popularity. There was no man in the village with

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whom, if he had been sober, such freedom would have been less likely to be used, and sober he almost always was. What else could be expected of a man with such a cantankerous face—furtive eyes set deep and close together under a heavy brow, a big hooked nose, a thin mouth, that was drawn down at the corners, and square jaws? Not at all the sort of man to play jokes upon, especially in view of his bulky frame and huge rounded shoulders, on which the head was set forward with an aspect of truculence.

But now they had their way with him. As he could not be induced to say what he would drink, a jocular dispute arose as to what would be best for him, and was only resolved by each of the disputants ordering the liquor that he himself approved. While the liquors were being served, passers-by, who had heard incessant and noisy laughter, came in to see what the fun was.

Ike was distinctly good sport. An enthusiast whose order had been overlooked put down the money for the rest, who thereupon insisted upon “paying their shot” and called for more; so that finally the victim of all this ambiguous good nature sat gazing at a row of half-a-dozen glasses, with an unbending solemnity which had the aspect of incredulous surprise. The merriment became a kind of ecstasy, in which men

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writhed, and shrieked, and rolled one against another, and fell off the benches. A dog, too, came to the door, and barked furiously.

“Eh, dear!” squeaked Curry the Packman, when they were getting over it a bit—but it seemed impossible to stop laughing while Ike continued to sit there, looking so puzzled and glum—“Eh, dear! Aw’ve nivver laughed so mich sin’ t’ blue pig wor runned ower. Ike, yo’ black boggart! Here’s to tha!” And he relapsed into a convulsion of laughter, spilling his ale.

“Nay, chaps,” interposed a big farmer, as he wiped a dew of perspiration and teras from his shiny face, “gie him a chance. Here’s to t’ carryin’ trade, lad.”

Ike lurched forward on to his legs with an incoherent cry of anger, between a yelp and a growl, that silenced the laughers. “There *is* noa carryin’ trade!” he shouted. “That for t’ carryin’ trade!” and swept the glasses on to the floor.

Then there was utter confusion—oaths, cries of “Brayvo, Ike!” upsetting of chair, and a pandemonium of other noises. Some sought to pull him down into his seat, but he shook himself free with astonishing force, and would have left the house if he had not run against the landlord, who was hurrying into the kitchen to see what the mischief was.

“What, Ike Slowit!” cried Boniface, with a glance

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at the broken glass. “Tha’rt nivver droughen, man! Sit tha down, sit tha down!”

“Droughen!” said Ike, mistaking his meaning and laying hold of him by the collar. “Aye, Aw may be droughen, but it’s not wi’ thy liquor. Do yo’ think Aw cannot

see—hic!—who set yo'all on? Wheer is he? Come out, yo' young bull-cawf!" He swung loose against the table, glowering at the roysterers. "Come out an' stand up like a man! Tha knaws who Aw mean, Jim Slowit. Aw willn't call tha bi name; tha owns my name— hic!—no longer! Go git another name. Go ax thi mother for a name." Then, by one of those sudden changes of mood observable in drunken men, he passed from raving to drivelling. "Humph!" he muttered, with a vacant laugh, "Can't finnd hissen. No name: can't finnd hissen."

But among the crowd of new comers in the doorway there was a clamour of protests and imprecations, directed against a man who was forcing his way in with unnecessary violence, and a moment later Jim Slowit touched his father on the arm and spoke to him. He was a ruddy-faced young fellow who had not inherited the ill-conditioned look of his father, and who prepossessed you by a certain quiet frankness of manner. It was remarked that he wore a newish suit of corduroys and a bright-coloured neckcloth, after the fashion of lads who go a-sweethearting.

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"What's that ye're sayin' abaht my mother?" he asked in a low voice.

The drunken man looked at him vaguely and then laughed. "Ger off home!" he said; "tha'rt lost. Ha, ha! Tha fancies tha'rt my lad, happen. But Aw disown tha! Be off to thi mammy, an' ax her—hic!—what they mum call tha."

