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***Kitty Fagan: A Romance of Pit Life* (1900)**

KITTY FAGAN

A Romance Of Pit Life

BY RAMSAY GUTHRIE

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"ON GOD´S LINES."

A Series of Mining Idylls.

By RAMSAY GUTHRIE.

APPRECIATIONS.

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"I have read your sketches and find them full of knowledge and sympathy. You have a clear understanding of the lives and motives of the pit folk. I am glad of your sane and healthy point of view.

"JOHN ACKWORTH"—

"We have wondered for some time how it was that nobody was trying to do honour to the North Country miner in the same way as the villagers of Scotland and the operatives of Lancashire have been distinguished, but now we have that want supplied for us in a very beautiful from by Ramsay Guthrie."

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TO MY WIFE.

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KITTY FAGAN:

A Romance Of Pit Life

The Fateful Speech.

The history of Blackerton has never been written. The Editor did, indeed, write a series of sketches— “The Annals of a Northern Colliery”— which appeared at intervals in *The World of Labour*, but it is no disparagement of their literary worth to describe them as fragmentary. We cherish the hope that Michael Naisbitt will ere long find time for more thorough research, and in collaboration with Janie, M.A., prepare an exhaustive and authoritative record of our local history. The materials are at hand; traditions abound. The septuagenarians and the octogenarians are with us still, and, though their steps are feeble and their vision dimmed, their remembrance of the past is unimpaired, and confidence yields to sympathy.

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In the history of our colliery there are epochs of melancholy significance —years of bitter memory, months of associations painful, and days the mention of which is the revival of horror. Even now, the year, the month, the day, the very minute

can be recalled when the earth trembled in the grip of the Fiend of Fire. These explosions are not forgotten; they haunt the memory still.

Strikes, alas I there have been in the years far past—some through local causes, and others on county issues. The iron had entered the soul in the experience of cruelty. These episodes of misery it was impossible to forget; the encumbrances of debt keep the bitterness alive.

But the eviction was the memory of direful meaning. Comparisons were possible in the disputes and calamites which had darkened the years. The eviction stood alone—a singular historic fact, an isolated tragedy. When hearts revealed their griefs, the poignant were those which happened when homes were desecrated and the innocent suffered the fate of the guilty.

It was assumed by our colliery folk that people of ordinary intelligence would be conversant with the dates and facts of these epochal events. I never dared to ask when the eviction took place. My reputation would have vanished on the instant. Excuse there could not be, and pardon was beyond hope, for ignorance so obtuse.

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I discovered the fact in a circuitous fashion. Martha Gibson calculated her age from the eviction year. "I was three-and-thirty gone," she would say, "when the constables and candymen showed face in Blackerton, an' that 'll be five-and-twenty years come this back-end. So there ye ken me age, if you´ll fash (trouble) to reckon the figures."

In course of time I was able to antedate my life, and found myself, in fancy, a contemporary of the Blackerton people of 18—. The conditions of life were different to those we know at present. The houses were not so numerous and the colliery workings were on a smaller scale. Life, on its domestic and social sides, had little of the refinement common in later times. Educationally, the status was the lowest. Political interest was in the germ. Hard and grinding were the modes of life for the colliers of Blackerton, their bairns and womenfolk in the years preceding, and for many succeeding, the year of awful memory, 19—.

The *personnel* of the colliery was of another order to that with which we are familiar. Shadrach Reaveley—"Rack," as he was contemptuously called—was the manager of the mine, and ruled with a tyrant´s will. Dr. Patrick Maloney, the saddle of Black Bess, was a popular figure. Mr. Telford, the school-master, had never been heard of, but ex-Corporal

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Jackson—"Old Waterloo," as he delighted to be addressed—reigned as the parish pedagogue, and though amateurish as a teacher, made amends in graphic and vivacious recitals of military exploits. The Catholics were more numerous in those days, and Father Sloan was a vigilant shepherd. The Rev. James Brown was the curate-in-charge of the Episcopal cause, and officiated in the "weenie tin kirk" in the field at the north. Campbell Robinson was the pastor of the people called Methodists.

In 18— the mining population of the North of England was seething with discontent. The spirit of combination was abroad, and the colliers were awaking from the passivity of generations, and looking with wistful eyes to the new era of redress and reform. Men who had accepted the conditions of their labour as part of the price for the privilege of living now began to talk of "rights", to fret at injustice, and to clamour for amelioration. A wild unrest pervaded the coalfields. The Union had already been formed, and tentative attempts were being made for the abolition of abuses and the concession of freedoms. The missionaries of trades-unionism were on the tramp, summoning meetings at the sound of the "craik," inciting the toilers to the sense of their wrongs, and exhorting them to join the Union.

The Union movement was persistently opposed

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by the capitalists and managers, the right to combine was denied with sneers, and the pretensions of the Union were defiantly disregarded. Men of intrepid temper, who

spread the agitation, were marked. A black list of the active spirits was drawn up and circulated amongst the masters` officials. Without exception work was refused to the luckless reformers. The sacrifice of the leaders was the scandal of the agitation. As one by one these cases of victimizing were noised abroad, the spirit of the colliers was incensed to madness.

But, intense as was the anger of the unionists at the employers` antagonism to their propaganda, the unwillingness of many of the colliers to enlist in the ranks galled them the more intensely. The division between the unionists and the non-unionists became increasingly conspicuous. Vindictive feelings were rife; passing each other, recriminations were the order of the day; old friendships were severed; the peace of families was rudely disturbed by the question of the Union.

Why was the war declared in Blackerton? Why, when the spirit of revolt was in the air of the North, did the storm burst here? The answer to this enquiry is the story of the fateful speech.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

A mass meeting had been announced to be

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held at Scotland´s Gap, a hamlet five miles from Blackerton, and the centre of the collieries in Lord Weston´s royalty. From far and near, in hundreds and thousands, the pit folk wended to the demonstration. Distinguished leaders had signified their intention to be present, and their willingness to speak on Union affairs. The committee-men, conspicuous by their blue rosettes, were exultant at the sight of the assembling throngs; but when the time announced for the commencement of the proceedings drew near, and none of the expected orators had arrived, they were seized with apprehension. The crowd was quick to perceive the perturbation of the officials. Their grave faces and impatient glances to the turnpike were proofs that the committee had been duped. Cries

of "Time!" were heard on every side, and continued to resound with ever-increasing insistence until two of the chief committee-men had mounted the temporary platform.

Order obtained, the chairman explained the dilemma in which they were placed, and with well-feigned heartiness prophesied a successful meeting in spite of the disappointment. A member of the committee had volunteered to address them on the question of the hour, and, as this was a maiden effort, he begged thir indulgence and patient hearing.

It was well that the president had appealed

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for clemency. For full ten minutes the weak and pointless utterance was endured; then forbearance reached the limit. Sifns of restlessness were observable; the sounds of savage dissent reached the platform; queries were interjected to the speaker´s contentions, and his nervous dismay provoked jokes and jibes. The members of the committee chagrined at the *fiasco* of the meeting from which they had hoped so much.

Suddenly all was changed. From the rear of the structure, a diminutive pitman was senn to emerge and mount the steps to the platform. A shout of gladsome recognition rent the air. "Tedy Turner!" "Good old Teddy!" "Little game ´un´!" "Hurrah for the man on the Black List!" These, and a score of similar cries, sprang from the lips of the excited multitudes. A thrill of delight passed through the immense assembly. The well-intentioned but poorly qualified speaker subsided in the clamour of the newcomer´s welcome. The dense crowd closed in, and thousands of eyes scanned the form and features of the little pitman.

A pathetic figure was Teddy, straining his eyes to see the faces of the crowds who bade him welcome. His lims were hopelessly deformed, his fingers cuelly disjointed, his head was permanently inclined to his left shoulder,

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and his whole figure drooped and stooped. He was a living witness of the martyrdom of the coalpit. An oldfashioned pitman´s cap, with the big black tassel in the middle of the crown, was n his head, and a cotton muffler in a sailor´s knot was round his throat. A solemn silence held the crowd as he was seen to draw his spectacle-case from his waistcoat pocket and place the glasses to his eyes.

Instantly his bearing was transformed. The sight of the kindly faces—faces without number—sent the life-blood throbbing through his veins. Here was the chance of a lifetime. To win these crowds for the Union, to incite them to righteous madness, to rouse them to claim their rights, to infuse them with reckless valour—this was his aim.

"Mister Chairmau," he said, in the county´s inimitable vernacular, bowing to the president, "friends, and marrous," —turning to the audience, and glancing around to the sea of faces—"my name is Teddy Turner. My native place is Blackerton. A pitman I is, and the son of a pitman. Me poor auld fether carried me on his back when I was only a bairn. I was barely fice when I did me forst shift as a trapper. On an´ off, I´ve been a pitman these five-an´-forty years…. Pitmatics? In coalpit geography I´m a maister. Pitmatics? I´ve tried

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me hand at iviry grade. Ye canna tell me onythin´ fresh in the way o´ pitmatics. All there is to be seen in a coal mine I´ve seen with these poor auld eyes of mine…. What hev I done? I´ve done me duty, an´ mair than that- Honest work for scanty money; risked me life for others´ folly; held me tongue to save a marrow; tould the truth an´ shamed the devil! That´s what I´ve done! … Where hev I been? Here, there, an´ ivirywhere. Seekin´wark, findin´it, deein´it, an´ losin´ it. Lancesher, Darbysher, Yorksher, Cumberland, canny Newcastle, an´ dear auld Durham…. What hev I suffered? Suffered, did I say? What havn´t I suffered? That´s the question! Hunger? Aye! Starvation? Aye! Weary limbs an´ achin´ bones? Aye! Danger? All sorts! What sorts? Damp? Gas? Watter? Pooder? Fallin´ stones? Rotten timmer? Aye! Aye! All o´ them! Owt else? Lod help me! Look at me eyes! Without me goggles, I´m as blind as a

bat. I was only a bairn when the pit did that. Look at me fingers!" (and he held up his hands to the gaze of the crowd). "Sympathise? I pity mesel´ when I see what a wreck of a man I is!"

The faces of the listening thousands were grave and pained. Men held their breath as the awful secrets of a life´s autobiography were spoken in their ears, and women sobbed and cried in compassionate distress.

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"Why do I tell you of this?" Teddy continued. "There´s hundreds worse nor me. I´ve seen bits o´ ladies in Lacesher wi´ belts an´ chains round thir shoulders, an´ crawlin´ on all fours dragginf´ the tubs in the dark…. There´s wholesale robbery gannin´ on in mony places. Tubs are bein´ confiscated for short wight, though the wight hes never been calculated to find the truth…. There´s pits in the North of England wi´ only single shafts, an´ God help the luckless Geordies if the watter bursts in, or the gas catches allow (alight)…. Hinnies! These things will hev to be altered. We´ve been goods an´ chattels lang enough; it´s time we were reckined as livestock."

A roar of assent broke form the excited multitudes. The eyes of men flashed fire. They stood with clenched fists.

"Hev ye read the Report o´ the Royal commission on Mines? D´ye ken what all that means? It means that the scandal´s got wind. The secret of the bloodsuckers is oot. The Queen, an´ the Royal Family, an´ the members of the Government know that we´re bein´ murdered an´ martyred in cold blood. That´s what it means!... Lads alive! The Union´s started. That´s the thing! If iviry Geordie-marrow will join the Union, we´ll soon put a different complexion on work an´ wages. Coals is sellin´ in London at twenty-six shillin´ a ton.

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Hoo much did you get? *You*, me canny man—*you*, I mean. You risked your limb an´ life to hew it. And what did you get? One shillin´ an´ elevenpence three farthings! …. Lads! There´s nee religion in slavery. I wish Jesus Christ had seen a coal mine. He´d hev given the pitmen a gospel for theirsel´s, an´ a few strite tips to the lords who claim the royalties an´ the gaffers who grind us doon. He gave them Temple traffickers a bonny hidin´wi´ that thong o´ His; but He´d hev borrowed a cat o´-nine-tails for our oppressors."

There were smiles in the faces, but tears in the eyes, of the listening throng.

"Noo, lads!" he went on. "We´ve been crawlin´ lang enough. It´s time we were beginnin´ to stand. We´ve just been tryin´ our ankles of late, an´ some of us hev got to the kneelin´ point. By-and-by we´ll spring to our feet, an´ stand erect as men!"

In the excitement of his peroration, he attempted to suit the action to the word. Then he remembered that for him the perpendicular was physically impossible. His knees knocked together. Hus head was at an angle. In a torrent of tears he turned from the audience, and felt for a seat.

The meeting closed, nothing further being said. The colliers and their womenfolk quietly dispersed. Men bit their lips, and grasped their

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staves , as they pondered on the strange things they had heard. They burning words of the impassioned pitman were the torch applied to the faggots of discontent, the accumulation of the tyrannies of years.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

Teddy Turner was alone—alone on the platform, alone in the field. The thousands who had listened to his heart´s outpouring, the members of the committee, whom he had saved from shame—these had all gone, without a care, without a thought for the poor and valiant pitman. Weeping his bitter tears, he was conscious of nothing till he realized that he was lonely. He had not where to lay his head. Twenty long miles he had trudged that day to hearten his fellows for freedom. Yes, the hope had cheered

him that some one might tale the risk of giving him food and shelter. The dream was a delusion. He was one of the sacrificed, and must perforce accept the fate. To be forgotten was the destiny of those who fought for humanity´s weal. He was grieved, but not dispirited. What though he gained no pelf or fame; to have driven one nail in the coffin of tyranny—that were gain!

He lifted up his voice, and shouted: "Geordie?" It was an appeal to his class. Again and again he cried, and bent his ear for a pitman´s response.

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There was no voice to answer. The night was dark and still.

He was conscious that his glasses were in his hand. Slipping them into the gloom, the denser for his shortsightedness, felt for the rail, and stumbled down the steps.

On the sward beneath the platform he pillowed his head, and slept.

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A DEADLOCK.

NICKNAMES were common in those days, and were generally apt and expressive. No offence was meant by the use of these bye-names usually, and none was taken. The case of the manager of the Blackerton Pit was one of the few exceptions. It was well understood that Shadrach Reaveley passionately disliked the appellation of his baptism. In signing his name, he formed the letter "S," and left the ambiguous capital to suggest whatever it might. People said he favoured Samuel or Stephen, but had no objection to Samson. Whenever he thought of his Christian name, he broke the fifth commandment.

"Shadrach," as a name, lent itself to contraction, and, when the character of its owner in the person of the Blackerton viewer was remembered, the appositeness of the latter half was as clear as light. The rack, as an instrument of torture, was a fitting

emblem of the cruelty of his rule. To be under his authority was to be stretched on the rack.

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Teddy Turner declared that " If ever the devil died, ´Rack´ Reaveley would have the first chance of his job." That he had an organ discharging the functions of a heart was conceded as a physiological necessity; but that he actually possessed a heart was seriously doubted.

He had never known sickness. To pain he was a stranger. When his leg was broken in-bye, he hitched into the tub unaided, complimented the pony on the fleetness of his trot, ascended to bank unaccompanied, and explained the circumstances of the accident to the Irish doctor without a wince, while the latter was setting the sundered bone. Pressed on one occasion, as to whether he had ever shed tears, he said, that "He might hev cried when a bairn, but he couldn´t mind on´t."

A proud man was Reaveley. The poorest of the poor, he had scaled to power and wealth. As a miner´s son he had known the pains and penalties of his class. But he had got on. Proof he had given of pitcraft, and his fidelity to the proprietors in a crisis of exceeding danger had singled him out for favour. He declined to give luck the credit for his promotion. The merit was his, and his alone.

Teddy Turner was an aphorist. "A gaffer that´s the son of a gaffer is always a canny man, but the gaffer that´s the son of a Geordie is as cruel as Nero." So he was wont to assert.

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When required to furnish names illustrative in proof of the statement that an employer frequently belonged to the class of the cruel, he would name Shadrach Reaveley as a case in point.

Probably the manager´s heartlessness was intensified by pique. The colliery-viewers were a caste, and the feeling was conservative- They had marked the distance, and kept him there- To be revenged was his savage resolve. He would compel respect by the unchallengeable absolutism of his management- While they were wrestling and compromising with their men, he would dictate his own terms, and execute them. His eye flashed a fiercer fire. His voice rasped a harsher tone. His patience took a shorter lease. Of one place he thought—the pit. One thing he meant to be—the master.

Why is it that men like these have angel-women as their wives? Mary Reaveley was a sweet and gentle creature, frail in from, confiding in her ways. "An ailin´ body" she had been ever since she passed with Shadrach from the miner´s cot to the manager´s house. The pain was in her heart, and sprang from her sense of impotence to save her husband from himself. He was growing harder daily, and she was helpless to redeem. She watched and prayed. Shadrach was the object of their vision, and the subject of her prayers.

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Watchful as were the managers of the agitation spreading amongst the pitmen, none were so keenly on the scent as Reaveley. That the men had dared to demonstrate at Scotland´s Gap maddened him. It was the throwing down of the gauntlet, and for himself he accepted the challenge. His tactics were astute. To have gone in person to the meeting would have been to have shown his hand. Nevertheless, he was there—by proxy. Tony Fagan played the spy, and did not deem the sovereign payment excess for the résumé of the meeting he privily gave to Shadrach. The epitome of Teddy Turner´s speech infuriated the viewer. He had had dealings with the masterful collier in earlier days, and had finally bade him begone. Nothing had been heard of him for months. That teddy would be reappearing in Blackerton the manager felt assured.

As the colliers left the pit on the Monday following the demonstration, they observed a new notice on the board. It was read in silence. Those who could not read heard the intimation in secret. Thus it said:

"To all whom it may concern. Any person discovered giving food or shelter to Edward Turner, late of Blakerton, will be immediately dismissed. By order of the management."

"S. Reaveley."

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A branch of the miners´ union had been formed in Blackerton prior to the assembly at Scotland´s Gap. The members believed that the secret was safe. An oath of secrecy had been taken by all. Tony Fagan had pledged his word—and broken it. His membership was a conspiracy and a hypocrisy. Tommy Gibson and his fellows believed that the existence of the lodge was unsuspected by the manager. There was nothing hidden from Shadrach. Though treacherous to his mates, Tony Fagan was loyal to his master. Knowing the secrets of the lodge-room, and having the means of knowledge in his power, Reaveley gave no hint. He winked at the formation of the union branch. There was nothing to fear. He could crush the local union when he willed. Till then, he could afford to wait.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

The Blackerton unionists had been gathered in secret conclave. Teddy Turner´s words were ringing in their ears. The resentment they had cherished against their fellows who had held aloof from the organization had been intensified by the speech of the Blackerton celebrity. Quietly in the week succeeding Scotland´s Gap, those within had approached the men without to espouse the aims of the Union. Their appeals were wonderfully successful. One by one the outsiders were enrolled, until the non-unionists

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could be counted on the fingers. These no arguments could persuade. They listened sullenly, promised consideration, and remained obdurate. The unionists were galled, and ultimately became abusive. Persuasion´s gentle art having failed, coercion was decided. The master´s spy presented a report daily. The division in the ranks of the men was the factor in the manager´s favour. Serious, indeed, would the position have been if the colliers had been unanimous in their alliance. He was wise enough to know that the cleavage was his weapon.

The manifesto was declared. Annoyed with the stubborn refusal of the few to join hands for the Union, the unionist forced the crisis by agreeing to refuse to descend the mine with the dissentients. This, they confidently believed, would bring the non-unionists to their senses. Surrender would be unavoidable. Feeling running high, it was determined to declare war on non-unionism the morning following.

That night Tony Fagan might have been seen in the shadows stealing to the manager´s house. The traitor had voted with the lodge, and was now on his way to sell the secret and his soul. Shameless, he detailed the proceedings, the minute passed, the names of the miners present, the substance of each man´s words. The silence of the manager was ominous. His set face and steely eyes were indicative of the worst. He

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was ready for battle. Without a word, he gave his dupe the fee, and opened the door for his exit.

Mary Reaveley was ill with disquiet. Well she divined that Tony Fagan was doing coward´s work. She had heard his voice in the room adjoining. Shadrach´s entrance confirmed her fears. One glance of her husband´s face was proof the vindictive was his design. Breathing a prayer, she waited in the hope of speech. He had seated himself at the table, and was making a list of names, the names of the men who had leagued in opposition.

"The villains!" he muttered, springing to his feet. "So that´s their game!"

He was standing on the hearthrug.

"What is the matter, father?" his wife quietly said, with a tremor of tone.

The joy of parentage had been theirs—once. But Joey was with the angels. The home had been desolate for years; but still they addressed each other as "father" and "mother."

"Everything´s the matter," he savagely exclaimed. "These confounded Union men have decided not to ride with the men who are not in their Union. The intend to lay the pit idle in the morning."

"Why have the Union men agreed to this?" she asked, in her simplicity.

"To compel these decent and quiet men to

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take part in their mischief-making," he swiftly and fiercely retorted.

"What is the meaning of this Union, father?" Mrs. Reaveley next enquired.

"Impudence and mischief. That´s the meaning. Grumbling and discontent. These firebrands like Teddy Turner are exciting them to laziness. They want to do less work, and get more money."

"Poor fellows!"

It was only a womanly whisper, but it set his passions aflame. He turned sharply to his wife, and his face was livid with anger.

"Stop your whimpering about the rogues! They´d blow the pit up, and cut my throat if they dared. I´ll change their tune in the morning. At 4 a.m. I´ll be there to meet them, and woe to the man who shoes fight."

"Father!" the trembling woman said, "remember!"

"Remember what?"

"You were once a pitman yourself. Surely you mind how you used to complain of the long hours, the toilsome work, and the scanty pay? How weary yon used to be when you finished your shifts. You had hardly list to wash. So hungry you used to be that I had to have the dinner on the table when you reached home."

There was a fierce light in his eyes as the recollection of the past was vividly unfolded.

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More than once he was on the point of resenting the remembrance, but the delicate hand of his wife checked the impatient outburst.

"Be pitiful to the mothers and bairns!" she pleaded. "The men can stand the mischief, but it kills the women, and hurts the bairns."

"Why don´t the fools think of their own womenkind and children?" he bluntly demanded.

"There were cruel things when you were a laddie, father," she continued, unheeding his question. "You haven´t forgotten when your father was a striker, how you were famished with hunger, and starved with the cold. I´ve heard you tell of seeing other ladies wi´ chunks of bread in their hands, and you being jealous of their plenty. Haven´t you given bigger ladies a ride on your back for a bite of the hard black bread?"

He had tried to escape this reminiscence. The last words reached him as he banged the door from without.

There was no sleep in the house of the manager that night. The soul of Shadrach Reaveley was in turmoil. There were good inspirations, but the evil triumphed. The heart of the woman was sick with shame and fear.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Lights were twinkling in the windows of the colliers´ cottages. The buzzer had summoned

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them to labour. At four o´clock all were gathered at the shaft-head. It was a biting October morning. The light of the lamps made Nature´s darkness denser. The miners were grouped in two divisions. The larger, with Tommy Gibson to the front, were the

union confederates. Nine was the total of section two. Tony Fagan was skulking in the rear of the unionists´ band.

At the signal for descent, two of the non-unionists stepped to the shaft-edge.

"Stand back!"

Tommy Gibson was the speaker. A few paces he advanced, and addressed the group of nine.

"Noo, men," he began, "we want to fight fair. We´ve asked ye to join the Union Ye´ve refused. It´s mighty important for yoursel´s an´ for us, that iviry chap should be a Union man. Ye´re stannin´ in you're an light. We´ve been vary forbearin´ see far wi´ ye. Here an´ now, we repeat the invitation. Will ye join? We´ll let bygones be bygones, an´ live as marrows. What d´ye say?"

There were hurried whisperings among the nine. This drastic challenge overwhelmed them. Spiritless and cowed of heart, they were swayed from side to side with thoughts of indecision.

The appearance of the manager, so suddenly

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and unexpectedly, created panic. Crouching behind the timber, he had heard every word. The vacillation of the non-unionists had timed his out springing. The one word, "Rack," passed form mouth to mouth. He stood between the parties. His eyes scanned the faces in the dim light of the lanterns. The silence was profound. The tension was painful.

A movement broke the stillness. Tony Fagan crossed from the side of the unionists. The smaller group now numbered ten.

There was triumph in the eyes of "Rack."

No sign execration was visible, but men hissed him in their souls.

"Are there any of you with the sense of Tony Fagan?" he demanded, eyeing the men of the Union.

The silence of the questioned irritated his imperious will. He lingered in hope of further secessions; but wild eyes met his, and strong men kept dumb lips.

"Do any of you wish to join these knaves and fools?" he interrogated, facing the ten.

Tony constituted himself their leader.

"None, maister," he replied, after whispered speech with the rest.

"You´re quite a spouter, Gipson!" the manager sneered. "Perhaps you´ll be willing to state what you mean by interfering with the management of the pit?"

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Thus challenged, Tommy made bold to say: "We´re in for the union, Maister Reaveley, and intend to be loyal. These men over there have refused to join. We don´t mean to ride until every man has given his name to the lodge."

So that´s your game, is it? Then the sooner you understand that I´m the gaffer here, the better for all concerned. There´ll be no Union despots at this pit. You must stop your nonsense, and get to work. Are you willing to go down?"

"Not until these others have come into the Union," Tommy Gibson replied.

"You defy me?" thundered the manager.

"We have said our say," the pitman calmly answered.

"Then I´ll say my say," Reaveley shouted.

"Every Jack man of you can take your clearance. I´ll stand no Union foolery. The salves of the Union need never come here. Men of independence will get the work. You understand! Now, you can take the day to gather your wits. Start your capers, and I´ll start mine."

Late in the afternoon men were to be seen collecting near the mouth of the pit. Tony Fagan had done "Rack" service by proceeding underground. They were gathering to give him welcome on his ascent. The crowd was humorous, though the humour was grim.

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When the traitor appeared, firm hands gripped him. A pair of stilts were forthcoming, and the terrified Tony was compelled to mount and walk. Objection was useless. In this fashion the spy was escorted home. High aloft was the indignant Tony; all around were the men he had betrayed. The women jeered as he passed, and children pestered him with missiles.

"Here, missis! " shouted the colliers, when at last the man on the stilts reached the door of his cottage, and met the taunting face of Kitty, his wife, "you´ll be proud to see your Tony. He´s the gaffer´s friend, an´nee doot hes a career efore him. We thowt, as he´d distinguished hissel , we´d bring him home in style."

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The exciting events of the day made Blackerton a lively scene that night. The colliers were at the "standing-shop," as certain public meeting-places were named. The gaffer and the man of the stilts were the subjects of the converse.

Unconscious of the day´s strange doings Teddy Turner appeared in the midst. He had tramped from Sunderland that day, and hoped to spend the night in the home of the Gibsons. Hearing all, he heartened the unionists with prophecies of triumph, and cracked his jokes at the discomfiture of "Rack" and Tony Fagan. Tommy Gibson had gone to inform Martha that Teddy would be their guest for the night.

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It was nearly ten o´clock when the agitator separated from the crowds, and made his way to the house of his friends. All was dark. The row was quiet. Hearing the sound of his name, he involuntarily came to a stand.

Tommy and Martha were at the garden-gate deep in conversation. Their dialogue reached the ears of the uneasy Teddy. It was Martha who had spoken his name. "An´ wad you advise that Teddy Turner should hev the door clashed in his face? I wonder at ye, Tommy!" she was saying. "Weel, but, me lass," her husband made answer, "here´s the notice an´ the threat. ´Rack´ will get to know that Teddy´s on the

place, an´ mebbe find oot if he sleeps in oor garret. An´ the gaffer will be fair crazy, the pit bein´ idle. It´ll be prime for him to revenge hissel´ on us."

"An´ d´ye think, Mister Thomas Gibson," Martha deliberately enquired, "that I´m not aware o´all this? An´ what for that? If we´re landed in the road by seven in the mornin´for defyin´ `Rack´ Reavely, defied he will be. When Teddy comes, the doors open, an´ he´s welcome to the best we hev!"

"I´m not unwilling´, wife," Tommy earnestly protested. "I wanted ye to see what might happen, an´ I´m prod o´ tha, lass, for the side thee mind´s on!"

Teddy was rooted to the ground, hardly

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daring to breathe, lest his presence should be detected. The dilemma of his friends was all too clear to him. Giving him shelter they exposed themselves to the manager´s malice.

There and then his mind was made up. He was weary with the tramp, and hungry with the fast of the day. There was a chocking sensation in his throat. It was bitter to be so near to warmth and plenty, and yet to turn aside. No other course was open. To compromise his friends was hateful to his soul. Quietly he retreated from the houses, and made for the turnpike, his face towards the Wear-side town.

In that dismal tramp of the lonely night, one thankful thought illumined his heart´s dark brooding. Desolate as was his fate, he was glad he had been prevented, even at eh last moment, from involving others in sorer straits.

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NOTICE TO QUIT.

The hope was expressed that the dispute would be settle in brief time and in kindly spirit. It was a wish of genuine fervour, but without basis in faith. Long years of pitiless

government had conquered the reluctance of Blackerton to believe the worst of the viewer. Reaveley had achieved his purpose. It was known he was not to be thwarted. He had strangled faith.

The deadlock having arisen, one thought mastered the mind of Shadrach Reaveley. He would see it through to the end. The process would be an annoyance, but his triumph in the collapse of the "mutiny" would compensate for loss and worry. "All´s well that the ends well," he repeated for self-consolement; and, that the end of the struggle would be "well" for him, he intended to see.

There was even an element of pleasure in the prospect of fight. Here was the chance of proving his mettle to the supercilious managers

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of the country. If he could grapple with the Union at close quarters, baffle the conspiracy, and cow the malcontents to submission, he would be known beyond the county borders, feared by the men, respected by the masters. It was in keeping with his usual good fortune that the test case should come to his hands. Congratulating himself on his fitness for such a crisis, resolved to widen the constituency for the admiration of his prowess.

Men there are whom antagonism makes pugnacious. Reaveley was one of these. His wits were sharpened, his eyes alert, his brain vigilant. The ropes were in his grip. With ten non-unionists he would be able to make sport of the men who had created the deadlock. He had two faces and two voices. For the men of the Union he had scowl; upon the men without he smiled. His suavity was the wonder of his friends. His severity was the terror of his foes. Tony Fagan revelled in the good graces of the manager. Tommy Gibson, as the champion of the Union, bore the brunt of Reaveley´s scorn. That he would compel the unionists to capitulate he never doubted for a moment. The climax was merely a question of time. To hasten the collapse, he would use the law´s utmost power. The verbal notice to quit was too weak a measure of policy. Retaliation for the malcontents was initiated by the delivery

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of the intimations in formal guise and legal phrasing.

It was the night succeeding the deadlock. Seated at the table in the sitting-room, the manager was signing the notices to the offending miners. Grim thoughts absorbed him. His gentle wife, fretting in the apprehension of the sorrows impending, could find no place of rest. She moved about the room. She had not lost faith in the man whose name she bored, but she was afraid of him for his own sake, afraid of his soul, terrified for the preservation of his heart´s humanities.

Glancing over his shoulder, a pained cry broke the stillness.

"Oh father! father!" she exclaimed. "You cannot mean that?"

She had seen the name, James Toppin, on the last paper signed.

"If Jim is turned out, Meg will have to be disturbed. You cannot have thought of that, father!"

It was a face of fury that met her tender eyes.

"Why not?" he demanded, in defiant tones.

"You cannot have forgotten?" she pleaded, laying a hand on his shoulder.

"I´m not likely to forget when *you* are the yammer!" he said.

A strained silence followed this brutal retort. She could not restrain her tears. Her lips

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trembled. Feeling as though she would fall, she seated herself on the chair at hand.

The movement caused the manager to glance around. His face relaxed its savage lines. Chafing with impatience, and pushing back his chair, he turned to chide his wife for her pitiful interference.

"Now, mother!" he began, not unkindly, and yet impatiently, "why don't you attend to your knitting, and leave me to manage my own affairs?"

He waited a moment for her to speak.

"These fellows have broken the peace, and must take the consequences!" he went on. "What would all the viewers think if I knuckled down to the agitators? They´ve been cool enough to me before this. They would cut me dead, if I gave in hands down. Besides, the rebellion will come to nothing. Their notions are preposterous. We cannot allow these wretched unions to interfere in the working of the pits; and, when they see that I won´t be humbugged they´ll be wise enough to drop the nonsense."

"Then why sign the notices?" she questioned, without lifting her head.

"Simply to back what I said to them by word of mouth!" he replied.

"Then you don´t mean to turn Meg out of her cottage?" she queried, remembering the notice with Toppin´s name.

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A harder look crossed his face.

"Jim Toppin is one of the Union men, and will fare as the others if things come to a head!" he answered coldly.

"But not Meg, father? Even if some have to get work elsewhere, you won´t allow Meg to leave Blackerton?"

"She will go where her son goes, probably!" was his reply.

"Answer me, Shadrach! To leave Meg here, you´ll keep Jim on?" she entreated.

"That depends on Jim," was the swift retort.

"But if Jim is stubborn, you won´t make Meg suffer?" she persisted.

"I won´t, but Jim will!" he adroitly parleyed.

She looked him full in the eyes. Reproach was there, and the grief of a woman who loves and finds the loved one worthless. There was no tenderness within him. Even her appeals and the remembrance of a great sacrifice failed to touch a humane chord.

She was left alone. He had taken the hateful papers.

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Tommy Gibson buoyed the spirits of his confederates with the assurance of the conversion of the non-unionists. They had been told to quit, but none of them believed that the extremity of removal would be enforced. Deputations were sent to the nine. Tony Fagan was ignored.

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With the traitor they disdained to parley. The exploit of the stilts had satisfied their rancor for the time.

Tony was not inactive. Even Kitty´s vigilance was out-manoeuvred. Secretly he stole from the house and negotiated between the master and the nine.

The dissentients were deaf to entreaty and indifferent to threat.

"Mebbe Rack will make a suggestion," was the hesitating whisper of the lodge-room.

The manager was implacable.

The men were at their games when the notices were distributed. Foot-racing and quoit –playing had their devotees. Some were showing their skill at bowling and shinney. Others again were absorbed with marbles. They abandoned play and gathered in the rows when the news arrived of the delivery of the papers. The men were wrathful; the women were tearful. Blackerton was in consternation. Conflicting cries resounded. Men vowel vengeance and were reproached by the women as the authors of the strife. Some predicted triumph and were mocked for their credulity. Patience was the counsel of others, an taunts were the reply of the exhorted.

Blackerton was miserable.

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There were only the two of them. Once the Toppins had numbered seven. Ben and Meg

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had sat, each with a twin girl on the know, while the three bright ladies romped at the hearth. Consumption had ravaged the family. One of the twins was the first to go. Her decline was gradual. No sooner had she looked good-bye than her sister "galloped" to overtake her in the spirit-world. The eldest son was within a month of his twentieth year when he laid him down to die. His brother fought the hereditary foe just nine months longer. It was said that the wasting plague was on the father´s side. Ben Topping had the cough of the consumptive, and, though he met his death in the mine´s darkness, his enfeebled frame made him an easy prey.

Meg and Jim alone survived. They were happy in a way, for there is happiness where love is. Yet their love was fearful and their joy was troubled. The broken woman watched the lad, the only child of her widowed years. She watched him tremblingly. That death was only dallying she well foresaw.

The lard himself was lonely. He knew his life was doomed.

When Jim returned within an hour of his departure on the morning of the deadlock, the news he brought was ominous to the mother´s ears. The days succeeding increased the alarm. But when the clerk handed in the notice-to quit, she was frantic with terror.

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His mother´s excitement helped Jim to maintain calmness.

"Sit down, mother! "he firmly but gently said , leading her to her chair. "We´ve known nowt but sorrow here."

"But I divvent want to leave!" she cried in anguish. " Hoo d´ye think I could live, away from your fether and—"

"All right, mother!" Jim interposed, checking the recital which would wring her heart.

"We will stay!"

She looked up quickly.

"Will you leave the Union?" she interrogated, in much surprise.

"Never!" he affirmed.

"Then he´ll turn us oot!" she hopelessly rejointed.

"Not he! It´ll never come to that! He´ll be fumin´ at the loss wi´ the pit lyin´ idle. The dispute´ll be settled efore the notices are up!"

Jim was hopeless, but secreted his despair. For the sports of his fellows he had no inclination, and wandered afield in the hours of daylight. His musings were dismal, but , for his mother´s sake, he whistled cheerily crossing the threshold.

Meg Toppin fathomed the deeps of trouble. Oh! It was hard that this should come! Had she not suffered enough? To lose the bairns

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she had borne and fondled, that were grief! To be widowed was desolation sore! To see the sole one left declining on his feet that were anguish! And there was the debt, the legacy of the old misfortunes, still unpaid! For this to come was agony unbearable. In the darkest hour this contingency had never occurred. To be homeless was the cruelest fate conceivable to the heart of the woman. Without a roof over her head, and a fireside for solace, she would die. Her very soul rose in protest. To be told to quit was maddening, and to be ejected by *him* was an insult insufferable. He must have forgotten. That he should dare to forget stabbed her to the heart. She would speak. She would compel him to heed. She would shame him to the face. Failing mercy, she would make him a spectacle to the world.

She confronted him at his garden gate. The odious paper was in her hand.

"D´ye mean this, Shadrach Reaveley?" she demanded, pointing to the words: "Notice to quit."

"Don´t Shadrach me!" he indignantly retorted.

"Shamed o´ yer name, are ye?" she sneered. "It would be more to your mense if ye were ashamed o´ yersel´."

"Learn to speak properly to your betters!" he replied severely.

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"I need nee tellin´ when I ken them!" was her quick response.

He made as though he would have passed her by, but she barred his progress.

"I´ve axed ye a question, Shadrach Reaveley, an´ I want yer answer!" she asserted. "D´ye mean this?" holding the notice aloft.

"Am I the man to play the fool?" he asked meaningly.

"Aye, that ye are, an´ worse, if ye mean this!" she retorted.

"Have a care, mistress, how you wag your tongue! I´m not the man to stand nonsense!"

The tension of the dialogue was too much for her excited nerves. Her voice was a scream. Her words were passionate. Her checks were aflame.

"An´ this is the thanks my canny man has for layin´ his life doon for you? Him the hero, scoundrel The villain ye are to forget that he lost his life to save yours!"

"Be quiet, woman!" he thundered, griping her by the arm, and glaring fiercely in her face. "You must be mad to say such things! Your Ben was killed by misadventure. He did not die for me!"

"The Lord forgi´e ye, if He can, for speakin´

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lies! It´ll none be easy, even for Him, to think kindly o´ yer sins to me an´ mine. Ye werna worth the loss o´ my man´s little finger. He died for ye when ye were as good as dead in the poisoned air, an´ this is hoo ye show yer gratitude to yer saviour´s kith an´ kin. Notice to quit!" she repeated, with grim sarcasm. "It´s a wonder ye give us notice! You´re vary polite wi´ yer cruelty. It´s like sayin´, ´If ye please, missis, will ye be kind enough to come forward to be murdered.´"

At that moment Mary Reaveley appeared at the door. She had seen the meeting at the gat, and divined the cause. Fear of complicating the issues had held her back. She could be passive no longer.

The intervention of the gentle woman created a diversion. Meg opened the gate and ran up the walk to the step where Mary was standing. Her arms were around the neck of the manager´s wife. She sobbed her sorrows on Mary´s bosom.

Reaveley stood irresolute. The speech of the widow had frenzied him. The silence of his wife was torture. His soul was a riot. Conflicting emotions baffled him. He turned and fled.

Mary Reaveley was drinking the dregs. Loyalty to her husband sealed her lips. Loyalty to her womanhood opened her heart. Sympathy

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is quick of wit. Her generous soul found means of solace for the anguished woman.

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The calm succeed the storm. Meg was herself again., she had known that in Mary Reaveley she had a friend at court. Confirmation she had received.

By the fireside she rested. Jim was asleep in the garret. In the silence she could hear the breathing, even the wheeze, of his weakly lungs.

Her thoughts were retrospective. All the bitternesses were present and the sweets that had supervened. In the present desolation she lifted her eyes on high.

She read “the portion.” It was a chapter in the Book of Job. “He disappointed the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. . . . But He saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty. . . . He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.”

Replacing the Book, she entered the room where her bed was standing. She was in the kitchen again, candle in hand. Mounting the steps, she entered the garret, and stood by the side of her son. Till the tears blinded her she watched the sleeper´s face.

God saw her as she traced Death´s premonitions on the features of her lad. It is terrible to think of the measure-

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less misery one soul may feel. The future seemed hopeless. Jim would die. Homeless she would wander. Reaveley would never relent. He was incapable of mercy. Surely God was better than he! In the six troubles He had been faithful. This was the seventh. She reproached herself for doubting. The notice-to-quit was in her hand. On her knows in the silent garret, by the side of the sleeping youth, she prayed the prayer of the soul confounded: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

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"Circumstances Alter Cases."

"CIRCUMSTANCES alter cases," was the favourite dictum of Kitty Fagan. Many times each day she repated it, sometimes in an explanatory sense, and often as a justification.

She had been "partic'lar kind" to Bella Dobson and her bairns. Proud she had been of the honour of being the first to wash and dress the new arrivals. Her affection was thus secured and grew with the babies´ growth. Circumstances altered the cases when "that Dobsons woman sent for her ower the way" when the "twinnies" appeared. Kitty never admitted that she had ever seen the twins, and , as for Bella Dobson, she "wouldn´t bemean hersel´ by noticin´ her."

"A few knots o´ sugar thoo wants, hinney," Kitty repeated, when Job Thomas, the six-year-old, delivered his mother´s message. "Here thoo is, Job hinney, and tell yer mother she´s welcome."

Three days later Job returned for the loan of

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an once of tea. Kitty´s heart was hard. The cases were altered. Job´s mother had forgotten to repay the sugar.

By-and-by it came to pass that circumstances altered the case in the Fagan household. Kitty had no misgiving as to the action she took. The alteration of the case was not her doing. Circumstances were the factors of the change, and Tony created the circumstances.

Kitty was a character. She was "canny as a rule, but cranky on occasion." "As nice as could be" she was when at her usual, but "as queer as Dick´s hat band" when her temper was up. She was Tony´s wife, and never understood how the relationship cam e about. Some sort of feeling in his favour she must have had when she consented to be his "missis," but all that was changed. He was a "wastral" in her eyes, and a "bad bargain." Still, the sense of duty kept her in the marital traces. She would have "done her best by him" to the end, if the circumstances had not altered the cases. Then she was released. No scruple disturbed her peace.

They were never seen together. It was well that they were not the contrast would have been ludicrous. Kitty was big and stout; Tony was small and lean. She was an ample woman; he was a scanty man. Passing down the row, her passage was like a procession;

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when Tony was on the trot, he was "off like a shot." The secretive was foreign to her, her appearance was an advertisement; Tony was stealthy, his movements were craft, he was always a mystery. Kitty had a tongue, and an exceedingly effective vocabulary. She had her thoughts, and was free in expressing them. What she thought she said; what she said she meant; what she meant she stuck-to. Some were pleased, others were "huffed." It was no concern of Kitty´s. She was open as the day, and frank as light. Tony was the contrast. He was wise in the wisdom of the deceiver. He knew when silence was golden and speech silvern. We had reason to know he was skilled in cant. Thought and speech

did not always tally with him. His promises and performances were as widely distanced as the poles.

He was a terrible trial to Kitty, and had been from the start. She was "sair mortified wi´ his general uncanniness." Not that he had ever given her much cause for specific complaint, but that he had queer ways of looking at things, and " a nasty knack" of keeping folks uneasy.

Kitty thought she superintended him, and was inclined to be "uppish" with the result —Tony´s oddishness considered. He was laughing up his sleeve. For years he "had had her on," and gloried in the consciousness the decep-

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tion. When the circumstances altered the cases, the laugh was Kitty´s. Verily, Tony had his reward.

The deadlock, Tony´s action in relation thereto, opened Kitty´s wyes. From that hour she was dangerous. It was the personal bearing of his duplicity which incensed her. Not only had he played fast and loose with the men of the union, but he had dared to trifle with her. Had he not pretended to feel as strongly as the members of the lodge on the refusal of the nine to unite with their comrades? Was he not steeped to the lips in protestations of fidelity? Had not she exhorted him to keep the men up to the scratch and to have it out with "Rack"? She thought she had been doing her duty in "egging him on." Now she had discovered that he had been fooling her all through. She was "petrified" To Meg Toppin she declared that "it was the biggest flabbergasterer" she had had in the course of her lifetime.

Kitty drank the dregs of disgrace on the day of the deadlock. She was free to speak, for Tony never showed face till he came on the stilts with the bantering escort. She chuckled to see him thus aloft, and, when he was precipitated from the steps of the stilts, and fell "all of a heap" at her feet, she was pitilessly exultant. Tony was glad to be in doors. He was not without courage, and needed all he had. Kitty´s

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Vocabulary was strained to the utmost in the relieving of her mind. He rounded on her at last, and "brazened it out." It was all that she could do "to keep her hands off him." Finally, she declared she would make him "lowp" before he was done.

It was no idle threat. Her ingenuity was exercised. All varieties of schemes retaliatory were suggested. They were each so inviting that the determination of the one to be adopted was a matter beyond her power. To hide his clothes, to clip his beard, to lock him in the garret, to tie him to the bed-post, were some of the ideas her mind evolved. She would have been well pleased to have tried the lot; as that was impossible, she waited a while.

No secreted she made of her meaning of mischief. She would have it out with Tony. It was an unequal encounter. He should have known that with Kitty he was no match.

"I´m shamed to the bone, Tommy!" she confessed to Martha´s man. "I thowt he was hand in glove wi´ that´, but it seems he´s caved in to `Rack.´ Ye waddent let me be a member o´ the lodge? I´d be varry happy to pay the levies!"

Tommy was sore by reason of Tony´s treason, but discreetly to accentuate the Fagan´s domestic disagreement.

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The notices expired. During the fourteen

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days some of the young men sought and found work at other collieries. But it was no easy thing for men with families to be thus accommodated. Ere they could remove they wanted places so that fathers and sons could toil together, and thus keep the households complete. The majority were disinclined to move. They meant to see the end of the contest, and were prepared to wage the war at all costs.

The viewer gave no hint. He pursued the line he had laid. There were contrary influences around him. His wife was a ministrant of peace, but the managers and masters had developed a sudden friendliness, and were appealing to him "to sit tight" and "to hold hard."

The legal course was clear. Shardrach Reavely never hesitated. The unwillingness and refusal of the men to leave the colliery-houses were construed by him into defiance, stubborn and sullen. He would match his will with theirs, and fight with the weapons the law provided. The notices for application for ejectment were distributed, and their import explained as the law provides. "Failing peaceable possession within seven days," the colliers were informed that he would apply for ejectment orders at the Petty Sessions in Bishopstown at eleven o´clock in the morning of a specified date.

Meg Toppin was standing at her door with the long blue paper in her hand. The clerk had

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read the closely printed matter, and with gentleness and lucidity interpreted its terms. She was stupefied anew. Even more terrible this notice seemed than the notice-to-quit. The clerk was in the fourth house above delivering the ominous papers. Meg was still at the door, half-leaning on the stanchel. Kitty Fagan was passing sown the row. Seeing Meg in the hopeless posture, she stopped and asked the reason of her distress.

Meg put the paper into Kitty´s fingers. "Ye ken I canna read, Meg Toppin!" Kitty exclaimed, after glancing at the long blue paper. "I guess it´ll be Shardrach´s latest. What´s he efter noo?"

"He gannin´ to gan to put us oot!" Meg rejoined with sudden passion.

"Weel, I´m jiggered!" Kitty ejaculated, and her wyes scanned the paper again.

She caught sight of the clerk emerging from the house the fifth from her own.

"He´ll mebbe hev one for me. I´ll be in to hear him say his lesson!" she said, and she marched up the row to her own dwelling.

He was passing the door when Kitty accosted him.

"Mister Charlie, an´ hennet ye one for me?"

She was looking down upon him majestically, standing with her hands on her hips.

"Your Tony is one of the exceptions, Mistress

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Fagan," the junior official explained. "He´s not in the union, and, therefore, not required to leave."

"`Appy Tony!" Kitty sneered, with a laugh. "By gox, an´ he is a hexception, but he´ll be nee hexception when the time for the shiftin´ comes. Neck an´ crop, oot he´ll go, an´ as for his luggish he can tak´ what he likes, an´ leave what he lumps."