Jim stood for a moment or two looking at him with a curious fixity of gaze, and then struck him full in the face. The blow flung him backward over the narrow table, on to the knees of the men who sat on the other side.

Thereupon the disorder renewed itself with a vengeance. The young fellow was seized by a dozen hands and hustled out into the road. Ike, who did not move after he was struck, they lifted on to the table, and, having first shaken him well, concluded when he made no sign that he must be dangerously hurt, and proceeded to rub his head with whiskey. That brought him round presently, and there was talk of a fight, but Ike began to stagger homewards as soon as they got him outside, and Jim sought shelter elsewhere than at his father's house.

It was this barbarous and unmeaning scene which persuaded the population of Slithery Gap that the quarrel had been provoked by Jim's defence of his mother against the tyranny of his father. Jim declined

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the honour which this explanation seemed to do him; but the explanation gained wider acceptance than ever when, on the following Monday, Ike parted from his wife, took lodgings at a farm in the parish, and resumed the carrying trade with the assistance of a hired labourer, while his son continued to live with her and found work under a new master. And being satisfied on this point, Slithery Gap ceased to be interested.

Its interest was revived by a dramatic incident which, I have no doubt, is still discussed as a principal event in its history. Mrs. Slaithwaite had in the intervening months become bedridden, and the neighbours used to drop in to prepare her meals and make her comfortable. One broiling day in July, when they had left the door open to procure a little coolness, a lurcher dog, pursued by a shouting crowd with pitchforks and hedge-stakes, darted into the kitchen, and sought asylum under the sick woman's bed. The door was instantly shut upon it, and crying out, "We've gitten him! He's fairly trapped!" the leaders of the chase went in search of a gun, leaving others to guard the door or caper in the roadway. Other doors began to open, and the crowd grew.

"My God!" cried a woman's voice presently, "Ike Slowit' wife; it'll worry her!"
Then there was silence. They had forgotten the invalid woman.

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"We mun git it out," said landlord of the Reed and Heald. And there was silence again, no one stirring.

"Better wait for t' gun," grunted one man; and gradually the idle clamour renewed itself. Plenty of suggestions and eager disputation, none but anxious faces, some few men standing apart very grim and undecided, but not one man who would risk the horrors of hydrophobia to save a worn-out woman. "Shoo'll be all reight," somebody said at last, "if shoo bide quiet," and they knocked on the window to tell her

so. They awoke her from a doze; and the dog, glaring from under the bed with a panting mouth from which the saliva hung in thick strings, howled at them and snapped at the air. Thereupon they all crowded about the window to look at it.

Before any one was aware of their presence two men were struggling on the doorsteps—Ike Slowit and his son. “Aw say tha salln’t, Jim!” cried the former, whose arm was thrown round the other’s neck from behind, while Jim clung to the iron bars of the little hand-rail. “Damn tha, do as tha’rt telled! And exerting all his strength he dragged his son away, with such vehement force that they rolled in the road together.

Jim struggled desperately on the ground, and a cry of indignation burst from the crowd. “Pool him off!

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Pool him off!” they shouted, and presently Jim was liberated from his father’s grip, only, however, to find himself the prisoner of the crowd, who held him back for other reasons than Ike’s.

“Let me go!” he cried hoarsely. “It’s my mother! Shoo’ll be worried!”

“Stick tul him,” said Ike, laughing. “Yo’ gaumless foil, tha’rt worth two o’ me. Aw’m bahn in mysen.”

Those who had dragged the carrier from off his son had done so under a total misapprehension as to his motive, and in the surprise which his declaration caused they loosed hold of him. He instantly disappeared into the house, shutting the door after him; and Jim, furious, burst into tears.

Peering through the low window, the onlookers saw the huge ungainly man arm himself with a poker and approach the bed, calling to the dog as if he would pat it. When the brute retreated out of sight, he went down on his knees to dislodge it.

“Git up, man!” somebody shouted. “Keep away, an’ wait for ’t. There’s guns comin’.”