She was wanting a crack, and was anxious to hearten Meg Toppin.

"Nee, he hessent one for me!" Kitty proceeded, when she had established herself in a substantial chair in the Toppins´ kitchen. "Tony´s in wi´ `Rack,´ an´ gets bid i´ the hoose; leastways, I´m not molested, bein´ his missis. But there´s nee guarantee in the case o´ Tony. An´ I´m beginnin´ to suspect that I´ll hev to tak´ in lodgers, an´ there´ll be nee room for the likes o´ Tony . . . . Divvent cry yer eyes oot, woman! It´s bad to bide, but ye´ve niver been destitute yet, an´ by the livin´ Harry, as sure´s my name´s Kitty Fagan, I´ll stick yer friend!"

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Kitty never let on. It was the day for the court, and the applications for the orders of ejectment. Tony was early astir, but not so early as Kitty. She had donned her oldest gown and the thick harn apron. Obviously she

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was bent on a cleaning and scouring day. She was making things hum when Tony descended for breakfast. She poured out the tea and placed his victuals, as though the

time required were a terrible tax considering the business she had on hand. The meal finished, he completed his ablutions, and dressed for going abroad.

Nothing escaped the eyes of his wife. She observed, and lifted her eyebrows, when he brushed his hair. That was unusual. When he sat on the cracket, withdrew the string from his shoes, and inserted the leather laces he had had in his trouser pocket, she smiled on the distant side of her face. The shaking of his coat and the beating of his cap against the chimney-stone were equivalent to a good brush-down. His procedure was significant, There was a great deal behind it. She knew.

Occasionally they exchanged words, but the topics were leagues removed from the thoughts engaging their minds. Tony was unconscious that that she was reading him and enjoying the process amazingly. When he stood on the chair to reach the secret drawer at the top of the chest, and took therefrom the Chinese cane, she ventured an innocent remark.

"Ye´ll be off for a swagger, I reckon. It´s weel to be a man wi´ time on yer hands. The poor women folks hev nee sich fairin´s. It´s washin´, an´ bakin´, an´ cleanin´, and scoorin´ fra´

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week-end to week-end. It´s a canny job to be a man"!

"Why, Kitty," he said, with an approach to a smile, "I´d just be in the way when ye´re reddin´ up. I thowt. I wad just hev a bit stroll till ye got cleared up."

"Ye´re varry considerate, my little man!" she rejoined, with a sneer half stifled, "but it´s rather a new feature in Fagan´s case. But off ye trot, an´ when yer wi´ yer conies ye can think that yer poor auld wife´s sweatin´ an´ strainin´. "

Kitty´s cleaning zeal subsided with the departure of her man. She turned the key of the door, and mounted to the room above. In an incredibly short time she was dressed in her "Dolly-Varden," and only wanted her parasol to be ready for the road.

She laughed when she re-entered the kitchen, and saw the pail, the scrubbing-brush, and the floorcloth in the middle of the room, and it was as much as she could do, so hilarious were her feelings, to stand on the chair, reopen the secret drawer, and lay hold of her parasol.

She was off to Bishopstown.

It was a great day for Shadrach Reaveley, and he was enjoying himself immensely. His lawyer was by his side, and he was ever and anon whispering particulars.

All was not "plain- sailing." Dr. Patrick Maloney had warned the viewer that he would

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do his best "to clip his claws." The Irish medico was wrathful indeed at the manager´s procedure, and made no secret of this sympathy with the men. It was the doctor who gave Tommy Gibson the tip. The men of the lodge, with the concurrence of the officials of the county union, had engaged a solicitor to watch the proceedings in the interests of the threatened colliers.

The men´s advocate, on behalf of his clients, offered to pay rent for the houses until the notified pitmen were able to find suitable labour and dwellings. This was refused by the manager´s attorney. They had the law on their side—the offer was rejected.

The doctor was more successful when he presented the list of sick and disabled. These were to be exempted for the time being from the eviction orders.

All was over. The magistrates were on their feet. The voice of a woman was heard. Tony Fagan "shivered and shook." Kitty was proceeding to the front, brandishing her parasol.

"I diddent hear you mention Jimmy Toppin in yer list o´ poorly folks!"

She was "glowering" at the doctor.

"Ye ken as weel as me that Meg´s bit lad´s in a varry middlin´state!"

She turned to the gentlemen on the Bench.

"I mean to say, yer honours, that Jimmy

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Toppin´s enjoyin´ varry poor health. He comes of a stock that dies. They´re a consumption family, an´ he´s the odd un´ oot o´ five. Meg´s a widda. His nabs there (pointing to Reaveley) could tell ye all aboot it, if he could speak the truth by way of a change. If it hadn't been for Ben Toppin, Mister Shadrach Reaveley waddent hev been here the day; an´ he waddent hev been in heaven, but in t´other place. If ye pass this ´jectment job, there´ll be a double funeral from Number 35, an´ the Toppins ´ll be distinct!"

The magistrates were bewildered by this unexpected appeal. They looked in the direction of the manager, who was excitedly whispering to his legal man.

"On behalf of my client," the latter affirmed, "I may say that this good woman´s statement is all nonsense. If there were any truth in her declaration as to the health of his young man, surely Dr. Maloney would have presented a case for the delay of the order."

This decided the Bench, and Kitty´s courageous and generous, though informal, appeal was summarily dismissed.

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It was late in the evening ere Tony Fagan ventured into Blackerton. Of the men he felt some fear. The stilts might be in readiness,

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or horseplay might not suffice to appease their vengeance.

But it was Kitty he feared to face. Clearly he saw how she had duped him. Her housewifely enthusiasm had been a blind. He had chuckled in hoodwinking her; now he was terrified in the sense that she had hoodwinked him. The appearance and behavior of his "bigger and better hall" in the court compelled him to recognise that a meeting with

her would be more than an ordeal. Still, to home he must go. Luckily, all was quiet in the colliery-rows. There was not a soul about.

He was standing at his door. The fact that it was locked was an intimation of battle ahead. Time and again he turned the handle. The door was certainly locked.

He was anxious to get entrance quietly. Tapping at the door, he waited for Kitty to respond by opening. Not a sound was heard. The kitchen lamp had been put right out. It was not even turned down awaiting his coming.

Stones he threw at the upstairs window. Kitty must have gone to bed and fallen asleep. Not twice, but twenty times, the pebbles rattled on the pane. Still, he was out in the dark.

Was it possible he had mistaken his own door? He could have taken a wager to get home blindfold. It was dark, and he might have mistaken. He stuck a match and looked

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up at the number. He gasped. What was that on the window above the door? Another march he struck. His fear was increased. A third, a fourth, a fifth match gave light in the darkness. His fear was confirmed. The white blind, the infallible sign of death within, was above the door.

"Oh! Saints and angles!" he breathed. "It'll be Kitty. She´ll hev died wi´ the heart-disease!"

If Tony had been able to think he would have been surprised that there were tears in his eyes. He could never have believed it.

It was time for action, and he acted forthwith. He roused the place. A curious sight it was to see the half-dressed folks gathering to Tony´s door, and from every window heads obtruding, and voices appealing for information.

Kitty had been in the row as late as nine o´clock discussing the events of the day, and uttering maledictions on "Rack," and his lawyer, and the whole bench of magistrates.

But there was the blind. Its meaning there was no evading. Kitty must be dead. But who could have pinned the blind?

It was the policeman who solved the mystery. "She´s gone an´ committed suicide!" he affirmed, "an´ reckoned to give folks notice in the morning. . . . We´ll hev to be in!" he declared, and appealed for help to burst the door.

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There was lamentation in the knowledge that Kitty had breathed her last. "Poor auld Kitty! Good auld sowl! A kind heart had Kitty wi´ all her roughness ! It´ll hev been the court that gave her her death-shot! An´, Tony! Bonny an´ shamed he´ll be! Ay, he´ll be sorry, an´ weel he might, but he canna bring her back when she´s dead! I wonder what she took. But mebbe she laid hands on hersel´. She was alwes a game ´nn. She´s gotten her deathblow wi´ championin´ auld Meg."

It was no easy thing to get the door opened. There was a sneck-lock, and a catch to that, the big lock, the bolt and the chain. Kitty always took precautions at night.

Suddenly hearts stood still, and men and women held their breath. The upstairs window was opened. A night-capped head appeared. In the dead silence these words were heard:

"If it´s money ye´re efter, ye can had away. Hooever d´ye think that a poor auld widda withoot a man can hev ony brass? Ye should be ashamed o´yersel´s, disturbin´ a widda woman, an´ her man lying´ a corpse in the hoose. Had away, I tell ye, an´ get yersel´s off to bed!"

It was the voice of Kitty.

She was closing the window.

Tony sprang forward and with eyes aloft, addressed his partner:

"Why, Kitty hinney, thoo must be dreamin´!"

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he shouted. "I´m here, yer own man, Tony, alive an´ well. Shake theesel´, hinney, an´ let´s be in!"

"Tony Fagan´s deed!" Kitty replied pushing up the window, "deed an´ gone, an´ gone for ever. He went to Bishopstoo this morni´, an was last seen alive in the ´Size Court. He deed there. I was there as weel. I was a woman wi´ a man, leastways a man of a sort, when I went. I was a lonely widda when I came back!"

"Nonsense, Kitty hinney!" Tony iterated. ´Here´s your Tony! I´m Tony Fagan, sure´s a gun!"

"Nonsense," Kitty repeated, "that´s what that lawyer-body said to the judges the day. Nonsense," she again repeated. "Ay, ye´re talkin´ nonsense noo. I tell ye the Tony Fagan I married is as deed as a door nail. Ye mun be his ghost!" and with that she laughed outright. The laugh rang out in the night.

The policeman intervened.

"You´d better come down, Mistress Fagan, an´ let yer good man in. You´re disturbin´ the peace, an´ liable to be summoned."

"Did ye say the good man, Constable Kennedy?" Kitty queried. "Tony was a bad `un, a rank bad `un, an´ he´ll get his desarvin´s. There´s a place for liars and traitors. Ha! Ha! I´m minded o´ the Book aboot that fellow that

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digged a pit an´ fell into it hissel´. That´s what Tony did, an´ he´s in it noo—in the pit."

"If you do not stop this nonsense, Mistress Fagan," the officer loudly declared, "we will brak down the door, an´ take you off to Sedgefield. You must be mad!"

"Noo, I´ll tell ye what to dee," Kitty retorted, leaning forward on the window sill and speaking in her most insinuating style. "Just get yerself´s off to yer beds, an´ you Muster Bobby, off to yer beat. An´ divvent be feared o´ Tony´s ghost. He´ll be oot o´ sight the minute ye are. But if the bit ghost´s cad-like, I´ll five him Tony´s sark, an´ he can find a bit bed-place where he likes. An, as for me, ye need never fash. I can tak´ in

lodgers, an´ there´s reason to think there´ll be plenty to get. Had away off, my canny folks, an´ leave me alone wi´ the corpse!"

She closed the window, and in the stillness the click of the fastener was distinctly heard.

Tony was frantic, and commanded the officer to break down the door. They were tying their strength upon it, when the window again went up, and Kitty appeared with the blunderbuss.

"Stand back, ye thieves an´ robbers, or there´ll be corpses ootside, as well as a deed `un within!"

The policeman made a last appeal.

"Do you understand, Mistress Fagan, that a man´s house is his castle, and that it is a serious offence to keep the head of the house outside?"

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"Sarcumstances alters cases," Kitty responded, "an´ alloo me to inform ye that I´m the head o´ this house, an´ alwes hev been. Tony used to live wi´ me, but now he´s deed an´ done wi´ an´ I´m the tenant in possession!"

The officer was not prepared to run the risk of Kitty´s weapon. The neighbours were shivering in the cold air, and, though they enjoyed the farce of the ghost of Tony, the fun would keep till the day succeeding.

The officer was the last to leave the locked-out husband, and was inwardly mirthful at Tony´s wrath.

Circumstances alter cases. Kitty was in bed, too gleeful for sleep to come easily. The "ghost" found shelter finally in the surface engine-house.

It was a memorable day when the applications for ejectment were decided. That day, or rather that night, "the gaffer´s friend" found an illustration of Kitty´s favourite dictum.

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THE RIGHT OF MIGHT.

ANXIOUS were the days succeeding the manager´s triumph in the Petty Sessions. To have secured the orders for ejectment was to suspend the sword above the heads of the hapless miners.

There was a small exodus from the colliery. A few were fortunate in finding work elsewhere, and in obtaining suitable houses. Ben Benson had a busy time. His cuddy and the cart were requisitioned for the shifting. He reconciled his feelings, for he sympathised with the colliers in the conflict, while keen to make a few shillings in obliging the "flitters," by observing that he "whised nowt but the best to all parties."

A few, again, made merry in the compulsory idleness, and went off for their "halidays." But to the many no choice was offered, and, truth to tell, none was desired. There were lively times ahead, and they were not the men to fear.

The viewer was seldom seen, and, though his

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appearance roused passion in many hearts, neither by sign nor speech was his progress impeded. As for Tony Fagan, man or ghost, he had vanished entirely. There were curious rumours as to his probable whereabouts, but he was too deeply despised for his absence to be regretted.

It was *the* day, the day when the evictions might begin. Blackerton was uneasy. Not a soul left the colliery.

"There´ll be wars, an´ rumours o´ wars the day, my man!" Martha Gibson observed when Tommy was getting his breakfast. "I waddent be surprised if we´re not the first to be landed in the row. It´ll be just as weel. We could play at gipsies as weel as most."

Martha laughed at the prospect before them.

"Time´ll tell!" Tommy responded, repeating the phrase of pregnant wisdom.

Scouts were stationed at points of vantage to herald the approach of any invader. The day passed slowly. Nothing transpired. For another night they were safely sheltered.

The morning dawned. A stranger entered Blackerton, and enquired for the manager´s abode. The local constable had been seen to enter an hour before. It was making for midday when P.C. Kennedy and the Bishopstown bailiff (for the stranger was he) left the house of Reaveley together. At the colliery offices

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they were joined by the officials. The group approached the miners´ rows.

Opinions were exchanged.

"They seem peaceably inclined!" one observed.

"I´m sure they dee! I thowt they would hev come wi´ swords and muskets. But they canna be meanin´ to start!" another replied.

"Bide a wee bittie, lads!" a third advised. "They´ll be trying to coax us ower, an´ if we cannot bide it, they´ll cock the pistils, an´ clap them in oor faces. Rack´ll hev put them up to a thing or two."

In Durham Street they halted, and at Number One. The colliery was all alive. Men, women, and children were gathered at the scene.

Tommy Gibson had compelled the unionists to swear that they would neither be violent to, nor obstructive of, the men who fulfilled the law. Well he knew there were all the elements of a riot. Quietly he had appealed to the leading and and stringest spirits to use their utmost influence to keep the peace.

But when the bailiff announced that Neddy Flaxman was to be the first evicted a roar of anger went up from a thousand throats.

"Start wi´ me!" Geordie Taylor shouted.

"Or me!" ejaculated Samson Anderson; and similar requests were numerous.

"We are obeying orders, friends!" the bailiff

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politely explained, turning to the crowd of onlookers. “We have to begin in Durham Street, and at Number One. The tenant happens to be Flaxman! “

The women were there, and in fierce indignation. “It´s as weel she died, “ they were saying. “There wad hev been nee howldin´ Sallie, if they´d tried their game on when she was aboot.”

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Neddy Flaxman was a “widdawer.” It was onluy afew years back since his wife had been taken from his side. Sallie had left to his care the there little danthers. Not a word of blame would have been heard if he had married again. It was generally agreed that “lasses were bad to handle,” and it would have been the most natural thing if he had found them a mother. The idea never occurred to him.

It was marvelous how quickly he domesticated. A man´s work and a woman´s he did. He could both “wesh an´ bake, “and with such proficiency that many women would have feared to compete. “He struggled on,” he was wont to say, “and lippened for the lasses to grow.”

Rough hearts were touched as Neddy performed the tasks bereavement had assigned. People seldom spoke him. He was well-nigh deaf. It was somewhat of an achievement when Neddy´s ears discharged their function. But many a nod he got, and smiles of friendly.

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cheer. He could never explain his infirmity. He “thowt it must have been the shot firin´.”

To say that he was a quiet man is but to hint at his amiable simplicity. He was “the peace-ablest man body in the place.”

Neddy was to be the first evicted.

But whatever could it mean? The blind were drawn; the door was locked. All was as still as the grave. Neddy must have slept in. It was queer that the girls had not wakened him. It was shocking to think that people could be in bed so near to the hour of noon.

"Why, this caps ivirythin´!" was the general exclamation.

It was whispered among the women that Neddy had been seen earlier in the morning. He had lit the fire and prepared the breakfast. Two of the lasses had been seen at the pig-cree, and the "middle ´un" had fed the hens in the front garden. Where were Neddy and his "dowters?"

Truth to tell, the Flaxmans were in bed. This was Neddy´s simple device of postponing the evil hour. Some instinct had led him to divine that he would be the first molested. Durham Street was the oldest row, and he lived in Number One. To extinguish the fire, to draw the blinds, to lock the door, to bundle the bairns aloft were easy of execution. It would save half-an-hour at least.

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He was painfully conscious of his infirmity. How he wished he could hear! His bairns supplied the lack, and helped him by signs to understand the position of affairs.

The bailiff knocked. A dozen times he knocked. The house might have been tenantless, or peopled with the dead.

It was the eldest daughter whose head appeared, and who timidly asked what was wanted. A moment later Neddy was seen at the window and let it be understood that he as preparing to obey.

Eventually the door was opened. The bailiff stepped within. At his heels followed the policeman. Tommy Gibson and a few of his principal coadjutors edged their way in. They had been studying the law on evictions, and meant to see that the law´s executioners were faithful to every detail.

The bailiff proceeded to read the order for Flaxman´s ejectment. Neddy was bewilderment personified. For the moment he was thankful he was deaf. Here and there

he looked round the room, and at the faces of friends and foes with eyes of misery and perplexity. That the bailiff was reading he understood by the movement of his lips, and the position of the paper. Neddy´s eyes were on the reader´s face. Suddenly he knit his brows, and turned to Tommy Gibson.

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"What´s he jabberin´ aboot, Tommy?" he enquired.

More than half of the order had been read.

It was explained to the bailiff that Neddy was "rather hard o´ hearin´."

The bailiff had "a fine pair o´ lungs an´ a champion trumpet." Stepping nearer to Neddy, and directing his voice in the way of Neddy´s ear, he began at the beginning, and with deliberation, distinctness, and volume proceeded to announce the order´s terms.

Neddy watched him closely. His big ungainly hands were now clasped before him, and now were flung behind. He was an awkward shape at the best, and, in these trying circumstances, the awkwardness was painfully conspicuous.

A few seconds the reading went on.

Neddy interrupted.

Are ye speakin´, mister?" he asked. "Because if ye are, an´ it´s onythin´ particular-like, ye´ll hev to speak up a wee bittie."

Tommy Gibson and his mates laughed onright. Even Constable Kennedy could not hide a smile.

The bailiff´s face was grim. Angrily he glanced around, and raising his voice to a higher pitch, for the third time began to read the eviction order.

Neddy was straining his ears to catch the

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speaker´s words. Then his face was lightened, and he clapped his hands in great delight.

"Did ye say that the pit was to start the morn? Man, an´ I´m pleased to see that! I´ll wag thee hand!"

He sprang to the foot of the stairs and called to his little daughters.

"How way doon, lassies! It´s all reet! They´re getten the gear ready!"

The bailiff was nettled, but succeeded in repressing his indignation. Laying his hand on Neddy´s shoulder, he severely shouted: "The long and the short of the business is thath you have to leave this house!"

Neddy stood rigid—only for an instant. Then his eyes darkened, and his mouth began to twitch.

"Leave the hoose?" he murmured. "An´ where am I to gan?"

"I have nothing to do with that," the official answered, "so long as you get out of this!"

"Ay, ay, mebbe, mebbe!" Neddy interposed. "It´ll be my business, I reckon, if it isn´t thine. An´ I hennet got any arrangements made, an´ I´ve got three bits o´ lasses to look after as weel as mesel´! I wish my poor auld lass had been alive the day. She wad hev seen her way through better nor me. Man, it´s a cruel thing to be a widdawer in times like these!"

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Neddy was weeping. The women were blocking the doorway. Their wyes were wet with angry tears.

The constable appealed to Neddy to be "reasonable." "All we want," explained the officer, "is to remove the furniture to the open air!"

"I´ll fell the man that touches Sallie´s things!" Neddy exclaimed; and he stood with doubled fists.

The bailiff motioned the policeman to attend to Neddy, and beckoned the colliery officials to enter and proceed to discharge the warrant.

But it was not to be. Tommy Gibson protested. The eviction order had not been fully read. Till that had been done he and his friends would defy the bailiff and his escort. He had right on his side. The bailiff was obliged to conform.

For the fourth time he began to read the warrant; and this time so loudly that, unless Neddy had been as deaf as a post, he could not do other that hear. Too well he heard, and the ominous words drove him backwards. Step by step he retreated, through the open door at the back, until he and the others were in the row.

"I´m off the premises!" Neddy exclaimed, "an´ it isn´t legal in the open air!"

So he quibbled.

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Finally the warrant was read. There was no excuse for further delay.

The bailiff was weary of the business, chagrined at Neddy´s contrariness, at the alertness and silent hostility of the men, and the excited antagonism of the women. He was not unfamiliar with scenes. Many a commotion he had caused when he had discharged his odious duty. Laughable and lamentable his experiences had been. He liked this least of all, and resolved to expedite matters. He appealed to Tommy Gibson to get Neddy to quietly leave, but no persuasions availed with Flaxman.

"The thieves'll steal the bits o´ things!" was his reply—he was resolved to stay to circumvent them.

He was frantic when the forcible removal commenced. Strong arms held him back when the officials laid hands on the furniture.

"The black-hearted scoundrels!" he yelled. "Mind what ye´re deein´! … That chest o´ drawers cost five an´ thirty shillin´s, good money! Lord hev marcy! They´re gannin´ wi´ the clock! They´ll put her wrang, as sure as life! Samson!" he shouted, straining his neck to peep round the doorway, and looking for Anderson, "Samson, thoo´ll hev to tak´ her in hands again! It was the missis´s grandmother´s clock! Mind ye divvent smash her

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face! Oh, my eye! There´s her wights knockin´ togither!"

He writhed to be free, to save the clock from the maranders.

"Be canny wi´ the sofee!" he appealed, as two of the men clumsily brought it into collision with the washing-machine.

"It run as nicely as can be," he remarked to three of the men who were making the said machine squeal and groan in the effort to get it outside. "I oiled the wheels only t´other day!"

He wrestled with the men who held him. What would have happened if he had got loose it is hard to tell. Geordie Taylor pinioned him fast when he had succeeded in freeing his arms.

The sight of the men touching the china ornaments upon the mantelshelf frenzied him.

"Mind the chine dogs!" he shouted…. "They´ll let it drip, see if they divvent!" he informed his captors, as the bailiff and another laid hands on the china money-box, an elaborate piece of work, which had always stood as the centre-piece…. "Look! They´re efter the stallions!" he screamed, when the two figures of the men on horseback at the extremities of mantelshelf were taken from their places.

"Tommy, my man!" he said to Gibson, "it´s bad to bide. They divvent seem to hev nee feelin´s. They lay hands on the bits o´ things as though they were o´ nee valee whatsomever!"

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When the invaders were proceeding upstairs a sudden bound gave Neddy release. Gripping the bailiff by the throat, he hurled him back. The constable saved the bailiff. A blow in Neddy´s side took the power from his fingers.

"I hennet getten red-up there!" he explained. "Gi´e me five minutes´ starts, an´ I´ll hev the things ready to move!"

His request was unheeded.

They kept him below.

"It´s nee use tryin´ to stop them, Neddy!" Tommy Gibson was saying. "They hev the right on their side, an´ right´s might, in a manner o´ speakin´; leastways it is when it´s the law o´ the land."

"But it canna be reet, my canny man, to tear folks´ heartses up?" Neddy expostulated.

"I agree wi´ tha´, Neddy, my lad!" Geordie Taylor broke in. " The reet seems to be wrang. It´s reet as Tommy says, an´ it´s wrang as thoo says. It´s queer as it comes to be, but the reet´s gotten topsy turvy!"

The officials in the room above were flinging the bedding through the window. A second time Neddy managed to get free, and was up the stairs before they could prevent him. Opening the door of a cupboard, he looked within.

"How way, my bonny lasses! We hev to leave!"

The terrified children clung to his arms.

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The household effects of the Flaxmans were in the open air. It was a scene of indescribable disorder. Lying on a mattress was the picture of the mother of Neddy´s bairns.

It was late in the afternoon before the house was emptied of its belongings. Neddy and the bairns were surrounded by the women, who reviled their tormentors and compassionated their griefs. The bailiff had intended to execute other warrants that day. They were in his pocket. He was sick at heart, and glad to escape. Locking the door, he half apologized to the infuriated villagers, and went off the house of Reaveley in the company of his friends.

It was the first eviction, and intended as an object lesson. The Blackerton viewer had been ill at case all day, consumed with anxiety as to the course events had taken. He had not dared to go to see, but had spent an uneasy day imaging the proceedings.

Cynically he smiled as the bailiff told his story, but anger mastered him when the bailiff declined to execute the warrants without police protection and sufficient assistance.

"Then you don´t think the men are frightened with the prospect before them?"

"If you´d heard them and seen them, you´d have learned a thing or two!" was the bailiff´s candid retort.

"Very well, the county superintendent can

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take the case in hand!" was Reaveley´s decision. "You must consult with him, and I will formally authorize him to the same effect."

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The brilliant idea was Kitty´s. Tony´s wife had been on the scene all day. It was tiring for her to stand for any length of time, and she wasn´t sorry when the "bum" began with the chairs. She was one of the first to get herself accommodated. Seated on one of Neddy´s chairs, her mind was exercised as to what was to be done for his convenience and the comfort of his children. Something must be done. What could be done? How was it to be accomplished? To whom did the duty belong? There were not only the expelled tenants to provide for, but the furniture. It could not be left where the shifters had placed it.

She had practically made up her mind to give Neddy and his daughters a hearth in her home. She knew that the plan was not without risk. They busybodies would make a "clatter," and Tony might reappear and kick up "whaups.""Circumstances alter cases!" Kitty was prepared for that and more.

Then the brilliant notion dawned. It was an inspiration. The bailiff had gone; the constable was out of sight; the officials were not likely to reappear. There was the house still standing.

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True, the door was locked, but any of the neighbours´ keys would fit it.

She was on her feet, her hands on her hips. "Stop yer noise, an´ listen to me!" she commanded. "I mean to say," she began, "that we´ll be the laughin´-stock o´ the county if we quietly submit to this. What´s Neddy ganin´ to dee the neet, an´ hoo´s he gannin´ to fend for his dowters? They´ll hetta sleep somewhere, an´ all their bits o´ things´ll hev to be found a place. I propose that we just open that door, an´ see Neddy nicely settled in his hoose again. They ´ll mebbe just put him oot the morrow, but they´ll hev the trouble o´ us to put things straight for one neet more!"

"Be gox, an´ that´s a brave idée!" Tommy Gibson observed, "an´ it canna dee neebody ony harm!"

Unconsciously silence fell upon the crowd. There was danger in the project, and the fear led them to stealthy movements and whispered words. There were few who did not share the honour of re-establishing Neddy´s home. The "big furniture" was left to the men. The lighting of the fire, the arrangement of the china ornaments, and the making of the beds were attended to by Kitty and her sex.

It was a proud moment for Kitty when she filled the kettle, and placed it on the fire.

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"They´ll want their teas!" she explained. "They´ve had nowt since breakwast!"

When all was done, and Neddy and his lassies were home again, the colliery folk quietly dispersed.

Tommy and Martha Gibson had sais their prayers. It was bedtime.

"I put a word in the neet, my man, for Neddy an´ his lot, an´I sent my kind regards to Sallie. Poor sowl! For some things it´s as weel she´s away, an´ yet for others it wad hev been better if she´d been wi´ her man for the present. It´s a lang way off, is Heaven. She´ll hev hed an anxious day, but she´ll hev a comfortable neet when she sees that they´re back in the hoose at eh end o´ the row."

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LAUGHTER IN TEARS.

THE police did not interfere. The county superintendent knew his business, and was too astute to be caught in a snare. Constable Kennedy had reported to him, and, knowing there had been no physical obstruction, and that neither life nor property were endangered, the bailiffs appeal and the letter of the manager were ignored.

Two days passed, and Neddy Flaxman was undisturbed. It was assumed that the first work of the spoilers would be to dislodge Neddy and his bairns again from Number One.

The succeeding day was wretchedly uneasy. Neither man, woman, nor child could settle to work or play. Interest centred in the bum-bailiff and his odions exploits. As the day wore on his absence increased the disquiet.

Kitty Fagan was on the rampage, calling doen curses on "Rack" and the "bum," and cheering the hopeless to stoical defiance. "It´s a rum `un if he´s funked wi´ the forst!" she

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observed to the group of women who were dejectedly discussing the state of affairs. "I reckon he´ll hev a heart like other folks, an´ mebbe he feels a bit soft-like turnin´ folks oot o´ doors. But ye canna tell. There´s nowt see queer as folks. Mebbe he´s getten reinforcements, an´ arrangin´ to dee the thing wholesale in the morn."

Speculation was rife when the second day was passing without his reappearing. Some of the women plucked up heart to bake, and a score of the men returned to the games.

"They´re come!" was the cry which flashed round the colliery on the morning of the third day. The populace turned out to meet them.

What trembling hearts there were as they hastened to see the men whose presence meant such dire distress! But when they saw the gang of candymen loud shouts of contemptuous laughter rent the air. This, then, was the explanation of the two days´ idleness. The bailiff had been enlisting among the ragmen, the pedlars, the itinerant glaziers, and the crew of the ne´er-do-weels for assistance in the work of spoliation. The inference was correct that Tony Fagan had been his lieutenant in these recruiting expeditions. He was there "as large as life."

Though rage was within them, the miners were hilarious at the sight of the bailiff´s broken-

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down supporters; and though the women were breaking their hearts now that the worst was to happen, the sight of the candymen incited them to cynical mirth and sneer.

"Weel, an´ ye´re the nicest set o´ ragamuffins as ever I seed!" Kitty Fagan made free to remark to the motley crew. "I say, Mister Bum," and she appealed to the bailiff, "where did ye happen to find sich a `andsome an´ sprightly set o´ fellows?... A´m sure an´ it´s as weel we´re all married, or hev been!" she went on, looking round at her women friends. "A fine kettle o´ fish there´d hev been if we´d all been single, an´ free to tak´ oor pick. …Noo, there´s a smart chap!" she exclaimed with superb sarcasm, pointing to the lankiest and leanest loafer of the lot. "Noo, that´s what I call a masculine lamp-post. He´ll be six feet five an´ a quarter in his stockin´-feet. But, Lord presarve us, he hes nee stockin´s. He´ll get cad. But, heyday! Look at the nose of him! What a picter! What a colour! John Barleycorn´s a pal o´ thine, I reckon, my cannie weenie man!"

Her eye alighted on another. His bow-legs attracted her. She gave him her greeting. "It´s shame an´ a sin fot eh likes o´ thee to be here. Ye´re an auld pitman, if thee legs is a guide. Ye´ll hev come to evict the pigs. It´ll be easier than catchin´ them!"

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Kitty´s sallies were boisterously received. The rough jokes and the wild laughter were outlets for the passionate feelings of these stricken hearts.

The candymen were considerably perturbed. They were by no means finical, but even their callousness was too thin a skin to turn the pricks of a woman´s tongue. The bailiff feared that the candymen and the colliers might come to blows.

Tony Fagan was in evidence, whispering to the candymen to "tak´ nee notice." The face of the traitor was more than Geordie Taylor could stand. "Here, thoo little banty-cock!" he said tuning to Tony, "if thoo doesn´t make theesel´ scarce there´ll be a strange face in Heaven."

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Surely the scene was unique as a farce and as a tragedy! Excruciatingly pathetic were the doings of that day, and yer screamingly amusing. Durham Street was thronged from end to end. Men were on the tops of the houses opposite, and ladies were perched on the walls. Women with children in their arms were huddled in a group or hustled from place to place. The dogs were in the melée and their snaps and yells increased the general din. Constable Kennedy was in despair. To keep the peace was the task to him assigned. Well he knew the risks.

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The crowd was savage with fear, and the anger would be madness when the desolation was created before the victims´ eyes. The candymen were clustered near the bailiff. Tony Fagan was nowhere to be seen.

The door of Number One was locked. Neddy was peeping at the window. He was resigning himself to the fate of re-ejectment.

But the bailiff passed to Number Two, and read the warrant to Samson and Maria Anderson.

"They´ll get their Sunday names if they tackle Maria!" Martha Gibson remarked to the women standing beside her.

Maria was near the doorway, with folded arms and indignant face.

"We´ll take the big furniture first, mistress!" the bailiff politely announced.

"Ye´ve only yersel´s to please. Im neerways partic´lar!" was Maria´s prompt reply.

Four of the candymen laid hands on the chest of drawers. The bailiff cleared a way for the furniture to be carried to the street.

"Stand back!" commanded the constable. "Here´s the drawers comin´!"

But the chest never came. The people thronged the doorway, and soon it was noised through all the street that even four of the candymen were unable to lift Maria´s chest of drawers.

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"Had away in, me lanky man!" Kitty Fagan shouted to the elongated pedlar. "Had away in, an´ gi´e them a lift!"

The candymen were assisted by their comrades, but the drawers refused to move.

"Mistress, it it´s a fair question, what have you got in these drawers?" the bailiff enquired of Anderson´s wife.

"Since yer see civil," Maria responded, "an´ ivirythin´ was paid for when it was getten, I´ll gi´e ye an answer. There´s Smson´s black claes for one thing, an´ a twilt or two, an´ afew bits o´ tablecloths."

The candymen were straining to lift the chest. There were three at each end and two at the front, but the eight were impotent to stir it an inch.

Maria was sarcastic.

"Weel, I wad hev browt a few men wi´ me if I´d had a job like this on hand!" she remarked to the bailiff. "It´s only a middlin´ size. Oor Samson an´ me could hev had it on the hoosetop in less than half the time."

"You´d better have a try, mistress!" the official snappishly retorted.

"Nay, nay!" said Maria. "I´m glad the drawers hev taken the reest. They´re as keen to bide as we be!"

Again and again hands were laid on the chest, but it defied removal. Truth to tell, Samson,

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at Maria´s instigation, had filled the drawers with heavy stones and iron bars.

The tables and chairs were cleared from the kitchen. Only the clock was left.

"Ther´ll be a screw in the back, mistress?" the bailiff queried, as he picked up the driver from the window-sill.

"Ay! There´s a screw or two!" Maria blandly replied. "Ye´ll mind not to damage her inside!"

Opening the door, the bailiff glanced for the heads of the screws. Starting back his wyes gleamed anger at the woman. He restrained his wrath, and motioned to one of the candymen to take out the screws. It was known in the street that the old clock had fifty screws in her back.

Maria Anderson was an envied woman.

She was sorry, and confessed as much to the bailiff. The latter had mounted the steps to superintend the garret´s clearance. "Dooked" and no mistake was he. The full contents of the water-bucket had descended on his head.

Samson Anderson found it convenient to step outside to smile. "The bum´s like a droonded rat!" he announced to the crowd of the pit-folk.

"Was´t an accident?"

"Oh, ay! A lucky `un!"

When all was cleared save the drawers a

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final effort was made to remove the chest. A yell of delighted laughter went up from the crowd outside when it was known that the united strength of the candymen was unavailing.

"Well, we´ll leave it, and lock the door!" the bailiff said, in despair.

"Ye can leave it, but ye winnet lock the door," Samson made answer. "So it´s a fool ye want to mak´o´ me? What guarantee hev I that ye divvent mean to steal the drawers? Ye´re only hoaxin´ that ye canna lift them!"

The door of Number Two was left wide open.

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Effie Gleaner was the tenant of Number Three. It was know that Tom had gone to Northumberland in the hope of finding employment. Effie was cowed with fear and powerless to resist the invasion. The children were in bed. It was only when she heard their screams as the candymen unceremoniously carried them down the steps that she was roused to wrath. Her protests were unheeded, and the four little children were laid in the open air.

Oh! The rage of the horrified spectators! The women hissed; the men fumed. Some on the housetops scrambled to the ground in the turmoil of their passions. Only the earnest pleading of Tommy Gibson and the lodge leaders prevented bloodshed.

"It´s bad to bide, Tommy!" was the hoarse

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whisper of Geordie Taylor. "You´d better tell the bum there´s things we canna stand!"

While the furniture was being planted in the row, Effie Gleaner clad her children.

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The door of the house adjoining was barred, and the crowbars of the emergency men were needed.

The sad work went on. House after house was emptied under the very eyes of their anguished tenants. It was useless to resist.

One man made an exit of the skylight, and sat "striddle-legs" on the chimney, to the huge delight of the juveniles. A woman who had hidden herself in a cupboard was heard piteously pleading to be released when the door had been locked.

Some laughed, some cried, others laughed and cried. There was laughter in the tears, and tear in the laughter.

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The bailiff was reading the warrant to Lucy Gallon. She lived in Number Nine. Lucy was one of the meekest and mildest of her sex.

"They´ll hev a canny job wi´ Lucy!" was the tender remark if Martha Gibson. "She´s as innocent as a babe unborn. Poor creeter! She´ll be whingin´ her eyes oot! We´d better gan an´ bring her oot!"

Mistress Gibson was permitted to enter, and

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was more than amazed at Lucy´s truculent spirit. The gentle woman was up in arms.

"Bide a bit!" Lucy was saying. "Look at all the dust on the drawer tops! D´ye want to shame me in the wyes of the world? Bide till I give it a bit rub!" And she got the cloth, and right and left scattered the dust. Full into the eyes of the candymen went the cayenne pepper with which she had sprinkled the furniture.

To the Blackerton people Lucy was a heroine, but their admiration of her spirit was heightened when the bailiff burnt his hands with the fire-irons. She had heated the heads in the fire. Loud was the laughter and triumphant the jeers at eh unlucky bailiff.

And so the hours dragged on. Few left the scene for the midday meal. The excitement of the eviction suppressed the sense of hunger. The crowd was a brotherhood and a sisterhood. They were feeling for and with each other. What had been done would still be done. There was no escape. The actual eviction fascinated men and women alike.

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The constable and the bailiff were in consultation. The officer was sick at heart with the woful business, and advised cessation. It was bitter to him to see the havoc of these peaceful homes and the discomfort of the people he knew

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and loved so well. But the bailiff was a man of business, and had bargained with the candymen for daily pay. There was still time "to do another."

What was the meaning of the merriment of the onlookers when the bailiff and his men proceeded to Number Ten? The men on the housetops scrambled to the tiles directly opposite, and the boys changed places to get the view. Even the women had ceased to moan, and were gossiping gaily of the work on hand.

Ah! Number Ten was Peter Golinghtly´s, and Peter was the " champion fiddler." Everybody knew Peter, and everybody liked him. "Lively as a cricket," "blithe as a bird," were the descriptive phrases associated with Peter. He had never been known to be angry. "Oot o´ fettle," he had never been seen. His face had been fashioned to smile, and his eyes were fountains of mirth. His jokes were better than physic, and his presence a constant delight. Ay, but the fiddle! It was said he took it to bed with him, and could fiddle "any way up." He had "larned hissel´," and "needed nee music." His ear was a marvelous organ. The folks on the colliery believed there was "nowt in the music line oot o´ the way wi´ Peter." The fiddler was to be evicted. The crowd was curious as to the reception he would give to the invaders.

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The door was locked.

Peter was fiddling.

The bailiff knocked and demanded admittance. A loud peal of laughter broke from the crowd, then a sudden hush as the strains of the apt plantation song in Peter´s jocund voice proceeded from within. "Who´s that knocking, who´s that knocking at the door?" was the query of Peter´s fiddle.

The bailiff knocked again, and announced his office and business.

"Stop that knocking, stop that knocking at the door!" was the command of Peter´s fiddle.

The constable knocked, and appealed to Peter to delay no longer. The door was opened by Peter´s "missis," and Peter himself appeared in high good-humour, playing the fiddle and singing: "Oh! you´re knocking, knocking, knocking, at the door!"

He accompanied the reading of the warrant with an improvised staccato movement. And when the furniture was being lifted without, the fiddle was on its "high horse." Welsh airs, Scotch airs, the airs of Ireland, and the songs of England were reeled off in dance-provoking delight.

Molly Golightly followed the men who were wrecking her home, but Peter sat in his chair cheering his heart with the music.

Only Peter and the chair and the fiddle re-

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mained within. Molly was on the doorstep with her wyes upon the furniture piled up in the street.

"Now, my man, out you go!" said the bailiff.

Peter played on, unheeding the command.

The bailiff winked to the candymen. Four of them gripped the chair, and shoulder high carried the chair and its occupant into the street.

The crowd was in tears. The women were weeping piteously, and the wyes of the men were strangely dim. The song had touched their hearts, the old song, the long-loved song. "Home, sweet home!" Peter´s fiddle was playing. It was more than they could bear when the music of chorus fell upon their ears: "Home!, home! Sweet, sweet home! Be it ever so humble, there´s no place like home! And the crowd was wet-eyed.

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NOW that the evictions were in progress, the ecclesiastics of the colliery openly sided with the distressed community. When the trouble arose and the quittance and ejectment notices were being run out, they had held aloof. Neither by the Methodist, the Catholic, nor the Episcopalian leaders had any encouragement been given to the union cause. Without conferring mutually, the priest, the clergyman, and the minister had pleaded with their flocks for moderation and urged for settlement. Too well they knew the loss and pain to home and church an industrial war would bring. But when the manager had taken the field and opened fire so eagerly, they made no secret of their sympathy with the menaced tenants. Indeed, Father Sloan gave "Rack" the open snub, unheeding his salutation. The curate had pleaded with the manager to be patient and conciliatory, while Mr. Robinson, to Shadrach´s face, had characterized the eviction as a crime. The

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sympathy of the clerics was genuine, and they were free to shoe it.

The occasions were rare indeed when they had been seen together, for sectarianism makes sad cleavages. Even in Blackerton, where everybody was familiar with everybody else, the ecclesiastics were practically strangers to one another. By sight they knew each other well. Good breeding compelled respectful recognition as they passed each other in the streets, but the occasions for speech had been few and far between. Sectarianism created circles—the priest was the centre of one, the preacher moved in a second, and the curate reigned in a third.

When Neddy Flaxman was being evicted, the clerics were among the spectators. It was Tom Foster, the atheist leader, who noticed them converged to a vacant space, and overheard their indignant observations. And on the day when the evictions began on a wholesale scale, they were moving about among the onlookers. Many of the crowd followed the bailiff and the candymen when they took their departure that night, but the majority lingered in the row with the families expelled. What was to be done with the people and their furniture?

To house the homeless for one night was a problem easily solved by Kitty Fagan.

"We´ll all hev to scrat to put them up.

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They´ll hev to sleep on the settles an´ the shakey-soons!"

But the furniture, what was to be done with it?

Campbell Robinson was endeavouring to console Effie Gleaner. One of the bairns was in his arms. The absent husband was one of the class-leaders, and Effie was a consistent Methodist. He had already sent word to his wife to prepare for the reception of Effie and her children. What to do with the furniture was puzzling him sorely. There was no room for storage in his little house. The reading-room would have made a capital repository, but that was out of the question. It was colliery property, and at the manager´s disposal. Close to the reading-room stood the Methodist Chapel. Like a flash the notion occurred. The situation was desperate, and scruples must be defied.

Geordie Taylor, standing near him, heard him mutter: "There´s only the chapel."

"Eh?" was the involuntary interrogation of the collier. "The chapel! What about the chapel?"

"We will have to store Mistress Gleaner´s furniture in the chapel!" Mr. Robinson said.

"Weel, that´s a good `un!" was Geordie´s bewildered comment, "an´ ye´re a brick for sayin´ see. Ye mean it, fair-horney?" he doubtingly appealed.

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"Certainly I mean it!" the minister replied. "It will do the chapel no harm, and we can worship in the open air!"

"How way, me lads! Let´s be startin´!" and Geordie was one of the many who lifted and packed the furniture in the chapel.

The tin kirk and the Catholic schoolhouse were opened on the same intent. On sectarian lines the disposal of the furniture proceeded. So natural it seemed that the arrangement should be decided by ecclesiastical proclivities that its peculiarity was unobserved. In the schoolhouse was the furniture of the Catholics, in the chapel were the belongings of the Methodists, in the kirk were the properties of those who adhered to the Establishment. That this should be done so naturally, surely proved how deeply-rooted was the village sectarianism.

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When the bailiff and his gang arrived the following day, Newcastle Street claimed their attention. One of the non-unionists was in possession of house Number One. His non-unionism meant non-expulsion. The second house was one of the exemptions. Within, a man lay slowly dying. Joe Scott was the tenant of Number Three, and was the first to hear the warrant.

Already the villagers had gathered as on the previous days, and many strange faces were in

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the crowd, for the news of the eviction proceedings had travelled far and wide, and the curious, the idle, and the indignant had come to see the "gannins-on."

"What´ll they dee wi´ the Scotties´ things, thinks tha´, Tommy?" Martha Gibson whispered to her man, when they reached Newcastle Street, and learnt that Joe´s house was to be emptied.

"That´ll be a poser for the parsons!" was Tommy´s jocular reply.

"They´ll be cliverer than I think they be, if they manage to settle it nicely!" Martha observed, with a significant nod of the head. "It´ll tak´ all the sense an´ al the religion that oor man an´ the priest an´ the clargyman can lay their hands on to tide it cannily ower!"

Martha waited to see.

How the clerics would dispose of the belongings of the Scotts was not the difficulty alone of Mistress Gibson. The problem was the public´s and a crucial one it was.

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Curious indeed, and occasionally unhappy, were the religious divisions of the colliery families. The inter-marriage of Protestants and Catholics, of Episcopalians and Dissenters led to the most glaring exhibitions of domestic dissimilarities. Nevertheless, the peace was

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well-preserved, remembering the theological and ecclesiastical antagonisms of the conflicting sects. These diversities of creeds in the homes where division obtained were, with one exception, limited to two.

The exception was the household of the Scotts. Joe was a staunch Churchman; in fact, the clergyman´s sidesman. It was regarded as an anomalous thing when he married Becky Sharp. Becky was a Methodist, and loyal to the core. Definite was the understanding when she changed her name.

"Oh, ay! I´m willin´ to tak´ yer name, but not yer religion!" was her reply to Joe when he had blundered out his proposal.

Evidence they gave to the world of the terms on which they began their wedded life. Joe wanted to be marred at the church, but Becky would have no minister, seeing she could not have her own. As a compromise, the ceremony was performed by the Bishopstown Registrar. Joe and his wife lived happily together. They went their own religious ways, and never a word of strife was heard. Two boys were born to them. In arms they were taken to the Methodist Chapel, and grew up in the church of their mother.

Becky´s death, as people were wont to say, "left Joe wi´ his hands full." He did his duty to his sons nobly, and made no attempt to divert

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their religious interests. They continued to attend the services of the Methodists.

Stanger than the first was Joe´s second matrimonial alliance. To marry a widow with three daughters of her own was a brave undertaking in the judgment of Blackerton, but when it was remembered that Catherine Donelly was a Roman Catholic, and was bringing up her children in that creed, Joe´s courage savoured of rashness.

Catherine followed her predecessor´s example. She insisted on a clear arrangement for immediate guidance and for future contingencies. Both parties were satisfied with the actual service of marriage. In perfect good humour, Joe maintained that he was married in the Church of England; she, on her part, affirming that the Church of Rome sanctioned her vows. Two ceremonies were performed, the priest and the clergyman respectively officiating. It was understood on the colliery that Joe and Catherine had agreed that if children were born to them, the sons would take their father´s faith and the daughters their mother´s.

As in the time of the first wife, so in the time of the second, peace reigned in the home of the Scotts. On the Sabbath, Catherine and the girls proceeded to the presbytery, the lads went to the chapel, and Joe performed his duties at the church. When the clerics made

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their calls, their respective religionists received them in the front room. The differences of sect were scrupulously respected. Joe´s sons and Catherin´s daughters agreed in the happiest fashion. If there had been sectarian bickering the neighbours would have known. The fact that scandal had no tales was ample proof of the domestic peace.