But Ike, disregarding that wary advice, began to crawl under the bed, almost on his belly; and a moment later the dog yelped furiously. That, and the movement of the man’s legs, evidenced the death struggle, and then were further horrified to see,

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the sick woman, supposed to have been palsied, clamber out of bed, and with a maniac's desperation begin to drag at her husband's legs. Two or three of them, frenzied at the sight, darted to the door; but when they entered Ike had drawn the badger. He held the beast by the throat in a grip of steel till it ceased to struggle; and then, taking it by the hind legs, broke its skull against the wall. But one of his hands was covered with blood, and before he threw the carcase away he wiped it on the dog's skin with an eccentric grimace. Then he had his reward; for the wife to whom he had spoken no word of tenderness for many years clung about him whimpering, and sucked the poison from the wounds.

He suffered her to do it, pretending a deprecatory smile; but to Jim, though the lad stood there trembling and with downcast eyes, he did not vouchsafe so much as a glance. The crowd thronged about him with praises, and with solicitous questions and advice; and he had so much to say to them that he did not appear to know of his son's presence. In all probability he took his triumph as a sort of justification, and could not resist the temptation to use the cost at which he had earned it as a rebuke. Jim drifted out of doors again with a sick heart, and before that day was over had resolved to shake the dust of Slithery Gap from off his feet for ever.

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A month later Isaac Slowit knew for certain that he must die. Already the first symptoms of the dread malady with which his rash deed of heroism was visited upon him were plainly manifest. When he recognized them he began to ask for his son. "Young wastrel!" he snarled, "who telled him to run away? Aw ne'er telled him." He fought hard against the disease, but the nervous spasms left him strangely weak and in a heavy perspiration, and then he would sometimes grow peevish and complain. "Eh, but he's main stupid [obstinate], is that lad. Ower like his father; ower like his father. Does nobody know wheer he's goan?" At last he went out and called on Stephen Ickringill, the blacksmith.

“Wha art-a starin’ a t?” was his characteristic salutation, as the smith at his anvil looked up mistrustfully. “Hes ta ne’er seen a man badly afore? Wilt-a do a job for me?”

“Owt a man may do,” said Steve readily. “Say what tha wants.”

“A horse staple an some strang chains.”

“That’s simple.”

“T’staple fixed so’s it cannot be drawn, an’ t’ chains on my shackles [wrists].”

The smith uttered a great oath and threw down his hammer.

“Well?” said Ike. “Dunnot stand theer like a

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stuck sheep. What says-ta? Come, ther’s noa time to loss. Aw’s be mad to-morn.”

“Aw’ll do’t.”

“What money does-ta want, then? Tha’d best hev it now.”

Something like a flush appeared upon the blacksmith’s swarthy countenance.

“D—thi money!” he replied; “What fashion o’ man does ta think me?”

When the sufferings of Ike Slowit were over, and he had been buried with all the honours that Slithery Gap could offer, the parson devised for the headstone of his grave, which was erected by public subscription, the following epitaph:

THIS STONE
WAS PROVIDED BY HIS NEIGHBOURS
IN MEMORY OF
ISAAC SLAITHWAITE,
WHO
GAVE HIS LIFE FOR ANOTHER
IN CIRCUMSTANCES
OF GREAT AND SINGULAR HEROISM
BORN, 1810; DIED, 1871.

*“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay
down his life for his friend.”—John xv.13.*

What shall I add to that veracious tribute? That he was happy in nothing so much as in the circumstance of his death? Asuredly not that. For there was sometimes visible another inscription, written by

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his own hand bearing indisputable testimony to the contrary. They found it scratched on the wall of his voluntary prison, a stable, an imagined that it had been done with a link of his chain. It contained a last message to his wife, who supposed him to have gone to Leeds for medical treatment, and to his son, with whom he wanted to make his peace. I copy it *literatim*:

“Gud by wife I olus loved the Thow not shoing it our mutch, gud by jim, be as gud a lad as thi father. and thou can dy wiling, horse opens——” And then an unintelligible scrawl.