In the course of years Catherine presented Joe with a couple of daughters. The bargain was respected. They were received by Father Sloan.

And then came Tot. The curate gave him his name one Wednesday night. Joe was in raptures, living in the anticipation of the time when Tot would accompany him to the church. He would never feel lonely again when he went to worship.

Tot was the last and the least. Such a mite he was said to be. He was the pet of the house. His supremacy was unchallenged. The father´s joy was boundless, the brothers were "proud as Punch" of the tiny chap, the girls were jealous for the nursing, Catherine´s heart ached with love for her latest born.

Such was the family to be ejected and the home to be disturbed. Their goods and chattels would be laid in the row, and the question of their storage would need to be decided. The lines of procedure of the previous day made

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the case of the Scotts exceedingly delicate and dangerous. Three ecclesiasticisms were represented in the family. Which should have the honour of helping in the hour of need? Never before had the clergyman, the minister, and the priest, a puzzle comparable to this.

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Tot relieved the difficulty by uniting the clerics in open revolt. It was the cleverest bit of management the colliery had ever known. The little five-year-old adroitly evaded the dilemma. He was the savior of his family, and the deliverer of the ecclesiastics. With the greatest ease he achieved the feat- He simply took a fever and sent his temperature above the hundred line.

"Ye canna turn us oot the-day, for Tottie´s getten the fever!" was the mother´s greeting to the bailiff.

"This is Number Three, I suppose," was the cold response, "and it doesn´t appear on the exemption list."

"It couldn´t varry weel figure there when the fever´s only just taken him durin´ the neet!" Joe passionately explained.

The bailiff was inexorable.

"It´s a pity, but it cannot be helped," was his lame reply, "but my duty´s plain, and you must all clear out."

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Soon it was known in the street that Tot Scott was "badly," and that the family was raising objection. The sympathy of the crowd was immediately enlisted. Appeals were addressed to the bailiff.

Martha Gibson put her head in at the door. "Here, canny man!" she said, "let them be! The bairn´ll get his deeth o´ cold, if he´s shifted from his bed."

Geordie Taylor was more emphatic.

"Noo, me heartie!" he shouted. "Thoo´ll swing on the gallows if the bairn comes to his deeth wi´ thee meddlin´. It´ll be a case o´ manslaughter as sure as thoo´s standin´ there. If thoo likes the prospect take thee way! Thoo´ll like the feelin´ o´ the rope roond thee neck."

Relentlessly the bailiff held his ground. To him the fever of the child was merely an excuse. He would not be baulked.

The clergyman´s arrival was in the nick of time. A mild and quiet man was the colliery curate. He was distressed at his sidesman´s trouble, and full of pity for the little churchman burning with fever. Sectarianism was not the secret of his partiality, but humanity strong and deep.

"You will not press the matter to-day under these painful circumstances," he said, addressing the official.

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"How can I do otherwise? I must execute the warrant!" was the bailiff´s retort.

Catherine was whispering to her eldest daughter: "Fetch the Father!" And the girl ran off to the house of the priest.

Bob Scott looked at Jim. The look was a language. Jim understood, and took to his heels to acquaint Mr. Robinson.

The ecclesiastics were in the kitchen.

"The bairn´s not a Catholic," Catherin was explaining to the priest, "but he´s my bairn for all that, an´ it´ll be a sin an´ a shame to shift ´im!"

"Ye´ll save ´im, Mister Robinson, winnet ye?" Bob was appealing, with tears in his eyes.

Never before was witnessed such a scene. In the room above the fevered child was lying, in the room beneath the clerics confronted the bailiff. The latter held the warrant in his hand—the symbol of the law´s authority. The powers ecclesiastical, Roman, Anglican, and Methodist, laughed it to scorn. From the preacher to the priest, from the priest to the clergyman, the eyes of the bailiff passed. He had out-manuœvred obstruction countless times before. He was bad to beat and he knew it. To capitulate would be a bitter reverse, but Catholicism, Methodism, and Anglicanism were leagued to oppose.

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"You will be well advised to leave the house!" was the counsel of the Anglican.

"We will not permit the outrage!" was the affirmation of the priest.

"Humanity is higher than law, and the life of a child of greater moment than the vengeance of the cruel!" the Methodist solemnly declared.

The bailiff, baffled and cowed, retired from the scene of conflict. A united ecclesiasticism "in arms" was absolutely irresistible.

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The strangest of all that morning´s strange happenings was the scene the kitchen witnessed when the intruders had departed. The minister, the clergyman, and the priest lingered to cheer the afflicted family. Attention was recalled to the child by the doctor´s entrance. Earlier in the morning he had seen the little invalid. He had come again—he feared for Tot. The mother followed him up the stairs. There was silence in the kitchen.

Presently the doctor descended. His face was grave and his feet were fleet as he passed through the kitchen.

"You´d better say a prayer for Tot!" he exclaimed, glancing at the clerics. "I´m off for a powder. His temperature´s at an awful height!"

They could hear the moans of the mother in the room of the fevered boy.

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Joe Scott burst into tears; the lads fell on their knees; the girls were clinging to each other in the extremity of their grief.

Then the clerics did a gracious and heavenly thing, and proved that "pure religion and undefiled" is greater than the sectarianism of the Churches. The priest and the curate were the juniors of the preacher. In that pathetic moment all questions of orders and of their validity were lost in the limitless charity of compassion and solace.

"Perhaps you will offer prayer, Mr. Robinson?" the clergyman said.

"If you wish it!" replied the minister, glancing at Father Sloan.

"We have One God and One Saviour!" the priest reverently affirmed.

Knees were bowed; hands were clasped; eyes were closed. A prayer was offered. One voice was speaking, but the listening Father knew that the prayer was the prayer of many.

"Oh, Lord! we pray for little Tot, that the fever may abate, and that his life may be preserved to those who love him so well; for his father´s sake, his mother´s sake, for the sake of the sisters and brothers, and for Jesus´ sake."

And the father said "Amen"; and the sisters, and the brothers, and the curate, and the priest.

They were kneeling thus when the doctor reentered and ascended to Tot´s bedside. Few

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were the moments really, though long indeed they seemed to the anxious group in the kitchen, ere the doctor and the mother re-appeared.

One glance at their faces relieved the tension of the dread. Sweet sleep had come for Tot´s salvation.

It was "the atheist" who let it be known that the priest, the clergyman, and the preacher had shaken hands on Joe Scott´s doorstep. Curiosity and the prospect of a priestly fight had kept Tom Foster in the immediate vicinity. He was amazed when the ecclesiastics fraternally parted. His eyes opened widely with astonishment when Father Sloan and Campbell Robinson concurred in the clergyman´s parting words: "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick."

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"THERE IS NEE LUCK ABOOT THE HOOSE."

WHEN morning dawned there was "a coat difference in the weather." The first snow of the winter had fallen during the night, and the black ballast of the roadways was lost in the dazzling whiteness of the flakes. The wintry aspect and the piercing cold were new elements of terror in the eviction proceedings.

Simultaneously "the regiment" arrived. It was "the foreigners" who broke the peace. An ugly rush had been made at the candymen by "the strangers from a distance." Stones had been thrown. Two of the candymen had wounds to show. A cordon of police, sixty strong, appeared on the colliery to defend the bailiff´s gang.

In larger numbers "the foreigners" tramped in. The tenants of Sunderland Street were to be turned to the doors. From the immediate vicinity the crowd was kept by the line of police.

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Dreary was the scene presented. The snow had been trampled under feet, and the wet ballast clung to the shoes. Even the cold kept few indoors. Ex-Corporal Jackson had been unable to keep school since the trouble arose. It was assumed that "the schule had broken up for the halidays." His protégés were glad to see the "bobbies."

The presence of the policemen omened ill in the eyes of the women.

"It´s a bonny queer thing," said one of them, "that the boobies alwes tak´ the maisters´ side. If there´s a bit of a rumpus, in they come like a hundred o´ bricks, wi´ their nasty interferin´. Thoosands o´ times I´ve noteeced it, an´ it´s alwes the pitman that gets the bat!"

"Sartinlies! Sartinlies!" responded her neighbor, with grim satire. "It´s a free country we´re livin´ in , an´ ye´ll surely fi´e them libery to please theirsel´s. There´s only one law for the rich and the poor, so they say, an´ it´s not for the likes o´ us to dispute it. But ye canna help yer thowts noos an´ thens."

"Mind ye, things is come to a fine pass when a regiment o´ bobby-bodies hes to be here to keep things kind o´ quiet!" a third remarked.

"It´s just as weel!" was the savage exclamation of another. "The scoondrels´ll get

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the hooses emptied in quick-sticks. An´ a lot they care, the hard-hearted villains! It´s a fine thing for the likes o´ this to happen in a place like England!"

The screams of a woman were heard. "Wheesht, there!" Kitty Fagan shouted to a nosy group of ladies; "we canna hear oorsel´s speak!"

"It´s Martha Ann," the women were saying. "But what´s the use on her objection´? She´ll hev to come oot, if they hev to drag her oot by the hair o´ the heed!"

Martha Ann was forcibly ejected. Her dress was torn in several places. Her hair had escaped the net, and was hanging down her back. She was beside herself with rage. The sight of all her furniture lying on the muddy road inflamed her fury.

"Oh! the vipers! the vipers!" she screamed. "An´ ye´re nee better nor these ragamuffins!" she yelled to the superintendent of police. "It wad be more to yer mense if ye clapped the shekels on these varmints, an´ locked "Rack" Reaveley in the booby-station. I only papered the hoose a while back, an´ put fifteen pen´orth o´ paint on the doors an´ windows. The hoose was as bonny as could be. But I winnet stand it!" she vehemently shouted, and sprang to the door as the bailiff was turning the key.

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"How way, canny body!" the women expostulated, as she struggled to release herself from the officer´s grip. "What´s the use o´ sayin´ out? If we´d only had the militia on oor side things wad hev been vastly different!"

Like "a hoose on fire" the warrants were executed that day.

Once the policemen charged.

Old Grannie Nixon was being put out at the upstair window. The Blackerton folks were incensed at the sight, and the strangers shouted "Shame!" vainly the officers struggled to drive back the threatening crowd.

"Keep back!" the superintendent commanded.

Closer and closer the policeman were pressed. Again and again Superintendent Blackburn uttered the word of warning to the infuriated spectators.

Suddenly he decided the tactics.

"Fall in!"

The cohort formed.

"Draw truncheons! Double charge!"

Loud cries rent the air—the screams of women, the yells of children, the curses of men. The crowd was a mob.

"Fall in!"

"Return truncheons!"

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Grannie Nixon was lying on a mattress in the cold winter´s air.

The evicted colliers "had their work set." Tents had been erected in the doctor´s field for the safety of the furniture and the shelter of the homeless. Fires were burning, and when the night came on torches lit the darkness.

"It´s nee joke to be gipsies when ye´re kind o´ not accustomed to that style o´ livin´!"

Martha Gibson observed to Tommy, when he was near enough in the tent to hear her. "I wonder if "Rack" Reaveley feels sateesfied like wi´ his mischief-makin´? If it´s murder on a big scale he´s efter, he´s hittin´ on a bonny good plan …. An´ hoo was grannie when ye left her?"

"As weel as could be expected!" Tommy replied. "The cad nipped her badly, but Kitty´s givin´ her a sweat. An,´of course, Meg Toppin´s a terrible comfort. Mind! It´ll be as weel if Tony Fagan bides away. Kitty says she´s gotten that mony lodgers that if Tony comes back an´ wants a bed, he´ll hev to sleep in the cat-basket!"

That night there were two patrols of sentries. The police went the rounds of the colliery in the interests of public order. In the field there was a guard of pitmen, watching the tents for the safety of the general belongings.

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And it was that night, to the surprise of both patrols, that the Catlings went out to the camp to bear the common reproach.

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It had been known for several days that there were "queer carryin´s-on" in the home of the Catlings. Jacob was one of the original nine, and, of course, escaped the warrant. Molly was pleased at the time, for she was "the proudest woman in the hoose direction" then resident in Blackerton. But when the bailiff and the candymen appeared she began to feel uneasy. What business had she to have a regular income, and a roof above her head, when wages were stopped and homes were taken from her neighbours?

Ever and anon her eyes would turn to the picture of a sturdy collier hanging on the kitchen wall. Once she stood on the sofa and read the printing. Above the collier´s head was the inscription, "The People´s Charter," and beneath the likeness were the six points of the Chartist´ creed:

1. Universal suffrage.
2. Vote by ballot.
3. Annual Parliaments.
4. That members of Parliament should be paid.
5. That every man, whether owning property

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Or not, should be eligible for a seat in Parliament.

6. That the country should be divided into electoral districts.

There were tears in her eyes as she murmured, "*He* waddent hev been content to be a hexception. Nay! Fether was a radical charterer. *He* was ales doon on the likes o´ `Rack´ Reaveley. *He* waddent hev bid outside the lodge. *He´d* hev been one of the fighters, mebbe the captain. If he happens to ken hoo things is gannin´, he´ll none be pleased that we´re bidin´ in the hoose!"

Fuel was added to the smouldering fire of Molly´s dissatisfaction. Her two eldest sons, hewers at the pit and members of the Union, had packed their boxes and joined the camp of the evicted. The marriage of her eldest daughter had been postponed by reason of the dispute. Sallie´s sympathies were with the evicted, for her sweetheart had suffered the fate. When her brothers left home Sallie accompanied them, and found plenty to do in the camp.

Molly Catling´s distress was poignant. Proud she had been as a mother of her united and affectionate family. She reviled the quarred for the domestic discord.

Fanned was the fire of discontent when her neighbours on either side were evicted. She

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had kept the door locked, even chained; but though the faces of the crowd were unperceived, she had heard the contemptuous and bitter observations anent Jacob´s adherence to the master´s side.

Her uneasiness deepened to misery. It maddened her to think that her husband had to lodge his way to the pit to avoid malevolent criticisms, and that each night he was escorted home by a taunting group of colliers and their wives. When Jacob got safely within neither he nor she were inclined for speech. Hardly a word was said when they were alone.

As for going outside, she never dared. Shame kept her within doors.

The younger Catlings were boycotted by the Blackerton juveniles. They were eager to be evicted as the rest, and to play at gipsies in the field.

Molly´s dejection so increased that the sight of the picture as torture. The eyes of the old chartist seemed full of reproach. Every memory of his strenuous life sent the shame-flush to her cheek. “It was nowt to him,” she muttered, `to tak´ the walk to London to be one o´ the thousands o´ Chartists to back Mister Feargus O´Connor when the petition was to be taken to Parlyment. An´ here I is, me fether´s only dowter, wi´ a wage

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an´ a hoose, when the neibors is battlin´ for reet!”

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“Mebbe I is, an´ mebbe I isn´t!” she replied when Jacob accused her of superstition. She had starled him by sayin: “There is nee luck aboot the hoose.” He had meant to sneer her out of the fear.

The notion that continued tenancy would mean misfortune had thoroughly mastered her mind. It was the "crockery business" which suggested the dread. In the course of a few days the havoc among the dishes and plates, the cups and glasses, exceeded the breakages if years. "There is nee luck aboot the hoose!" Molly exclaimed, as she picked up the fragments of the fancy pie-dish. She "cried fit to break her heart" when the cup which had been her father´s mother´s slipped from her fingers and was smashed to atoms. "There´s a curse on the hoose! I´m sure on´t! The Catlin´s´ good luck´s gone!"

When she baked the two stones of flour and "clean forgot" the yeast, the fear was confirmed.

Twice she set the clock a-going, and thrice for the "catchy-time," but all to no purpose. A few minutes the clock would go—then her tick would cease. "There is nee luck aboot the

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hoose!" Molly bitterly confessed, leaving the clock to idleness.

And as for Molly, "the dowter," the curse had blighted her wits. Not content with "cowpin´" the bucket at the head of the stairs and drenching the brand-new carpet, she let the bundle of tallow-dips fall into the rain-water pail, and hung them before the fire to dry. "Oh! ye daftie! Ye greet big daftie!" Molly screamed, when she beheld the candles melting away. "There´s nee mistakin' the meanin´! The Catlin´s is under a curse. There is nee luck aboot the hoose!"

It was the day when the "rigiment" appeared. Jacob was scalded. Molly had made the tea and placed teapot on the centre of the fender. Why she put it there she could never explain. The hob was the usual place Jacob was "on" the "cracket," "toastin´ his toes." Molly stepped upon the fender to reach to the mantle-shelf, upsetting the teapot, and scalding Jacob´s feet. With a howl he hitched to the door, while Molly "trimbled as nivver was."

"Mebbies ye´ll believe it noo?" she said, as she bathed his feet with lime-water and oil. "There is nee luck aboot the hoose, an´ accordin´ly it´s one thing efter another, an´ the Lord only knows what´ll be next!"

All was as still as the grave. Jacob and

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Molly were lingering near the fire before retiring to bed. The blind of the scullery window had not been drawn, and they could see the glow of the camp-fires and the flash of the torches.

"It´s a cad neet for folks to be oot!" Molly remarked, thinking of the people within the tents.

"Ay, it is!" Jacob agreed.

Then silence fell, and was long-continued. It was broken by a crash within the kitchen. They were on their feet, staring widly. The picture of the old chartist had fallen from the nail, crashing on the sofa, then leaping to the floor.

"Diddent I tell ye!" Molly screamed, gripping her husband with both hands, and glaring into his face. "There is nee luck aboot the hoose. Me fether winnet bide in it. He wants to be oot in the field wi´ the canny folks that´s getten evicted. An´ by jingo, we´ll dee as he tells us. No! Not another neet will I bide here!" she exclaimed, as Jacob sought to soothe her.

"Bairns! Bairns! Molly! Amos! `Arry! Moriah! Up ye get!" she shouted from the stair-foot. "Up ye get, an´ on wi´ yer claes, an´ we´ll be off to the field where the tents is!"

And so they did. They police eyed them suspiciously for a while, and the sentries in the field knew not what to think. Nevertheless, before midnight there was another deserted house in

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Blackerton. Many questions were asked in the days that followed as to the reason of the self-ejectment of the Catlings.

"There is nee luck aboot the hoose!" was Molly´s reply to one and all.

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THE TOUCH OF NATURE.

THEY lived in a single house, and the warrant was being explained. The bailiff stammered as the haggard eyes of Phil Bex met his. Nellie was in the corner, sobbing and crying, her apron thrown over her head. The candymen shuffled to the door, and in the street whispered to the policemen. Beckoning the superintendent, the bailiff solicited counsel.

The heart of Superintendent Blackburn was deeply moved. He had children of his own and compassionated sincerely the distress of the young husband and wife. To the side of the young woman he stepped and patted her kindly on the shoulder.

"Cheer up, my good woman!" he said. "We will see if anything can be done!"

Martha Gibson was there. She had a right to be, for Nellie Bex was her niece. The hesitation of the bailiff, and the tenderness of the officer, raised high hopes that the young couple would be permitted to remain.

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"It wad be a black, burnin´ shame if they was turned oot!" she declared addressing the superintendent. "Nellie´s my sister´s dowter. You understand, Mr. Blackburn," she continued, in justification of her boldness of speech; "an´, consequently, her man´s my nevvee (nephew). The two-somes only been marred a twelve-mouth, an´ the babby´s aboot due. In fact, it´s behint its time. We reckoned that all wad hev been cannily ower efore this. . . . Hoo wad it dee if my man went to see

Maister Shadrach, an´ just mentioned hoo things were stannin´? His mistress presented him wi´ a bairn once, an´ he´ll mebbe remember!"

So it was agreed.

Martha was left with her niece and Phil, and was blithesome in the belief that the exception would be made in their favour. "Dry thee eyes, hinney," she said, putting her arms round the neck of the weeping girl. "It´s as good as settled. Thee uncle´ll hev just to say a word an´ the thing ´ll be done. He´s a hard man, in Shadrach Reaveley, but he´s been a fether hissel´, an´ there´s alwes a soft place efter that!"

Outside, the colliers, the candymen, and the constables were of one mind and heart. The touch of nature had made them all akin. Resentments were forgotten. The policemen and the bailiff´s men chatted in the friendliest way

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with the pitmen. Kitty Fagan found the bailiff in agreement with her views. Superintendent Blackburn and Geordie Taylor were in amicable conversation.

They were waiting for Gibson´s return.

They were growing inpatient.

"Tommy´s a lang time!" Geordie Taylor ejaculated.

"I wonder what´s keepin´ im?"

"I shouldn´t wonder if he didn´t find that the maister was at the hoffice when he got to the hoose!" Samson Anderson responded. "He wad hev to gan there to seek `im, an´ a bonny lot o´ questions he´d to answer!"

"Oh, no!" the superintendent interjected. "Mr. Reaveley would see the position of affairs at once, and would unhesitatingly agree to stay the warrant."

"Mebbies, only mebbies," Samson dubiously replied. "It´s the likes o´ us that kens the real Mr. Reaveley. He has a lot o´ palavervarnish when he´s in company, but when he´s aboot the pit he´s jus hissel´, an´ see, see!"

"Noo, he´ll be hevin´ a bit confab wi´ Mary Reaveley, that´s what Tommy ´ll be efter!" Kitty Fagan exclaimed. "They say that women-folks is fond o´ gossipin´, but my sartes, they canna haad a candle where the men-folks come!"

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In this deliverance the women concurred.

Kitty laid hands on a chair and seated herself, saying: "We may as weel keep oorsel´s comfortable till he takes it intiv his heed to come back."

When Tommy was discerned in the distance it was known his appeal had failed. Dejection was in his gait.

"I telled ye what it wad be, Mister Blackburn!" Samson Anderson remarked. "If Shadrach hes a heart, there´s neebody knows the lonnen that leads tiv it!"

The bailiff and the superintendent stepped to meet the messenger.

"Well, Gibson, and what did the manager say?" the officer enquired.

"He said varry little, but mair than enough. I was just beginnin´ to open things oot to him," Tommy made answer, "when he said he didn´t want to be bothered wi´ clash, an´ banged the door in me face. I begged and prayed of him to be canny, an´ to think o´ the lass that was nearly a mother, but he said it was nee business o´ his, an´ that we should hev thowt o´ all these things when we laid the pit in."

"Ay, that was like `im," Kitty rejoined. "I was sceptic all the time thoo was away. I just fancy I see ´im. He wad be highty-tighty. He´ll be thinkin´ we´re gettin´ frightened."

To this day the tenderness of the warrant´s

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executioners is rehearsed. It was hardly like an ejectment, so gentle and sympathetic were the constables and candymen. The bailiff ordered that the furniture should be

carried to the camp, and not left standing in the row. And every heart was bitter when Nellie Bex, heavily leaning on Phil and Martha Gibson, was driven from her home.

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Nigh to the hour of midnight a child was born in the tent. All that ingenuity could devise under the peculiar circumstances was arranged for the mother´s comfort and the child´s welcome. In the centre of the tent a space had been cleared and a room constructed. Big pieces of furniture had been placed four-square, with only an opening as doorway. The men had scoured the fields for bags and packings, and with these had closed up all the apertures to keep the draughts out. A desk-bed came in handy, and was speedily made ready by the women. Bundles of straw were laid on the ground, and Martha Gibson´s front-room carpet was spread upon it. Tables and chairs were put in position, and the lamps were lighted. Many eyes peeped in to see the room in the tent, and all were agreed that the sight was "champion."

"Ay!" Martha Gibson said. "there´s mony a poor creeter come to her trouble in worse

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places nor this, an´ mony a bairn hesn´t had the sight of a carpet to make him feel respectable. An´ supposin´ it isn´t a hoose, if ye just suppose contrariwise ye couldn´t tell ony difference. The place is as cosy as can be."

She was only a girl, though a wife, for the pit-folk married early in those days. She was full of fear now that her hour had come. It was a genuine kindness when Kitty Fagan retired, and offered the opinion to the women who were there that it "would be as weel to leave her abee." Martha Gibson´s generous hear, ample knowledge, and clever fingers were devoted to Nellie´s service.

It was not till eleven at night that the doctor was summoned. Phil went to call him. The children of the camp were fast asleep, but men and women lingered in groups near the fires. The spirit of prayer was in every soul. Sometimes the petitions found, voice, and the ejaculations secured responses.

Dr. Maloney was in the room in the tent. Phil Bex was on his knees before the curtain which screened the doorway. Then, an infant´s cry broke the stillness of the night. Phil was on his feet, pacing to and fro. It seemed an eternity. In reality less than thirty minutes had elapsed, when the doctor drew the curtain aside and beckoned Phil.

Martha Gibson was in ecstasies.

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"My lad, an´ thoo´s a fether, the fether of a man-child, an´ a reg´lar beauty he is, an´ a big un!"

She suddenly kissed the abashed Phil and for a moment laid the bairn in his arms.

Then Phil´s eyes found his wife´s. There was a look in hers he had never seen before. The tears blinded him as he stooped to kiss her. They fell on Nellie´s face.

Martha Gibson kept the vigil of the night. The mother was sleeping with her firstborn nestled to her breast.

Even the heroic Martha was startled when the face of the manager´s wife appeared at the curtain. Her finger was up on the instant commanding silence. Mary Reaveley stepped within.

"An´ hoo did ye get to know?" Martha wonderingly whispered.

"Tommy told me this mornin´ that your niece was night her time," and the tears rained down her cheeks as she remembered Tommy´s unsuccessful appeal. "I begged an´ prayed o´ Shadrach to hev mercy on the lassie, an´ to think o ´the morn when I was laid to bed wi´ Joe; but oh! the hardness of his heart! Even to me he waddent listen. I got doon on me knees tiv him, an´ pleaded an´ prayed, an´ said all I coul think on to make him be kind, an´ he only laughed. God forgi´e

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'im, an´ God forgi´e me for sayin´ a word against the fether o´ my bairn that´s an´ angel!

Mary Reaveley was broken-hearted.

"Ye needn´t say owt to me, Mary," Martha tenderly said. "I know ye wad dee yer best."

"I´ve thowt aboot Nellie all day. I expected the upset would bring her to bed the neet, an´ I´ve browt her a few bits o´ things." Again her tears were falling. "They were my bairn´s things. I stitched tem all mesel´. I´ll never want them again, and I´ll be pleased if Nellie´ll hev them, though I is the wife of the maister."

"Why, Mary!" Martha responded, and her heart was full, "divvent be see nonsense-ful! We know you´re not to blame, an´ we´re just see full o´ thankfulness that we hevvent time to be vexed wi´ onybody…. You´ll want to see him, I reckon."

The lamp was turned low, but the light was sufficient to sight. Mary and Martha watched the sleepers. Then, with a full heart, Mary turned to make her way homewards. Much she had risked in venturing to the camp. She was mistaken in imagining that her absence had escaped her husband´s notice. For some reason, inexplicable to himself, he refrained from comment.

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The evictions were in full swing, for the

morning was well advanced. One of the castle carriages was espied on the turnpike. No notice was taken, for many times a day the equipages of Lord Weston were seen on the road to Bishopstown, and seen again on their return. To the left the horses wheeled, up the road to the colliery.

"By gox! It´s coming here," Geordie Taylor shouted, perfectly bewildered.

Not more than twice or thrice had a vehicle from the Castle been seen in Blackerton.

Superintendent Blackburn was uneasy. If the colliery was the destination of the carriage occupants they mist pass up the very street in which the evictions were taking place. The street was blocked with furniture. But perhaps the manager´s house was the place of call, or the clergyman´s residence; in that case the street could be avoided.

A crowd of excited children were running to meet the carriage.

"Two drivers an´ two ahint," they screamed one to another, as the coachman and the grooms appeared in sight. "They´ve all got their big coats on, an´ the lasses´ hairy jackets, an´ the lang toppers. Hooray! Hooray!"

On to the street came the carriage, to the superintendent´s consternation. In his despair he called for the bailiff, wondering what was to be done. From all parts of the colliery the

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residents collected to the street, watching the advancing vehicle.

Some of the bairns came shouting back to their parents. "It´s the Queen!" they yelled, "the lady fra´ the Castle an´ another woman. She´s dressed like all that, wi´ a reed-ridin´-hood cloak, an´ any amoont o´ shaalls."

There was no response to the children´s joy in the hearts of their parents.

"It´s that lot that´s the root o´ all the mischief," Geordie Taylor savagely affirmed. "I wad like to know what business Lord Weston an´ the lords o´ all the other airts, north, sooth, and east, hev wi´ their royalty-rents an´ way-leaves, an´ what no? Somethin´ on every tub o´ coal hes to be laid aside for that lot, an´ a bonny good thing they seem to hev on it... He can live in a castle an´ gan to London as if the fare was only one-and-fippence, an´ horses an´ hoonds, an´ cattle, an´ sheep, an´ pheasants, an´ deers, an´ a crood o´ sarvints. The bits o´ bairns is daft wi´ delight, but they divvent understand these things, but, by-and-by, they´ll get their eyes opened, an´ they´ll find it hard to stomach the haristocrats."

Meanwhile the superintendent was explaining the situation to Lady Weston, and hearing from her the reason of her visit. Dr. Maloney had been summoned to the Castle to see his lordship,

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who had caught a chill; he had told them of the child born in the tent, and she had come to see for herself.

The horses pranced while the candymen lifted the furniture to the sides to make way for the carriage. The policemen were stationed on the route.

"If she´d been a lady—a real lady—she waddent hev come at all!" Kitty Fagan asserted. "But she´ll be just like the forst woman that the Bible tells on. She was a cur´osity body was Eve, an´ it´ll be cur´osity that setten her ladyship here. She´ll be wantin´ to see what things look like when they´re all upset, an, when she gets her dinner wi´ Mister Lordship, she´ll mak´ `im die wi´ laughin´ at the pickle we´re all in. I´ve half a mind to give her her Sunday name. they nasty spiteful creeter, wi´ her fine feathers!"

Through the street to the camp the carriage proceeded. When the way became uneven the grooms alighted and led the horses. At the tent´s entrance they drew rein. The police had formed a bodyguard, and were now drawn up on either side of the way from the carriage-door to the tent. The grooms were in service, attending to her ladyship. Their arms were full of rugs and wrappers.

"Get them doon, ye jackanapes! Her ladyship´ll dorty her slippers," Kitty Fagan shouted,

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venting her wrath, and thinking that the shawls were to serve in place of carpets. "By hinnies! If ye were mine, I wad mak´ ye sharpen yer pegs!"

Lady Weston was brave indeed to face the crowd of angered pitfolk. The men were infuriated, the passion of the women was at white heat. The crowd was a magazine of malice. To fire it, only a spark was needed.

Her ladyship alighted, followed by her maid.

The crowd held its breath as the vision of her youthful beauty dawned upon them.

"Take me to see the child and his mother," she said, in sweet and trusting tones, to the superintendent.

In the curtained doorway she stood. Every detail of the extempore arrangement was observed in that sweep of the eye.

"How good of you all to do the best you could to make them comfortable!" she exclaimed, with frank kindliness. "May I come in?" she appealed to Tommy´s Martha.

And she stood near the bed, stroked the forehead of the wondering Nellie with her soft white hand, and kissed her on the checks; and when at length the child was in her arms, she sat on the three-legged stool and declared he was a jewel of a boy.

Martha Gibson had sent for Tommy. The turn affairs had taken had driven her wits away.

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Her ladyship did all the talking. The eviction was a scandal to the county, she declared. She neither knew nor wanted to know what it was all about, but to turn poor people into the fields, as though they were tramps and vagrants, was a disgrace to the British Empire.

Then she mentioned her shceme, and bewitched all parties to concurrence. There and then she would take the Bexes to the Castle—the mother, the father, and the "jewel of a boy." The horses could walk, and they had wraps and rugs in abundance. Dr. Maloney could give Black Bess a gallop to the Castle each day, and all enquiring friends would be welcome.

Martha feared it was risky, but her ladyship was positive no harm would befall.

Lady Weston´s will was done. She was the presiding genius.

Who can describe the scene when the mother and child were lifted within the carriage?

When all was ready for departure, she spoke to the watching crowd: "You must all try to be brave in the midst of your troubles, and be kind and helpful to each other. God bless you."

And a discordant cry went up—a shout of gladness, which was yet a sob, and a wail, and an anguish of shame. Malice fled, and suspicion, and all feelings evil, and a great love, radiantly happy, possessed every heart. Geordie Taylor

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eased his soul by filling up the ruts with stones to save the carriage from jolting. Kitty Fagan was shamed of her wicked words and openly confessed she was "a bad ´un." Tommy Gibson was crying like a child, and was blamed by Martha for "setten´ her on as weel."

There was no need for the cordon of police to act as bodyguard. A thousand hearts poured benedictions on the lady from the Castle.

The "touch of nature" leaps the chasm of the social cleavage. Love makes the whole world kin.

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WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS.

HARRY MINNS was an old man at fifty. He had "nivver been neewhere else" than Blackerton, and openly confessed that he wasn´t keen to shift at his time of life. He was in the lodge, and one of the active spirits. "A cramper" he was commonly called, by reason of his caustic wit, his droll anecdotes, his utter contempt of all opinions cherished concerning him.

"Edecation!" he would say. "There was nee sich thing in my time; that is to say, in a manner o´ speakin´ , it haddent getten here. I was edecated to work, an´ lost nee time aboot it."

"Oh, ay!" he would acknowledge. "When yer years coont five-tens-fifty ye´ll be likely to hev seen improvements, front ways an´ back ways, upside an´ doonside, for the better o´ the workin´-classes an´ the worse."

"Noo, divvent be efter showin´ off to me!" he would impatiently outburst to a junior man

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airing his wisdom. "There´s varry few things ye can tech me. An´ I hevvent getten mine fra´ picter-books, but in the booels of the warth, wi´ a shovel an´ a pick-shaft. Man alive! I´ve forgotten mair than the likes o´ thoo´ll ever know."

When Harry Minns was hot, he was red hot. It took something to engender the heat, but when the fire was kindled, invisible oil seemed to tempt the flames. Often he barked, but seldom bit; when he did bite he left more than the marks of his teeth. And, having once taken a side, no power on earth could move him. Teddy Tuner and he were "cronies."

He was one of the founders of the local union, and gloried in the fact that he had moved the resolution which led to the deadlock and the eviction.

Harry was at his best in the lodge-room. When the younger men doubted and hesitated, he pronounced his certitudes.

"The whole bag o´ tricks o´ ye hevvent a heart, as big as a sparrow´s" he would say contemptuously, goading them to resistance and courage. "What a blessin´ I´s here, an´ a few auld pitmen like me! I wonder hoo ye wad hev managed if ye´d had this job to yersel´s?" and the pompous little autocrat would eye them compassionately.

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"He as prood as Lucifer, an´ a reg´lar Boneyparte," would be whispered round the room.

It was Harry who put them on the scent of the blacklegs.

"As sure as my name´s Harry, we´ll hev some o´ the tribe at eh collery. They´re warse than devils, is the blacklegs. `Efore I wad tak´ the breed oot of a man´s mooth, an´ dee the dorty work o´ the gaffers, I wad cut me throat, an´ droon mesel´! They´re a nasty, venomous crew, is the blacklegs, not only black in the leg, but black in the hand, an´ black in the head, an´ black in the heart. Onythin´ but a blackleg I can stand. A doonright honest thief ye can dee wi´, an' a liar o´ the straightforward kind ye can abide, but a blackleg—why language is only a middlin´ thing to get ye feelin´s mentioned…Noo, they´ll be comin´, an´ Rack´ll be see nice an´ civil. He´ll set them on, an´ they´ll send for their wives an´ families, an´ where´ll us be? We´ll either hev to rot in the field, or emegrate. That´s the prospect. A´, but we´ll gi´e them `gip´ when they come. An´ they´ll come. As sure as I´m givin´ ye gospel, they´ll come. Be ones an´ twos, an´ threes an´ fowers, an´ mebbes be sivins an´ tens, they´ll come. Ay, an´ by the livin´ Harry!" he thundered, bringing his fist down with a bang upon the table, "we´ll send them back wi´ their tails atween their legs!"

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Blackerton was suspicious and watchful. Colliers forgot their differences an women their grudges in the apprehension of the blacklegs´ advent. And every day, morning noon, and night, men, women, and children eyed the strangers. They were questioned, they were shadowed from the hour of their appearance till the moment when they left.

To blackleg was infamy of the vilest. In the judgment of the evicted it was as bad as murder. "The fellow that takes a striker´s place is worse nor a highway cut-throat!" was the verdict of the colliery.

"It´s a funny thing there´s nowt aboot blackleggin´ in the Commandments," Harry Minns´ missis observed, when the old pitman had unburdened his mind for the

hundredth time. “It seems to me they should hev put in a word when they were on aboot covetin´ yer neighbour´s wife, an´ what not.”

“A´, hinney,” Harry replied. “Moses knew nowt aboot pits. The only disputes he ever handled were wi´ brickmarkers an´ their gaffers. Blacklegs is a sort o´ scum that ye only find in the coalfields. Else, if he´d ever been in these parts, ye can lay yer life he wad hev come oot strong on the subject.”

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It was through the strangers the manager intended to outwit the men of the union. In

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the county papers, and in journals far afield, his advertisement appeared, inviting men to the standing colliery. “Men with working sons” were preferred. In the parlour of the “Black Horse” the advertisement was first discovered, and wild was the tumult when they read of the offer of the houses and gardens, and all the usual privileges to the invited blacklegs. Through the colliery went the news to the hardening of the heart and the sharpening of the eye.

Then they came, one at a time. The road from the turnpike, the path to the manager´s house, the wagon-way to the offices, were the tracks of the union´s scouts. And many a blackleg got the “reet-aboot-turn.”

But even the scouts were tricked, for the blacklegs crossed the fields. Evading the sentries, they got the “gliff” in the sight of the multitude.

“Noo, thoo´s a blackleg,” harry Minns exclaimed, thrusting his face into that of a stranger. “Thoo hes the cut o´ the nasty breed, wi´ thee paper collar an´ clean shart an´ Sunday duds (clothes). I can smell the hair-oil, an´ there´s the foxey look in thee eye, an´ the slink in thee gait. Noo, thoo´ll get thee ways to the lonnen, an´ not be lang aboot it!” and the blackleg departed, silent and cowed, to the delight of all assembled.

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Blackerton was hilarious at Tony Fagan´s expense. It had been shrewdly suspected that the "spy" would be seeking strangers. Confirmation was forthcoming, and yells of laughter greeted every mention of Fagan´s name. Late at night, Tony, with a couple of blacklegs, had knocked at his door and demanded lodgings for himself and friends. Long and often he had knocked before Kitty prepared to answer. When at length from the window, she made enquiries, she had Tony "stampin´ mad in less than nee time."

"A´! what nonsense ye´re talkin´," she said. "I´ve been a widda this while back, an´ nicely getting´ ower the frettin´. Tony died in the Court-House under distressin´ sarcumstances. He must hev been restless among the speerits, for his ghost made a row one neet, but I hoyed him a sark o´ Tony´s, an´ that seemed to give him ease. Mebbe ye´re the same ghost?" she gravely queried.

The blacklegs were furious. They had feared to come, and had only consented when Tony promised them beds in his won house and lodgings till they were accommodated with homes. They were certain that he had duped them, and there and then thrashed him thoroughly. "By hinnies, but he did squeal," Kitty observed to her friends. "If all ghosts

hev lungs like Tony´s they´ll be a deefenin´ lot to live wi´."

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Then the advertisement was altered and the blacklegs were directed to address their applications to the attorney in Bishoptown. To this day the tale is told. It happened on a Saturday. The manager had driven into town to hear the lawyers latest news. "Splendid! Splendid! Couldn´t be better," Reaveley joyfully responded, when his legal man informed him that nine-and-thirty men were coming from a Midland coalfield, and would arrive at Bishopstown Station at 11.55.

"This will end the business, you´ll see," Reaveley continued, with gusto. "With thirty-nine and the men on the place we can count-on, the pit can start. It will be worth our while to do the thing handsomely at he very beginning. They may be ticklish to deal with, but we´ll give gem a dinner at the "Rose" as soon as they land, and then we can come to terms. The dinner will put them into humour."

Reaveley left the order at the hotel while the lawyer went to meet the train.

If rumours may be trusted, the blacklegs had a sumptuous repast. They commercial-room was placed a their entire disposal. Substantial was the meal, and even dessert was spread. The blacklegs were cofounded. Such bounteous

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treatment was without precedent. They could hardly believe they were still in England, and, when cigars were offered, they pinched each other in exuberant delight. Unanimously they agreed that they lawyer was a nice-spoken gentleman, and all were assured that of jolly good fellows Reaveley was the jolliest and the best.

"Now, men," the manager concluded, "I´ve told you the wages I´ll pay, and the conditions of service. The houses are standing empty and ready for occupation at once. If you agree to star, you will be driven out; you can send for your families, and all removal expenses and train-fares we´ll be pleased to refund."

O course the "guests" agreed, chuckling heartily at their great good luck. In the vehicles of the "Rose" they were conveyed to the colliery. Business detained the manager in town, but the drivers were instructed to tale the nine-and-thirty to Blackerton.

At the bend of the road the waggonettes were descried. By the time the village was reached the populace was gathered to give them greeting.

"It´s just as I telled ye," Harry Minns asserted. "the two that warmed Tony´s jacket were a deputation, an´ here´s the gang that sent them. Noo, me boys," he continued, "this lot´s to leave an´ quick-sticks. If they´ll gan wi´ a word or two, the better for them, but

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if they set their monkeys up, we´ll let them see sparks… Here, Tommy an´Geordie!" he called, to Gibson and Taylor, "stand wi´ me."

Evidently the blacklegs were perturbed. The sight of the throngs and their menacing gestures filled them with alarm. The vehicles came to a stand, and the blacklegs were ordered out. Somewhat unwillingly they obeyed, but the drivers would brook no dallying. With the eviction proceedings the latter were well informed, and in their hearts despised the men they had driven in.

"Noo, noo, me lads. Be easy, an´ let, them be," old harry cried, as the nine-and-thirty were being surrounded.

The blacklegs were taking counsel.

"Why, they´re foreigners," Kitty Fagan declared. "They´re jabberin´ away here, an´ O canna´ mak´ oot a word wi´ sense or meanin´."

When the blacklegs´ spokesman ventured speech, his "twang" cause general laughter, and when Harry replied in his vernacular, the blacklegs viewed each other in ignorance of his meaning. Such are the freaks of dialects!

Eventually communication was established, and the strangers were enlightened as to the actual circumstances of the case. They professed ignorance, and knew not what to do.

"Ye´ll hev to gan back to the spot ye came from," old Harry declared, which, when inter-

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-preted, the blacklegs confessed was out of the question, as they were penniless.

The drivers were wheeling round. To the waggonettes the blacklegs sprang to return to Bishopstown. This the drivers would not permit, as the fare had only been paid for the single journey.

The strangers were left with the Blackerton folk.

"Noo, I´ll tell ye what we´ll dee," Harry began, with geat politeness. "There´s nee wark here for ye. Ye should hev made enquiries efore comin´, ye´ll hetta gan back home. An´ to show we´re sorry to see ye lookin´ see soft, we´ll pay yer train fares all the way. This is a county quarrel, an´ we´ll be backed oot in this expense. What d'ye say?"

When Harry´s proposal had been duly elucidated, it was debated by the nine-and-thirty, and thankfully accepted.

"Weel, then, Mister Tommy Gibson an´ Mister Geordie Taylor, the lodge secretary an´ treasurer, will gan in wi´ ye to Bishopstown, buy yer tickets, an´ see ye cannily away."

And off they went.

Tommy and Geordie were having quite a cordial chat with the Midland pitmen as they tramped to the town. Surely the fates were against them. They were halfway in, when they met the manager driving homewards. At

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a glance he comprehended the position of affairs. He stamped and fumed, ordered his "guests" to return to the colliery, swore what the law would do to the leaders of the local lodge, and, when threats were unavailing, declared his intention of returning to the town to engage the police to arrest the entire party. The blacklegs were more than afraid as they watched his retreating figure. They had visions of handcuffs and prison cells.

One word Tommy Gibson whispered to Geordie Taylor.

"Crossvale."

High in the air, with a scream of delight, went the cap of the local treasurer.

"Tommy, I could find it in my heart to kiss tha´ for thinkin´ on´t. Ha! Ha! Ha! What a pity auld Harry´s not here. He´ll split his sides wi´ laughin´ when he hears on´t. It´ll be dangerous to speak to "Rack" for a month efter this. But how way, let´s be off."

Crossvale was the fist station on the main line after Bishopstown, and only two miles from the place where they had encountered Reaveley. The manager would gather the police at Bishopstown Station. Crossvale would never suggest itself as the way of escape. Thus they could dupe him.

The plan was explained to the blacklegs, who were as jubilant as Tommy and Geordie in the

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prospect of deliverance. A sharp turn to the right put them on the track, and away they went with hurrying feet.

"Oh, ay!" Geordie said to the Blakerton folk, when the tale was told. "We got there in nice time, got the tickets, saw them in, an´ bonny an´ thankful they were to see the last on us."

Shadrach did as he had threatened. The police were on the platform ready to arrest the blacklegs for the breaking of their agreement.

"They´ll be coming, I tell you," Reaveley retorted, impatiently and savagely.

When he saw that he was mocked his heart was hardened.

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THE ROMANCE OF THE PIT-HEAP.

"A´ HA´D yer tongue, till I sit me doon!" Kitty Fagan would say, when the pit-heap happened to be mentioned. "Laugh? I get a stich in me side whenever I think on´t. To see them wooden railin´s roond the heap, an´ Alec wi´ his wooden leg gallavantin´ like a noodle—why, laugh? I canna see mesel´ for laughin´. Wheesht a bit till I´m sittin´ easy!"

Tony´s wife had no monopoly of the mirth. That hideous mass of debris was a continual source of amusement to all the colliery-folks during the perquisites of the

Northern miner. Rent and firing were in the pitman´s bargain. Whenever the master was unable to provide a colliery-house, an allowance was made in lien of the rent and the cost of fuel. To annul the contract of service was to terminate

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the house´s tenancy and to withdraw the coal allowance. These conditions of employment gave to the mining community, when industrial peace was maintained, a sense of domestic security. It was felt that they were "cannily-off" when they were "sittin´ rent free" and were "sure o´ th´ firin.´"

Of course, there were complaints as to the destinations of the different qualities of coal. The colliery-carts were vigilantly scrutinised as they passed by the backs of the houses. A load of "lumpy" or "roundy" was certain to be laid at an official´s door; the poor pitman got the "rubbishy small" —so it was said, and said at every consignment. Nevertheless, there was an abundance of fuel, so that every pitman´s kitchen could have its ample fire.

When the notices were served in Blackerton it was well understood that homelessness would not be the limit of their subsequent privations. The coal supplies would be cut off, and the future must needs be faced with this additional severity.

In the interval between the delivery of the notices and the actual eviction an unwonted economy was exercised with the store of fuel remaining. Afterwards woful sights were seen—men and women, on the railway-sidings picking up the coal and coke, and little children with bags and baskets, poking in the wagon-

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ways for everything of the semblance of fuel. Later still a pathetic contrivance was the general procedure. When the snow was on the ground the evicted pitfolk would dig beneath, scoop out the grimy ballast, mix the dust with water, and make what they called "coal-balls."

Cold is a terrible thing to the miner and his family. Accustomed to the big fire of the tiny kitchen all the year round, they are susceptible to every blast of the winter´s wind.

The pit-heap became, therefore, an object of peculiar interest. In the long years a mountainous pile of refuse had been there collected. Valueless to the owners, of priceless worth it seemed to the needy and shivering people.

The manager was well aware that the heap would be a sore temptation. It strengthened the public impression of his desperate determination when barricades were erected round the heap, notices posted threatening the prosecution of all trespassers, and the appointment of Alec Hedley as the watchman. The choice of Alec was the inexplicable item in the manager´s scheme of defence. It was a provocation and an invitation rather than a prohibition. The rumour spread that the trouble had affected "Rack´s headpiece," and that he was hardly responsible for all he did.

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Tony´s mistress was mystified, even while she enjoyed the farce. "Alec mindin´ the heap!" she would say. "Why, it´s like sendin´ a lamemay (a little lamb) to manage a menagerie."

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The Hedleys, mother and son, were "uncommonly weel-liked." The "marrow" of Auld Bessie could not be found in the county. "She´s ninety if she´s nine," was the reply when her age was the subject of question. And, indeed, she was a wonderful woman! With her fourscore years and ten, she could see to read "print" without the aid of glasses. Reckoning on Bessie´s deafness, a gossipy stranger was glad to escape from the wrath of her tongue. It was Bessie´s proud boast that all her senses and faculties were "in fettle." As for the doctor, she regarded him with the utmost contempt. She riled him occasionally by insinuating that his profession was a piece of bluff.