Jim was brought home after the obsequies by Curry the packman, who had met him by accident in Keighley market-place, chapfallen and hungry. His first tears came when he read that unfinished scrawl, for he knew what his father had tried to write.

“He’s fun’ it aht,” he said.

“Found what out?” asked the person who showed him the message.

“He said ‘at Aw left’ gate oppen. It’re t’ horse ‘at opened it.”

Ike had made up his quarrel.

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THE HERO AS POET.

WHILE they were building the new bridge at Raincroft, I set a man’s leg which had been badly broken in the clumsy handling of one of the great stones of the pier. I was lucky enough to make a good job of it, and kind enough to charge him nothing—in the sure and certain belief that he could not pay me a penny. On the day of my final visit, he put a folded sheet of paper into my hand, and said, with an odd mixture of diffidence and assurance:

“When yo’ve time, sir. At your leesure. It’s called ‘The Broken Wing, or the Sufferer Succoured.’ Just put it in yo’r pockit an’ read it when yo’ve an hour to spare. It’s taken me a bit o’ puttin’ together, but yo’re welcome to it, yo’ are indeed.”

I glanced at it and saw that it was poetry, and did as I was bidden. I have to confess that I also suppressed a smile. I wanted to smile, not because a navvy had written poetry, but because poetry had been written by this man. He had a long and

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anxious countenance of the Puritan type, and had often amused me by his impressive gravity on trifling occasions. When I came to read his verses, I found that they were a touching tribute of gratitude, paid to myself as a surgeon.

I was figured as a “gentle Maiden so comely and kind,” and he as a skylark with the broken wing of the title. Modesty forbids that I should disclose the flattering things he had written about the maiden’s charms of character. But it is due to the reputation of my ingenuous eulogist that I should transcribe a few lines at least of his soaring verse. I quote from the point at which the skylark had disappeared in “the glittering heaven.”

“The hawk was vexed to hear her sing so bold
And mount so high in empyreal sky.
And oh! The grief and agony untold.
He swooped upon her from the clouds so high.
A broken wing, ah? who can tell her fright,
What will you do, Sweet Bird, to get a bite?”

Of course the reader is laughing; and at this distance of time I can laugh with him. But, upon my word, when I first read that doggerel it excited no other emotion in my breast than sympathy. I thought of the writer’s hard lot, and said to myself “Poor devil!” and put the paper away in my writing-desk. Afterwards I learned to recognize that in Enoch Kershaw the world was blessed with a rare phenomenon—an

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ambitious, puzzled-headed, gentle-hearted man, whom Nature had designed with exquisite fitness for the plain, straightforward duty of scaring crows, and who for thirty indomitable years had agonized in the bonds of versification, like Prometheus in his chains.

By the kindness of a local landowner from whom he rented a cottage and kitchen garden, his rhymes had been printed in a small volume, so that he could distribute them among his friends. A copy lay in the homely little “best room” of the “Coach and Horses,” with some yellow books of sermons, a piece of coral, a case of moths, a stuffed badger, a frame of “sampler work” and the Craven Pioneer of the current week. One morning, having called to arrange with the landlord for the hire of his dogcart, I heard strange voices in that room, and bursts of merriment. The visitors were young men from a town: I knew so much without being told. Town voices are high and rapid, and town-bred youth of a certain class is prone to the use of picturesque expletives.

“Holy blue!” cried one of them, just as I began to lend an ear. “Shut up, johnnies, and hearken to this. *Le note gai, messieurs*:

‘This Eastertide, it’s thirty years,
Since parson did us wed,
And ever since, yea, side by side,
We’ve slept in the same bed.’ ”

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There was another burst of laughter, loud and long, punctuated with cries of distress and facetious protests. “What knocks me,” said the reader, running on before they had done—“What knocks me is the way the bounder gives himself away. This is why he wrote it:

‘For Genius sometimes fires my brain,
When Nature’s beauties shine on hill and plain,
And spirits buoyant as the soap balloon

That childhood loves to waft to the sun;
And then I think on tuning up my lyre—’ ”

“Hold on, Ted, for Heaven’s sake!” cried one of the others. “Give a man a chance. “Take my solemn davy I never laughed so much since our last campingout do. High Jingo! The soap balloon—and the lyre! Ho! Ho! Good old lyre! Tune her up some more.”

Evidently they were relishing that book of poems. I sat and blushed for the author—blushed furiously, as if it were mine.

“Listen to this!” said the visitor they addressed as Ted. “Mark the ‘fluency of foine langwidge,’ and the Shakespearian climax:

‘And brings the sheep to please his master kind.’

See?—its called. ‘The Shepherd’s Best Friend.’ Now he’s moralising, so be serious if you can:

‘Where is the villain, not of human kind,
Who does not love the collie for his toil?

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Or thinks himself, superior creature man,
A better subject for the poet’s pen?
That cannot praise Creation’s glorious scheme
But inspiration draws not from the theme?
Well, we read of the fool in his folly,
Let him keep away from this lovely flowery valley.’ ”

“I say! That’s rather personal, Ted.”

“Yes, isn’t it? But you’re jolly candid, old man, *I* didn’t like to mention it.”

“No; doesn’t do to be vain about a thing like that, of course.”

The badinage was followed by a scramble of some kind, in which, if my ears may be trusted, the book was two or three times employed as a missile. Happily they ceased this horseplay as soon almost as it had begun, out of consideration for the furnishings of mine host's parlour. Presently I heard one of them reading the title-page and the dedication.

“ ‘Enoch Kershaw, stonemason, of Raincroft.’ Wrote it himself, I suppose,” he commented, quoting Mark Twain. “Is he dead, can any one tell? Oh, look here! He actually had the cheek to send it to the Queen—and got a letter from the old woman, by Jimminy! I say, we must find him out and kid him to recite some of it. Eh? It'd be as good as a penny gaff.”

“Aye! Come on! Go for the boss and see what he says.”

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Whereupon one of them went in search of the landlord, while another amused himself vastly by singing the four-line retrospect of marital joys to the tune of “A little ship was on the sea;” and the third joined him in the refrain.

I relied on mine hots of the “Croach and Horses,” who is an excellent man, to dissuade them from a purpose so uncivil and uncharitable. It appears that he did his best to do so; but that having learnt where Enoch lived they would not be content till they had seen him. When I found that they had set out, I fervently prayed that Enoch might not be at home. His work often took him away for months together. But they found him without much trouble, and if they did not make fun of him it was not because he was a master of repartee.

The labourer lived in a cottage which any poet might have envied him. It was clothed with ivy to the chimney-tops; it was sunk in a pine-wood on the hillside; and in the little clearing where he had made his garden there was sweetbrier, and honeysuckle, and a big tree covered with Gloire de Dijon roses. On a hot summer afternoon such as that was, the air was laden with fragrance, there was a loud hum of bees, and now and then a bird sang.

At the cottage door, when they entered the garden there sat a melancholy figure, which I have often seen

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as I have passed the place. It was that of a man, observant and mute, whom an accident on the railway had deprived of his legs, and for whom the many-sided genius of Enoch had constructed a little cart, on which the cripple could drag himself along with his hands. I believe that when they saw him they would have turned back, if they had not already advanced beyond the garden gate. What happened has been told me by one of themselves.

They spoke to this sorry *cul-de-jatte*, and he pointed over his shoulder into the house, making the harsh sound which is sometimes produced by deaf mutes.

"Hellou!" cried a woman's querulous voice. "If yo're wantin' Enoch he's nut here. Yo'll finnd him up i' t' wood."

They thanked the invisible inmate, and turned to go, very glad to have an excuse for escaping from the adventure. But Enoch, carrying a heavy bundle of faggots, met them in the road. They were about to pass him, not recognizing the bard in a bronzed and haggard man clad only in his trousers and a blue shirt; but he stopped, and, looking up under his burden, said:

"Is there owt yo' might be wantin', gentlemen?"