"Bessie Hedley!" Dr. Maloney would maliciously exclaim, "you´ll be taken badly one of these days, and you´ll be glad to see me!"

"Nivver!" old Bessie would retort. "By hinnies, nee doctor´ll ever try his games on me! I´ve manished this ninety years, an´ I can manish another ninety. When I hev to die, thinks I," she would affirm with sudden solemnity, "I´ll not want to be poisoned. By gox!" she would

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continue with great glee, "I´m one o´ th´ long livers that´ll hev to be shot!"

Alec was Bessie´s only son. He was sixty if he was a day, and yet, to his mother, he was only "a bit lad." The years had marked no difference in her style of address. Grey-haired man as he was, his obedience and deference were those of a child of six.

A lovable man was Alec, and distinguished in his way.

"Thinks I to mesel´," was a phrase continuously on his lips. It was an extension of a trick of his mother´s speech. "Thinks I!" "Says I!" were familiar ejaculations of Bessie´s. Alec found variation in the enlargement of the formula.

A happy soul was Alec, save when his wooden leg was regarded as an infirmity. He scouted the idea that he was crippled, and would waylay to chastise any who dared to express commiseration. "Thinks I to mesel´," he would mutter, "the wooden `un´s as good as the one me mother gave me!"

The comical and the mischievous had a place in Alec´s make-up. Even when his drolleries were creating the wildest mirth his face was as stern as the visage of a Sphinx. His exploit with the recruiting-sergeant was probably his greatest achievement. He was one of many seated at the tables in the reading-

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room when the soldier appeared in his dazzling regimentals. The shilling was offered to tempt recruits, but none of the colliers were willing. A second time the sergeant went round the room, holding the coin before the eyes of the pitmen.

Something in Alec´s eye arrested the attention of the man of war.

"Will you take the shilling, my man?" the sergeant enquired of Alec.

"Thinks I to mesel´, I´ve nee objection. It´s a good `un, I suppose?" and Alec rang the shilling on the table, and caught it in his hand.

To the others the offer of enlistment was made, but without success. Seeing that his cause was hopeless, the sergeant called upon Alec rejoined, as he hobbled across the floor with his wooden leg.

Anger was on the sergeant´s face, and indignation in his voice, when he demanded the return of the shilling.

"My canny man," Alec blandly replied, "thoo´s makin´ another mistake. Thoo axed me if I wad tak´ the shillin´, an´ a bit unusual. Noo thoo wants it back, because thoo hadn´t the sense to look an´ see if me legs would soot the regimentals. Thinks I to mesel´, I´ve got the shillin´, an likely to keep it."

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And the sergeant departed a wiser man.

Droll as he was, his simplicity was a ceaseless wonder. He was a bachelor of the hopeless type, and free from all suspicion of hankering after the gentler sex.

"Wed?" he would say. "Me get wed? Thinks I to mesel´ I´ll hardly venture. Me mother an´ me´s auld friends, an´ I waddent like to gan away wi´ a strange woman."

Even the manager was amused when he commissioned Alec to act as the pit-heap garrison.

"An´ what many be the nature o´ the duties, Mister Reaveley?" he naively enquired.

"Now, Hedley, none of your fooling!" Shadrach responded severely. "The pit-heap will be attacked night and day for firing purposes, and it is your business to keep the folks off."

"Thinks I to mesel´," Alec made answer, "ye should be varry much oblige if it gets used up in a gradual way."

"Why don´t you think to yourself when you say you do?" Reaveley demanded.

"Thinks I to mesel´ that´s just what I was sayin´," Alec explained.

"Well, then, you understand, Alec! I´ll hold you responsible for the pit-heap!" the manager concluded.

"Nay, nay, Mister Reaveley! Howld me

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responsible for a thousand tons o´ rubbish! Thinks I to mesel´, what´s it worth? Rubbish is worth nowt, even though there´s a million tons on´t. If I´m to give a sort o´ guarantee that the pit-heap hes to be as big at the end o´ the winter as at the start, thinks I to mesel´, I´ll see what me mother says!"

"Hedley! you´re an idiot!" the master exclaimed. "I want you to *watch* the heap!"

"Oh that´s different!" cried Alec, apparently relieved. "*Watch* the heap! It´ll be dowlie (lonely) wark lookin´ at a mountain o´ rubbish fra´ mornin´ to neet, but if that´s all you want, thinks I to mesel´ there can be nee objection. As me mother says, it´ll keep us oot o´ mischief!"

"Quite so!" agreed the viewer. "Keep a sharp look-out on the heap, and see that the scoundrels and their youngsters keep their hands from picking and staling."

"It´ll be the tramps ye´re fear on?" Alec suggested. "Thinks I to mesel´, I´ll crack their fingers if they try their tricks!"

"What do the tramps want with a pit-heap, you trickhead?" Reaveley impatiently demanded. "The danger is from the union men, and their wives and bairns."

"Oh, I see!" Alec replied, with a show of sudden intelligence. "I´ll tell them to keep off, but thinks I to mesel´, I canna be on all sides all at once."

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"Of course you can´t, but you can surely perambulate round and round?"

"Sartinlies!" Alec concurred. "You want me to *watch* the pit-heap?"

"Quite so!" said Reaveley. "And a nice easy job it will be!"

"Ay, easy wark," Alec commented. "An´, thinks I to mesel´, it´ll be easy money."

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Alec was on guard, and practically had only himself to please. He was fickleness itself in the policies he pursued. That heap might have been a diamond-mine, so doggedly he defended the barricades when certain people clamoured for admission.

It was know that the gentry had failed to cajole him. Why they came was a secret; but come they did, six of the colliery property, and in the course of their tour, desiring to pass within the pit-heap railings.

"Keep to that side, my bonny chaps!" Alec exclaimed, when they were scaling the barricades.

"But we want to climb up to the shaft head!" one of them protested.

"Thinks I to mesel´, what ye want an´what ye´ll get on this occasion´s varry different thins," replied the watchman. "My orders

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is that neebody hes to be within the boundary without special leave."

"Do you know that I am the Mayor of Jarrow?" one of the gentlemen asked majestically.

"Thinks I to mesel´, if thoo was the horse o´ Shields, or the stallion fra´ Sunderland, thoo canna come near the heap!"

Blackerton was hilarious when Alec sent Isaac Todd about his business. "Toddy," as he was familiarly called, not content with his wages as a miner, carried on a confectionary business in his cottage. What an object of marvel was Toddy´s window to the juveniles of the place! In chocolate and sugar-cake were elephants, and camels, and horses, and mice.

Toddy was supposed to be "featherin´ his nest." The pit-heap guardsman was amazed when the pitman-confectioner came with his poke to gather fuel.

"Thinks I to mesil´, thoo´s not wantin´ in impidence, Isaac Todd," said Alec, when the other´s purpose was revealed. "Ye should be ashamed o´ yersel´ to want firin´ free, gratis, an´ for nothin´. Thinks I to mesel´, ye canna be badly off when you´ve got a sugar menagerie in yer window.

Toddy´s face was the picture of woe. "Ye wad think ye was badly off, Alec Hedley," he

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whimpered, "if ye had to sugar yer tea wi´ candy cats."

Even this extremity of impoverishment failed to move the watchman´s compassion. His heart was steeled against Toddy, and the latter was obliged to retire with empty bag.

Alec Hedley was deliberately inconsistent. He would hobble round he corner to be out of the way when the colliers came to riddle the heaps, and when the ladies filled their little bogies with such firing as they could find.

"Thinks I to mesel´," he would mutter, "it canna be wrang to let them howk among the rubbish. Where´s the harm, I wad like to knaw? If I let the poor creeters get somethin´ to keep the fires in it´ll be lettin´ `Rack´ dee a good thing without his hevin´ the bother on´t, on the sly like, an´ on the off side. Thinks I to mesel´, at the Day o´ Judgment, he´ll be obliged to me for gettin´ a good thing doon to his accoont."

The manager scared him out of his wits. Kitty Fagan was filling her bag. Alec was aware of the fact, and had considerately withdrawn to the other side. "Rack" suddenly appeared on the summit of the heap, shouting for Alec, and gesticulating wildly in Kitty´s direction. In the instant Alec set off to chase the thief away, pulling his cap from his head

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to give speed to his feet. Rounding the corner, Tony´s wife was full in view.

"Ye auld scoundrel, Kitty Fagan," he shouted, "takin´ advantage o´ me absence! Off ye scamper, or I´ll tak´ ye in charge!"

Kitty was making off with such haste as she could attain with her well-filled bag upon her shoulder. Alec was in pursuit.

Gaining on Kitty, and fearing that he might overtake her, he loudly vociferated: "Thinks I to mysel´, Kitty, I´ll cop tha´!"

"If thoo does, Alec Hedley," Kitty shouted back, "I´ll tell thee mother on tha´!"

Alec knew that "Rack" was watching the chase. He wondered what he would do with Kitty, or rather, what Kitty would do with him, if he succeeded in laying hands upon her.

It was a simple expedient, but effective. When within five yards of Tony´s mistress, as though by accident, his wooden leg tripped over a rail, and he was stretched on the muddy road.

Old Bessie Hedley was gratified when Kitty declared, after having related the adventure, that Alec was "a rare lad."

In the end conscience came to torment the keeper of the heap. He knew that the mountainous pile had been literally turned upside down, screened and riddled for every vestige of coal.

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Not merely by day, but by night, the heap had been the rendezvous of the people evicted. Even at midnight, when he had peeped from his garret window, he had seen the dark figures of the prowlers searching for coal in candlelight.

What would the manager think of him? His misery increased when once conscience had driven in the wedge of remorse.

"Thinks I to mesel´," he would lament, "I´m a wicked an´ unprofitable sarvant."

To the manager he went at length, confessing his shame, and resigning his commission. And "Rack" laughed with a heartiness and jollity which surprised Alec exceedingly. "Ha! Ha! Ha!" Reaveley screamed, and so uproariously and genuinely that his wife hastened to learn the cause.

"Why, Mary, hinney, this *is* lark! Here´s Alec feelin´ like a sinner for lettin´ the folks get their firin´ from the heap. Haven´t I had them on? Did ye think I was such a fool as to believe that a barricade and a watchman could save the heap? It would have taken a regiment of soldiers, as well as cordon of police, to have kept them back. Man, Alec, I wanted to egg them on. That´s why I went to the expense of the railin´s an´ gave ye such a light job!"

Shadrach was gleeful. "You´re an auld sinner, Alec Hedley, betrayin´ yer trust," he declared, with jovial banter. "Wait till I see

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Auld Bessie, an´ I´ll give her a fine character about ye."

"Thinks I to mesel´," said Alec. "I needn´t hev fashed to hev bothered the Lord to forgi´e me!"

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THE END—THE BEGINNING.

EVEN in the coal-mine, competition is a principle of action. So keen is the spirit of rivalry among the Galloway-putters that, not unfrequently, jealousy leads to encounters pugilistic. As for the hand-putters, to secure the largest output is the daily design of one and all. The deputies have ambitions likewise, and vie with one another to win the premier name. It is, however, among the pitmen proper, the hewers of the coal, that the spirit of competition is the fiercest. What struggles there are in the mine´s darkness! With energy Herculean, and speed impetuous, the colliers toil to beat the latest record.

Suicide it is to the infatuated competitors. As men intoxicated they stagger from the coal´s face when the hours of strain have run their course. The pride of the conqueror is unbounded when his championship of the hewing fraternity is established. As a king crowned, or a gallant knighted—so is he. Visiting neighbouring collieries, he

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discovers that his fame is known, and revels in the plaudits which greet him. A champion hewer is a person of distinction. Assuredly his supremacy has its hazardous side, since his defeat is the daily project. His ascendency maintained, his authority is paramount.

When the pit was laid-in, Bill Gibbons was Blackerton´s champion. How he managed to find entrance into places less than two feet high, and to work therein when entrance had been gained, is a problem baffling to the unversed mind. Bill was of gigantic stature, with mighty limbs and strength prodigious.

It was well for the general peace that his closest rival was his nearest friend. Franky Coulson was well aware that in muscularity he was Bill´s inferior, and was content with the glory of the second´s place.

"Thick as thieves," were the two of them, and "menseful" of each other. In Franky´s absence, Bill would relate the pitmatic exploits of his mate. When Franky was free to speak, the praises of his hero would relate the pitmatic exploits of his mate. When Franky was free to speak, the praises of his hero would be sung. Proud men were these expert pitmen.

It was an old story, but Franky never wearied of repeating it.

"Ye wonder why Bill an´ me´s sich pals?"he would say enquiringly, by way of prelude. "Ye´ll not wonder when I tell ye what he did for me. It was like lightnin´, it was that sudden.

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Him an´ me was workin´ away for bare life. We´d heard that two o´ them foreigners fra´ Cornwall was tearin´ away to get a tub more nor us. Bill and me was on the job. As near as I could tell, another hoor an´ the shift would hev been finished… Doon she comes, timmer an´ all. Bill an´ me´s in the dark… She was on me legs, an´ move I couldn´t. Where was Bill, I thinks. Mebbe she´s killed `im. I durna ask for fear he telt me he was deed… Then I hears`im.

"´Franky,´he says, `hoo is tha´?´

"Man Bil,´I says, `I´m glad thoo´s in speakin´ from. Hoo is thoo?´

"´She´s on me legs, man, an´they´re all to bits,´he says.

"`An she´s on mine as weel, ´I tells him. An´ there we was, Bill an´ me, in the dark sitting with the stones on the legs an´ feet… When the depetty came an´ the t´others, they saw Bill forst. Reg´lar vexed he was when they began to get him clear. `Had away to Franky,´ he tells them. ´The heavier end´ll be on him. Noo I´m tellin´ ye. I winnet be oot till he´s oot. When Franky´s on his pins, ye can come to me.´

"Bill´s legs was broken, an´ for the matter o´ that, so was mine. The depetty was sick with the sight on us. `An´, man,´ Bill says tiv `im when he was wonderin´ what to dee to get

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us oot, `I wad be a man, I wad. Just put Franky intiv a tub, an´ let the Galloway walk. An´ two on ye carry me, an´ I´ll carry me legs… He´s a plucky `un is Bill, an´ nee mistake, an´ a grand marrow when ye´re in the dark, an´ hardly sure whether ye´re alive or deed."

Bill´s Nancy commonly remarked that he was an expensive man to keep. His strength was such that to maintain it she should have had "a fortnight´s pay each week." Holding the championship of the colliery, it was her duty to keep him "in fettle." Nothing came amiss in the way of his appetite. "Solid and substantial" was the fare he required; yet, as Nancy well knew, he was "awful fanciful for sweetmeats." "He could eat tarts," she would say, "like snowballs in front of a fire."

The champion had ac nick-name. He was ignorant of the fact. It was only used when his back was turned. He was drunk when he made the strange request and enquired the route to the continent. It was on a pay-Friday night. In the "Black Horse," he had spent his money and muddled his senses. Failing to reach his home, he had lain down by the dyke side. The sound of passing voices roused him from his stupor. "Hi, there!" he cried. "Can ye tell us the way to Europe?" The champion´s touring proclivity was the

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perpetual joke of the community and "Europe" became his secret bye-name. Strangers thought, when Gibbons was being discussed, that his championship was Continental. It was Franky Coulson who let it be known that the mention of Europe in the hearing of Bill would be a dangerous proceeding.

The champion was one of the few hard drinkers who never gambled. In the parlour of the "Black Horse" he would explain. "When I spend the money I wrowt for, I alwes likes to see that I´m getten full valee. I never backed a horse but once, an´ that was when I backed it intiv a shop window, an´ had to pay fot it."

Bill and Nancy got on "like a hoose on fire." She was Blackerton born and bred, and knew how to manage a man. Her policy was astute. With what she called a man´s privileges, she never tampered; with what she called a woman´s rights, she would brook no interference. Bill had to keep the championship, and could please himself what he did with the money and time at his disposal. She had him to feed and clothe, and the house to keep in order. Bill understood; she understood; and amazingly they agreed.

Kitty Fagan could tell the tale to perfection.

"Div I mind when Nancy an´ Bill was married? Why, folks, I was there, an´

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in all me glory. It took the starch oot o´ Bill when he had to say what the parson telt ´im. When the parson read the forst bit aboot splitin´ if they knew of ony himpendiments, Bill couldn´t keep his tongue still. `By gum, I do sweat,´ he says. He was that nervous when the ring was wanted that Nancy had to get it out of his trooser pocket, an´ steady his hands whiles he put it on. For all the world ye would hev thowt that Bill was deef. He spluttered an´ stammered, an´ made the parson say all sorts o´ gibbersish that wasn´t in the book o´ print. But Nancy was all their maisters, an´ lied as nice as could be. `Tak´ yer time, Mister Minister,´ she says, `there´s nee hurry. Mebbies I´m only to be married this once. Bill, ye ken, hes a sediment in his speech, an´ canna hear as weel as he might´"

Such were the Gibbonses, Nancy and Bill.

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They were the last of the tenants to be evicted. The constables and candymen were eager to be done. Unwelcome their task had been, odious it became before the end was reached. To see the belongings of the Gibbonses removed from the cottage, and that with the quickest despatch, was the aim of the parties concerned.

"This is the end of the business!" the bailiff

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joyously observed to Superintendent Blackerton as he knocked at the door.

"Put your best foot forward to get it done!" was that officer´s exhortation.

There was no response to the bailiff´s knocking.

Again and again he battered the door, but neither sign nor sound was given from within.

Through the window he looked, but was unable to see inside.

Through the camp passed the news that Bill and Nancy were on the defensive. The promise of sport brought the crowds to the scene of the last eviction.

Angered was the bailiff. There had been scenes in the earlier part of the day which had irritated and excited him. He was anxious to finish. The eviction completed, he vowed that Blackerton would see his face no mere. It was maddening to be thwarted at the last. Loud and resounding were the blows which fell upon the door.

The sight of the mirthful pitfolk incensed his rage yet more. His eyes were fire when Peter Golightly struck up, "When Johnny comes marching home again." He gnashed his teeth when Peter was joined by other "musicianers" and the gewgaws were on the twang.

It was a call to battle when the women

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suggested cheers for Bill and Nancy. "Europe´s gannin´ to fight," was the excited whisper of the throngs.

"We´ll burst it open!" the bailiff decided when all his clamours availed him not. The men with crowbars began their task.

Contemptuous was the laughter of the multitudes as the tiniest chops fell to the ground. The policemen rendered help, but the door refused to budge. "Europe´s done it in style!" the women rapturously declared.

"Three cheers for the champion!" was the shout of a youngster, and wildly and triumphantly they were accorded.

And within the kitchen Bill was standing with folded arms. There was a smile on his face, proud and grim, as he scrutinized his defences. The door was barred as never door was barred. From top to bottom, from side to side, from corner to corner were planks of wood, and above them all were iron girders firmly fastened.

"Try the window!" was the suggestion of Superintendent.

To break the glass was easy, but to dislodge the pile of bricks was a dangerous enterprise. Behind the bricks were mattresses, and behind these were battens of timber.

With a mighty crash the defences of the window were at last o´erthrown, and the giant

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form of Gibbons appeared in sight. “Europe” was on guard, griping a crowbar in his mighty fist. “Ye take the risk if ye enter,” Bill quietly said, and the champion of the fiddlers responded with “Rule Britannia.”

Chipping at the door were the crowbar men. It was slow work and laborious.

The bailiff appealed to Gibbons.

“Europe” smiled.

Superintendent Blackerton warned him of the peril of his resistance.

“Europe” still smiled.

The time was passing.

Gradually the door was being chipped away.

“Europe” had been standing with his back to the scullery door.

Suddenly he stepped aside.

“Fire!”

And the sharpshooters of Franky Coulson instantly obeyed. Through the gimlet holes thy puffed their peas and pebbles in the faces of the besiegers at the window-

In the open row “Scots wha ha´e” was the melody of Peter´s fiddle.

The champion was outnumbered. The firing ceased at the word of command. Bill withdrew to the rear.

When the bombarding party entered they found the house evacuated. Wondering greatly at eh emptiness of the rooms below the bailiff

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and his men proceeded above. Like a man demented, the “bum” stamped and fumed. Not a stick of furniture was to be seen. The house had been stopped from end to end.

The only thing which greeted the bailiff´s eye was a penny mouse-trap, with a little grey captive, placed in the centre of the floor.

Pitiable was the shamefacedness of the candymen as they retired from the scene. Passions vindictive filled the bailiff´s heart. Superintendent Blackerton was chagrined at the public discomfiture. The besiegers all were piqued that "Europe" had fooled them.

Of course, Kitty Fagan was there, and offered consolations. "Ye´re getting finished up at last, Mister Bum," She observes, when he was grinding his teeth. "That moosie´s taken a lot o´ shiftin´. We wad hev thowt that a bit moose-trap wad hev given ye such a botherin´ time? Ah, weel, ye´ll hev `appy recollections o´ yer Blackerton trip, an´ ye´ll be able to tell them in Bishopstoon what a nice time ye had at the end… Noo, Peter," she called, "gi´e them a send-off—somethin´ to march an´ whistle to!" and the fiddle and the gewgaws began the "Dead March."

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The champion was the hero of the camp. Unanimous was the feeling that "Europe" had

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made a gallant stand, and given the eviction a distinguished finish. In the defeat there was triumph. He was victorious though vanquished.

He was hungry after the long fast of the siege, and praised his "owld lass" for the liberal bowl of "crowdey" she provided.

But the end was the beginning. "Europe" was making up his mind. He was sore at the refusal of the publican. There was the empty barn at the "Black Horse." Why could he not be permitted to store his furniture there? A good friend of the publican´s he had been, not merely by what he spent himself, but by the trade he drew by his presence. It maddened him to think of the publican´s emphatic objection. In all

confidence he had made his request. At the rebuff he received he was surprised and humiliated.

Nancy´s reception had been otherwise. The curate was graciousness itself. Certainly he would do his best for the "champion´s good lady." It needed ingenuity to secure a place for their things. Bill had the satisfaction of knowing that Nancy´s furniture was under cover.

These transactions were in "Europe´s" mind. He was thinking. Nancy was making the night´s arrangements.

"Nance!" says he. "Thoo´ll hev nee objection if I sign teetotal?"

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She stared incredulous.

"I´ll kiss tha´ if thoo does!" she exclaimed.

"Then I will!" he says.

And Nancy kissed him.

Franky, smoking his pipe, heard the "smack" and expostulated.

"This is a fine hoo d´ye do!" he cried. "There´s nee fules like the ould ones. The minute ye´re in a field ye´re thinkin´ o´ yer swetheartin´ days, an´ fogettin´ that ye´ve been wedded these twenty years."

The champion explained to Franky.

"Noo, ye can please yersel´, Franly, what ye dee!" Bill began. "The finishin´-up´s been an eye-opener. I alwes thowt that him o´ the `Black Horse´ was a kind o´ friend o´ mine. Ye ken yer friends when things is upset. He was all smiles when the brass was changin´ hands, but when I wanted an obleegement he says, `Not me!´ That´s one o´ the things a fellow that´s a champion canna stand. So I´m done wi `im, an´ all that´s like `im. Never nee mair will he be able to say that the champion´s in his parlour. I´ll turn cadwatter an´ gi´e me name to the little curate… Noo, thoo can please theesel´. Ye´ll be mair important nor ever if ye continue to gan. When I´m not there ye can play

forst fiddle. Please theesel´! Of course," he continued, "things´ll be different atween thoo an´ me if that´s hoo thee mind

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goes. But as I say, please theesel´, Franky, please theesel´!"

"Ye auld rascal, Bill Gibbons!" cried Franky, springing to his feet, and facing the champion. "An´ that´s what ye call palship? Ye should burn to the bone for yer nasty doots. Thee an´ me´s been as thick as thieves in the auld days. We´ll be as thick as saints from hencefor´ard. If thoo´s T.T., then I´m T. T. If thoo´s in for teetotalism, I´m at thee heels. If it´s a begincement thoo´s makin´ the neet, I´m after tha´, body an´ sowl."

In the morning it was known in Blackerton that the end of the eviction was the beginning of a new regime for "Europe" and his ally.