"No, thank you," answered somebody. "We're just going up into the wood, to have a talk with this poet of yours, that's all. Grand day, isn't it?"

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"It is, sir," said Enoch. "But I'm the man yo're seekin', if that be so. Will yo' walk in, gentlemen?"

They were put out of countenance, but had to make the best of it. Enoch cast off his bundle in a shed by the side of the house, and then turned towards them, wiping his brow.

"Will yo' sit down in t' summer-house?" he asked, with the timidity of an unaccustomed host. "Or maybe yo'd like to walk i' t' garden?"

Mr. Ted Sedgwick, the scoffer in chief, was the first to make amends. He did so at once. "Thank you, Mr. Keershaw," he said, with the readiness of his town breeding, "but really we came just to have a word with yourself, and to see what kind of man a poet is:" and he laughed apologetically, with the consciousness of having told the truth nicely.

"Enoch!" cried the querulous voice, and instantly the poet said, "Excuse me, gentlemen. My mother's nut varry weel," and left them hastily.

Then they were witnesses of what took place within the house—almost as distinctly as if they had gone in with him. The old woman's whine had a curiously piercing quality in its feebleness, and she appeared to be rather less an invalid than a valetudinarian. "Come thi ways in!" she said as he reached the door. "I declare tha'll nivver learn sense. Ther's allus some'dy gammin' [making sport] wi' tha." Whereupon

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Enoch began to make minute enquiries about her needs and comforts. She answered him always peevishly, but by great patience he induced her to say what she wanted—a shawl for her shoulders. The cripple watched the colloquy intently, turning half round in his cart.

When Enoch came out again, in five minutes or so, he saw that his visitors had retreated down the garden, out of earshot, and he came towards them with his clear blue eyes fixed on their faces, and a sort of dismay upon his own weazen countenance. "Yo're nut offended, I hope," he said.

They assured him they were not, and said they only did not want to waste his time.

"Nay, I 've over much time to spare, "was his rueful rejoinder. "There's no work stirrin' i' my line. But when a body gets owd, ye see, an' cannot fend for theirsels', they're naterally a bit worrity as yo' may say. Things look different, like, to what they once did. Aye, yo're welcome, indeed yo'are. It isn't oft 'at strangers comes to talk in a sensible way, an' that—gentlemen 'at's edicated an' wellspoken, beggin' yo'r pardon. Are yo' here for long, then?"

No, they said; they were only filling up an idle day.

“Aye, aye,” assented Enoch, musingly; and then,

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nodding his head towards the cottage, “Yo’d be a bit taken aback wi’ Aaron theer,” he said.

Aaron? Oh, yes—the cripple. Yes, it seemed a sad case, poor fellow.

“Eh, yo’ may say that—yo’ may, truly. He’re a wonderful strong man when he were young. Aye. We worked together on t’ Haworth lime for t’ best part o’ two years, him an’ me did, an’ he could do t’ work o’ two other men.”

They supposed, then, that he lost his legs as the result of some accident.

“Aye, just that. Yo’ see, through bein’ deeaf an’ dumb, he couldn’t look out as weel’s another, an’ some trucks runned over him.” He paused for a minute, his eyes bent with a solicitous gaze upon his gang-mate; and then went on. “There’s some ‘at blames me for keepin’ him—nawther kith nor kin. But he’s reight useful, is t’ man. Shoo awns it hersel’ now. Why, but for him there’d nowt be done i’ t’ house whenivver I’m away makin’ a bit o’ money. Oh, he’s varry clever wi’ his cart: yo’d nut believe.”

He made some sign to the pensioner, who responded by pushing himself to and fro with astonishing agility. Enoch laughed in admiration, and the cripple pointed to the cart and then to him, nodding his head.

The author of those homespun verses began to

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interest them. Reading, as it were, between the lines of what he had said, they began to see the true complexion of his singular goodness to this unfortunate being—a sort of goodness not at all warranted by his meagre resources, and only maintained by the exercise of untiring patience against the resistance year after year of the third member of the household—his own mother. The smile which kindled in his eyes during a rapid interchange of signs with his mute companion transfigured his features by its exceeding gentleness, and lent them a kind of nobility.

“He seems pretty cheerful,” observed Mr. Ted Sedgwick, refering to the cripple.

“Oh, aye,” replied Enoch, gaily. “He’s a good plucked ‘un, is Aaron. He nivver freats [grieves]. I wonder at him mony a time. It hes been”—and the speaker became grave, and slightly embarrassed—“ ‘at we’ve lacked. Well, yo’d hardly think it, but he shammed badly for a week, he did for sure, an’ wo’dn’t tak’ bite nor sup—an’ all that time he were crackin’ his jokes at me for nut hardly believing it, till I were fair bet wi’ him. Aye, I wor!”

The subject of this flattering censure, smiling back at them ingenuously, looked so friendly and companionable that Mr. Ted Sedgwick offered him his tobacco; and when he had filled a blackened clay pipe and lighted it, they found their way into the

[255] summerhouse, oppressed with the blazing heat. That structure, as well as the gocart, was attributed to Enoch by his crony and dependant. Lounging on its semicircular seat of home made “rustic-work,” and watching the blue smoke curl up into its ling-thatched roof among the spiders and the earwigs, they settled down to a long talk. The poet was no smoker, but a conversationalist he certainly was. He overflowed with praises of the dales and wolds, and told them of at least a dozen places which they would “have to see,” to each of which he pointed out the route minutely. One of them pleased him greatly by urging that he ought to write a guide-book—“unless,” he said, “you’ve too much to do in the building and carpentering line.”

“Nay,” said Enoch, whose face had shewn a ruddier bronze, “I cannot write except when I ‘ve plenty o’ work. I’m a bit like t’ birds. They sing best of a night, when they’ve done a day’s ranging and filled their bellies.”

Their colloquy was interrupted once more by the fretful call of the decrepit woman indoors.

“I’ll be wi’ yo’ again in a minute,” quoth Enoch, as he started up.

But he was not so soon set free. The infirm creature received him with a tirade of reproaches. “Hah can ta sit idling! theer?” she cried, shrill and petulant, “an’

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nowt i' t' house? Neighbours cry shame on tha! They can see varra weel 'at tha'rt aimin' to pine [starve] me to deeth."

The poor fellow, in a low and pleading voice, faltered some reply.

"Ho'd thi din!" she cried still louder, determined that they should hear. "I've no patience wi' thi gaumless idle ways! I wish I'd nivver gi' en tha suck! Tha'rt gooid for nowt, nowt at all; nobbut scrattin' on paper like an owd hen at a midden, an' dallyin' wi' a pack o'wastriils 'at nivver—"

That was all they heard distinctly, for Enoch shut the door. But the voice of the bedridden vixen, audible still as an inarticulate clamour, kept them silent and ill at ease. A long time elapsed before Enoch, with a dull and weary look in his eyes, came out again, and when he did appear they rose at once to go. Nor did he make any resistance.

"Mr. Kershaw," said one of them, whom after a brief consultation they had made their spokesman, "we're glad to have seen you, and proud to know you. What we really came for was to ask you if we might subscribe in a small way to your next book? When it's printed, just drop a line to this address will you? Then we'll let you know how many copies we want—eh?" And the speaker gave him his card, with a bank-note doubled up underneath it.

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Enoch's mouth came open, and his glance fluttered from one face to another, but he answered never a word.

"Good-bye, old man," said Mr. Ted Sedgwick, and shook his hand brusquely; and then the others shook hands with him, and they hurried down the garden and away, talking noisily.

When they reached the next turn of the road, a couple of hundred yards away, he was at his gate looking after them, and his mouth was still wide open. But a stumpy figure, standing out in the road, waved them a mute farewell.

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The Salamanca Corpus: James Keighley Snowden. *Tales of the Yorkshire Wolds* (1894)

TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