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THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL.

THE years have flown since the Christmas of the eviction, but the happenings of that day are as fresh and delightful as ever. Hundreds of times the story has been told, and, as long as Blackerton is Blackerton, the recital of that day´s event will be necessary to the completion of the Christmas joy. At the fireside, in the meeting of the religious, in the publican´s parlour, wherever the colliery folk assemble, the thrilling tale is told. Nothing new can be added- The simple facts need no embellishment. Every repetition increases the enjoyment. That Christmas seems more and more romantic, receding in the past. Dismal, wretched, horrifying were the conditions under which it dawned. The conditions were transfigured as joy succeeded joy, and blessings unexpected came to each and all. It was a day of human kindness, of words of peace, and omens of good-

will. The narrowing laws of class and caste were lost in the genuine compassions of loving hearts
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Many names are mentioned when the story is being told, but the dearest of all is the name of the angel-child. Then the eye brightens, the face lights up, the lip trembles, the tear falls, and Heaven´s highest good is desired as her reward.

In scores of homes in Blackerton there is a picture of the lovely child, with golden ringlets, ruby lips, and laughing eyes. In letters of gilt her name appears. Only the scholars on the colliery are able to translate it into speech. The Honourable Angelena Louisa Gertrude Hamilton Colenso is the name of the bright-eyed maiden. In the circles of the great she is now known as Lady Searle. In the imagination of Blackerton she is still a child, and loving lips still speak of the angel.

In the days preceding Christmas it seemed to the homeless pitfolk that the future held no light of hope.

Christmas!

Every thought of it was of holiness and happiness. The best day of the year it ever had been, of sweetest memories, of long-loved customs, of treasured songs, of real good-will. A pitman´s home at Christmas was a pleasure indeed to see. The carols of the singers, the agility of the sword-dancers, the antics of the geysers, the festivities of united families, the

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great gatherings of the churches, the general loving-kindness—all these were elements of endearment in the thought of Christmas. Kitty Fagan voiced the popular feeling when she naïvely declared that she “alwes liked to be alive at Christmas.”

Christmas!

With cheery hearts the evicted pitfolk had faced their fate. Laughter and tears there had been in the horrible weeks preceding. Every feeling of the heart had been

touched as they had seen their homes despoiled, and realized the rigours of ejectment. Yet, through it all, their native courage had been displayed, and heroic speeches had cheered the despondent.

But Christmas!

The desolation was intensified. The wretchedness defied concealment. Poignancy was given to the pain, and bitterness poisoned the soul.

Christmas!

The thought was a mocking fiend. Christmas in an eviction field, on gloomy tents, with scattered furniture, and infinite discomfort—the thought was pain, anguish, torture.

"There´ll be nee Christmas in Blackerton this year," Kitty was heard to say, "unless `Rack´ an´ the blacklegs is hevin´ one to theirsel´s… When the angles see that we´re only a lot o´ gipsies, they´ll flee reet ower oor heeds an´ gan straight on to Bishopstoon. An´ as for Jesus, it

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waddent be reet to expect 'Im. He`ll see that this is nee place for ` Im. He´ll be bonny an´ vexed to miss us this time, but when He sees what a commotion there is, an´ just at the time when we should hev been up to Dick, He´ll just think we´re not very particular whether He comes or not… An´ the singers! Weel, does ony on ye think that we´re in the mood to sing? Ye can `hark the haralds´ as ye like, but they ´ll flee away an´ be glad to be off… Peace! Good-will! Where is´t? It used to be. Where is´t noo? Ask `Rack!´ He´s the man that kens… The carollers used to tell us to get up an´ `saloot the ´appy morn.´ What a farce it is to think on´t! We´ll just hev to think o´ last Christmas Day, an´ lippen on the one for next year."

Strenuous efforts were made by the union leaders to settle the dispute before the day of Christmas. Meeting after meeting was convened to discover some basis of peace. Women urged their men to put their "studyin´-caps on,´`and to get them home again before Christmas advent. A deputation waited upon the manager, and with wonderful

docility pleaded for terms of grace. Abject submission was his one condition. The deadlock was still the deadlock. Bitter was the disappointment, and malicious were the thoughts.

"What sort of a Christmas d´ye think we´re

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likely to hev, huddlin´ together in the field?" Tommy Gibson passionately demanded of Reaveley.

"If you wait till it comes, you may see!" was the callous retort.

In the tent that Christmas Eve Tommy´s Martha read the Christmas Scriptures. Closing the Book she said: "There were shepherds abidin´ in the field, Tommy, an´ they were the forts to hear the greet good news. Here we are, all the canny folks o´ Blackerton, huddled an´ muddled like gipsies in a field. Does tha´ think it´s likely that ony angles´ll want a bit crack wi´ us? I much misdoot. They´ll tak´ their crack an´ their company somewhere else."

Tommy was miserable.

"Ye see, hinney," he said, after a woful silence, "them angles was Palestine angles. There´s nee angles in England—leastways, if there is, they´re never seen in the minin´ districts."

There were hopeless hearts on the eve of Christmas.

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Clear and frosty dawned the day. The very sunlight seemed to mock the despairing hearts. No greetings of Christmas were exchanged. Even the cynical held their peace.

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Oh, that the day was done! Was the unspoken desire of every heart.

"What´s the news? What´s the news?"

The pitfolk were on the move and eagerly enquiring the reason of the clamour. Deserted was the eviction field, and, in one great mass, the populace was collected. "A reg´lar Godsend!" was the jubilant cry.

The treasure of the County Union had brought the subscritions of their friends and comrades. By order of the Executive each colliery had been appealed to in support of the evicted families, and generosity on a fabulous scale had resulted. Hundreds of pounds had come for their relief. Oh! what a shout of gladness! How grateful were these hearts! It was a gleam of sunlight in their darkness.

It was the beginning of surprises. A colliery wagon was driven to the eviction field. It was as much as the four great horses could do to drag the load of provisions. Twenty miles the waggoners had come, bringing the offerings of a generous colliery.

Another and another, and still they came—waggons, and carts, and traps, and flats, form the north, and the south, and the east, and the west, conveying, with greetings from kindly colliers, the flood that the hungry were needing. Great was the joy of the evicted. Thankful were they for the bounty which offered them

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succour; triumphant was their delight in the sympathy the gifts expressed.

"By hinnies, an´ this is a business!" Kitty Fagan ejaculated, eying the piles of food-stuff, and standing with her hands upon her hips. "I always said that a pitman´s sowl was in the right place, an´ by the livin´ Harry, here´s the proof. Wait till ony o´ them´s in trouble, an´ we´ll show them what we think o´ their kindness. God bless them!" she exclaimed, and her eyes wee wet. "We´ll b e thinkin´ it´s Christmas efore we´re done!"

It was Geordie Taylor who suggested it. Instantly all were alert. A dinner on a big scale was the splendid idea. An animated scene the field presented. Hither and

thither hurried the men, securing tables and seats; in the preparation of the victuals the women found delight.

Into the midst of the bustle sprang the great black charger. Over the fields from the Castle Lord Weston had ridden his famous horse. "A merry Christmas, good women!" was his greeting to the wives of the pitmen, as he started them by his sudden appearance.

"But what is the meaning of this?" he interrogated, as he beheld the ample food-supply.

"I was hoping to provide your Christmas dinners. The Castle carts are on the way."

With pride and pleasure the facts of the

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colliers´ philanthropy were stated by Martha Gibson.

"But you will not say nay to the little I have to give?" Lord Weston replied. "Such a day we had yesterday," he went on, "getting the geese cooked and the beef roasted."

And when the carts came, and their contents were exposed to view, men laughed and cried, and women cried and laughed.

"Martha Gibson!" said Kitty Fagan, "will ye tell us where I is? I´ve been labourin´under the impression that I was a Blackerton woman, but it appears I´ve been mistaken. We´re in Canaan, Martha hinney; we´re in Canaan!"

Geordie Taylor was confounded. Such was his perturbation that he wist not that his cap was in his hand. He sprang back as his lordship wished him the compliments of the season.

"I´m yer Majesty´s `umble sarvint!" he blundered out, "an´ I beg yer pardon for callin´ ye ahint yer back!"

His lordship waited till the grace was said, and then, shaking hands with the priest, and the parson, and the preacher, leaped the dyke and galloped for home.

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It was three o´clock when the angel came. In her won little carriage, with the lily-white ponies, with the juvenile coachman by her side, she appeared in the eviction field. At the

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vision of her beauty the ladies and lassies looked with astonishment and admiration. A fairy she seemed as she held the reins and guide Pat and kit whither she willed. Then she stopped handing the reins to the coach-boy, stepped to the ground, and with eyes, and cheeks, and curls, and dimples, took possession of every heart.

"A merry Christmas!" she said, glancing around to young and old. "We have one of your babies at the Castle," she explained to the wondering children, "an´ we want you all to come to see him get his christening. He´s to be called Christmas! Isn´t that queer and nice?"

It was not to be expected that the colliery bairns would be able to speak in an angle´s presence.

"Don´t you love me?" the little charmer demanded, her face becoming suddenly grave, and her lips beginning to tremble.

"Ye little angel, ye´re sich a jewel, we canna speak for lookin´!" Kitty Fagan replied.

"Then you will come and see Christmas christened?" she appealed.

As that moment Lady Weston was driven up, her carriage leading the way of a line of vehicles. Every conveyance on the Castle property had been requisitioned for the occasion, and there were the great carts, with extemporized seats, bringing up the rear.

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"Have you told the good people, Angelena?" Lady Weston enquired of the little lady.

"Me told them, but they do not speak, mamma!" she answered.

"It was Angelena who thought of it," her ladyship explained, addressing the pitfolk. "Nellie Bex´s little son is going to be christened to-day. We are all agreed that `Christmas´ will be a handsome name. Angelena thought that `Christmas´ would be proud if his friends were there. We should have liked, if it could have been, to have received you all. So this is our plan. All the old folks, men and women, will go in the carriages, and all the children in the carts. Now, there´s no time to lose; so be as quick as you can in getting dressed."

Who could object to anything arranged by the lady from the Castle?

Lady Weston´s heart was full as she watched the eager preparations. What a scramble for shawls, and jackets, and hats, and bonnets! What a business it was to get the ladies to stand still while hands and faces were being washed; and surely the tresses of girls were never combed under such circumstances of excitement!

When all were ready for the journey the air rang with salutations, and commendations, and cautions, and benedictions. There was not an envious heart on the eviction field. The pleasures

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of the aged and the young were the pleasures of the ones remaining.

The last was never heard of the visit to the Castle. Brought back as they were taken, all their tales were glorious. Such a castle! Such rooms! Such furniture! Such pictures! Such lights! Such stables! Such horses! Such food! Such fruits! Such kindness! Such a man was his lordship! Such a lady was his wife! Such an angle was Angelena, or Angleica, or some such name as that! And the christening, and the tea, and the bairn who was called after Christmas! It was on every lip and in every heart. It is there still. It is there for ever.

There was no happier place in England than the field of the evicted. And when the sword-dancers gamboled in the night-lights, they danced to the honour of the angel. When the guysers, in their female garments, their bonnets and feathers, and masks and

veils, and collars and ribbons, played their anties here, there, and everywhere, it was all to the praise of the angel.

Then the Christmas hymns were sung to the tunes of Peter´s fiddle, and the fiddling and the singing were inspired by the love of the angel.

It was like Martha Gibson to speak to the Lord about it. “Oh, my Father!” she said in

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Prayer, “we´ve had a wonderful day. When Thoo gave us the first Christmas, it was when Thoo sent the only Son Thoo hadst; an´ here, the day, just to keep us all in mind on´t, Thoo´s sent one o´ His little sisters, an´ if iver onybody was thankful Thoo surely sees hoo thankful we all are…. She´ll be sleepin´ in her grand bed at the Castle. Oh, my Father! Keep Thee eye on her, an´ send her nowt but happiness all her days. She deserves nowt else for makin´ what promised to be a woful day the best Christmas there´s iver been in the collery.”

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THE FIRST-FOOT.

FOR a new year to dawn without a first-food would have been regarded in Blackerton as a deliberate defiance of Providence. That there was virtue in the first-foot was a conviction profoundly cherished. The family to whom no first-foot came felt the omission as a slight and an offence. Nobody could expect anything good to happen in any day of a year that opened so lucklessly. Desolate indeed were the colliers who had no fitting friend to be the first to knock at their door, to cross the threshold with the lump of coal in their hands, and to wish for them in the ensuing twelve months the best that heart could desire. A perilous thing it would have been to have expressed skepticism concerning the first-foot. Was there not in the folklore of Blackerton

evidence all-convincing of the fortune that had followed the first-foot, and of the misfortune which had commonly been traced to his absence?

"Noo, thoo can sneer as thoo likes, Tom Foster!"

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The atheist had found in the credence of Kitty Fagan a fruitful topic for ridicule.

"Thoo´s an unbelievin´ sceptical, thoo is!" she would say. "Thoo dissent believe nowt, thoo dissent. Thoo´s alwes happiest when thoo hes a side all to theesel´, and can argefy wi´ ivery other body; but all thee wisdom´s wind—nowt but wind—an´ thoo canna alter the fact. Iverybody else but theesel´ believes the forst-foot´s the bringer o´ good luck!"

"But Kitty"—and the atheist was beginning to reason— "hoo can the forst-foot interfere wi´ the established course o´ nature? There´s nowt comes by chance. There´s nowt but law in this world o´ oors, an´ the forst-foot business is only an auld wife´s tale."

"If thoo was open to reason, I wad reason wi´ thoo, Tom," Kitty would reply; "but sarcumstances alters cases. Thoo kens nowt aboot owt exceptin´ the course o´ nature. But there´s Providence in the world as weel as nature, an´ Providence takes her an course. Like iverbody else, she hes her likes an´ dislikes. When ye set yer impidence up tiv her she just bides her time. She doesn´t forget. Not her! She´ll be even wi´ iverbody that trats her badly. Noo it stands to reason that she´s gratified like when the forst-foot pays his respects tiv her, an´ she does the best she can to bring the best o´ luck to all her friends— Noo, thoo can

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save thee wind! If thoo wants to blackguard the forst-foot thoo´ll hev to keep oot o´ the hearin´ o´ Kitty Fagan."

Of course the first-foot must be of the masculine gender; that was perfectly understood. No woman could bring good luck, beauty and grace notwithstanding.

Martha Gibson "cried her eyes oot" one New Year´s morning. Tommy and she were sitting waiting for the first-foot. Suddenly the door was flung open, and "one o´ the Robinson lasses" dashed in to see if her mother was there. Martha screamed. Tommy´s fear was terrible.

"Ye thowtless hussey!" he exclaimed. "I thowt the door was locked. The forst-foot hessent come yet. We´ll hev a bad year efter this. Get thee ways oot, thoo lang-legged bow-deskite! Martha an´ me´ll just hev to make the best on´t noo!"

The girl, ashamed and affrighted, awkwardly withdrew.

Martha was bitterly weeping. That the year upon which they had entered would be calamitous she was thoroughly assured. And so it was. Deaths, diseases, and disappointments were the twelve months´ records. The secret was known at the outset. That "rapscallion lass o´ Robinson´s" had occasioned the misery.

Important as was the sex of the first-foot, his colour was of equal moment.

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"Noo, thoo can keep thee fiery heed at a distance!" Kitty Fagan would say to a redhaired man. "Ginger´s not the colour, an´, for the matter o´ that, sandy whiskers isn´t the thing. Neebody that´s fair or fiery should be a forst-foot. The black `uns is the boys—broon an´ black, good stan´in´ colours!"

Nobody on the colliery, with the exception of the "scepticals," had the slightest doubt as to the sex and colour of a reliable first-foot. To have a woman instead of a man, to have a fair man instead of a dark man, "to let the New York in," was as sure a precursor of disaster as to have no first-foot at all. So it came to pass that in the early hours of the New Year´s Day the doors were locked, and the first-foot was not admitted until the questions of sex and colour had been satisfactorily established.

Naturally, the dark men were in great demand on the first of January, and the more popular had regular expeditions. From year to year they made their circuits, and to

each year´s list there were additions. From house to house they would go, observing the ceremonials, and invoking luck´s favour for their clients.

Without doubt George Grieveson was the favourite of the first-footers. It was the best of good signs, so Blackerton thought, when George´s missis would have no other first-foot than her own man.

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"When I got him," Dorothy used to explain, "I got luck´s ansel´, so be stickin´ to Geordie I stick to luck!"

Many were the homes that waited to hear his knock and glad was the welcome when he stepped within.

Dodie Grieveson," as the pitfolk affectionately but inaccurately called him, did the thing in style. The coal was carefully handled and skilfully placed in the flames. His good wishes wee earnestly uttered; those, indeed, for whom they were expressed felt that Dodie´s intercession was a veritable guarantee in the name of Providence.

"Noo we´ll just say oor prayers!" and when all was quiet he would bring the family to the notice of the Lord, mentioning them one by one by name. Having prayed, he would be asked to sing.

"What´ll ye hev?" he would enquire.

"Give us one o´ thee an´ make-up. Let´s hear `The ´Appy Prospect´!"

Standing erect, with his hands clasped behind him, with his full, rich, musical voice, he would begin:

Give me the wrings of faith to rise
Within the veil, and see
The saints above, how great their joys,
How bright their glories be!

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Dodie was distinguished, and in ways unique. There were the "musicianers," of course, and Peter Golightly in particular. "Grieveson was all their fethers," so it was said. That the fiddlers had fine cars for music was readily admitted, and that Peter´s "variations" were wonderful was frequently remarked. Still, Dodie held an unrivalled position, for was it not know that he was a composer? He was "chock full o´ music," and compelled for safety´s sake to get some of it put on paper.

His methods were peculiar. Working away in the mine, he would extemporise a tune to one of the many hymns he knew by heart. There and then he would drop his pick and run to the nearest tub. With the utmost speed, with the chalk he was always careful to have in his pocket, he would draw five lines on the side of the tub. Then he would dot down the notes, and sing it through to assure himself that the air had been caught. Perhaps only a couple of lines had been composed, but Dodie was happy in the knowledge that he had got them down. Back to the face he would go, and even as he hewed the coal he would be whistling, and humming, and singing the lines to tack on to the first instalment. When these were to his fancy he should set off to seek the tub. Frequently it happened that if had gone on its journey, and he would be obliged to take another

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for the second part. The chief consideration was to get it down, and through the other tub was rattling along two or three miles away, he was perfectly content to use another for the lines succeeding.

Dodie´s tunes were never complete without a chorus, and it was in the choruses that he excelled. Bringing down the coal he would compose the refrain. Then, for the third rime, he must procure a tub. It mattered not to Dodie. He knew his tune was secured. None who handled the tubs ever dreamt of taking liberties with Dodie´s

musical MSS. It was easy for him, when his shift was done, to secure the tubs, and prick the air on a scrap of paper.

In the evening the music men would be gathered in Dodie´s front-room, and the small fiddles, and the double-bass, and the harmonium, would combine to find the parts for the air. The composer was very particular. The procedure was his own. From that there was no departure. First the "trible" must be mastered by the "small fiddlers." When they were able to sing and play it to the master´s satisfaction he himself would take the double-bass, "tune `er up," "rosen the bow," and adapt a bass of his own linking. Down he would dot the notes. The bass of the chorus was always the stupendous feat. It was absolutely necessary that an opportunity should be given for ex-

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Haustive and intricate execution. When this was accomplished he would permit the player of the big fiddle to try his hand. When the latter was "up" to his part Dodie would settle the tenor and alto.

Sometimes an appropriate introduction to the tune would suggest itself, and Dode would compose the bars "to lead her in." Often a grand "finisher-up" would appear to his mind.

When the process was complete he would "try her through, to see hoo she gans."

"Lads alive! She´s a champion!" he would say. "Dorothy!" he would call; "fetch thee knittin´ this wat, an´ come an´ hear her. Noo, me lads, ye can sing as weel as play. She´s a short measure. We´ll take the auld favourite: `Come, ye that love the Lord!´ Noo, take her gently through the varse, an´ then give her ´grip´ in the chorus. Noo, then, lead her in! All together!"

Thus engaged, Dodie was in ecstasies.

"Dorothy hinney, I think she´ll dee! We´ll give her a try on Sunday neet. If there´s a short metre in Mr. Robeson´s numbers we´ll put her to that, an´ if not—for he´s terribly partial to sivins an´ ights—we´ll hev her for chant."

That trial of the Sabbath night decided the fate of the tune. If it succeeded in closing the eyes, in moving the feet, in making the

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congregation swing, its lease of life was secured. If, however, it failed to "fetch the power" it was at once abandoned.

Dodie´s tunes were easily recognized. It was said that "neebody could make as much oot of a hymn as him." Not once or twice, but several times, the words would be repeated, and the tunes were such "roond-aboots" that as likely as not you would be back at the beginning and "givin´ her another spell."

Dodie was the "leadin´ singer," and reigned with unchallenged authority. In the music-box there were only fragments of printed music. "Gimmysticks" were the favourites, and Dodie´s masterpieces the regular selections.

It seems needless to say that the composer christened his won creations. "Gilead´s Balm," "The Heavenly Palaces," "The Way to Zion," "Sweet Communion," "On Before," "Celestial Joys," were well-known tunes, but "The Happy Prospect," in the judgment of the master, and in the opinion of the Methodists, was the "champion."

He was always invited to the funerals. Before leaving the house a hymn was invariably sung at the door. The family bereaved selected the hymn. Nearly always "The Happy Prospect" was the choice.

Dodie could "start a tune against the world." The pitch was an easy matter to

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him. Sometimes others would venture, even in his presence. "Hi, there!" he would say to the amateur. "Stop a bit till I clip thee wings! Thoo´ll hetta hev a throat a foot an´ a half higher if thoo hes to see her through at that height."

"Wheesht, wheest, me lad, till I hoist tha´ up a wee bitee!" he would say to the novice who had started in the deeps.

It was a joy to Dodie to know that music had such a prominent place in the life of Heaven. He was sure he would feel homely among the saints. That Jesus would be glad to hear his tunes again, he was convinced, and that they would produce "a big sensation," he thoroughly expected.

"By hinnies, I´ll hardlies ken me an pieces when the angles is singin´ them, an´ the harps is runnin´ in the instrumental."

But Dodie could pray as well as sing. Not only was he the leading singer, but the cottage prayer-meetings were in his command. He could catch the worldlings with his guile. It was his policy to have the meeting in the kitchen of an irreligious family.

"Noo, a few on us´ll come an´ gi´e ye a bit sing," he would say when he called to find a place for the next meeting; "an´ we´ll hev a word o´ prayer noos an´ thens in atween."

He was seldom refused.

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Delightful were the prayer-meetings, and many were the souls who felt sin to be a burden, and eagerly welcomed the news of release.

"My Father!" Dodie would say, addressing the Lord in reverent intimacy, "we´ve just been singin´ some o´ Thee hymns, an´ if Thoo´ll only come doon, an´ make one o´ oor number, Thoo´ll enjoy Theesel´."

When Dodie knew that three were sinners in the cottage, he was explicit in his prayers. He wanted "a capture."

"Lord!" he would pray, "come on! Come doon! Come in! What´s Tha thinkin´ aboot bidin´ away like this? Come on! Come doon! We´re waiting on Tha! We canna dee owt till tha comes. Come in, my Lord, come in! Thoo canna get in at the door, for the place´s full, but come in through the roof. Nivver mind the damage! I´ll pay the masons if Thoo´ll only come on an´ save these sinners!"

The piety of George Grieveson was above suspicion. His sincerity was transparent. Even the "scepticals" admitted that he was a man every inch.

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The 31st of December found the evicted pitfolk in the field. Under the circum-

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stances, the watch-night services could not be held. They were doomed to begin the New Year without the first-foot´s greetings.

Kitty Fagan and Meg Toppin were sitting at the fire. The back door was open, so that they might hear the Bishopstown clock peal the hour of the dying year.

"Meg hinney! Things is come tiv an awful pass. This mony a year Dodie´s been the forst-foot. He used to say his prayers, an´ give us a varse or two, an´ fairly start us on the next journey. Here we be, an´ the New Year´ll soon be on us, an´ we´ll just hev to take pot luck.

"Poor Dodie! Nee wonder he´s taken poorly! What a time he used to hev on the New Year´s mornin´! Maloney can say what he likes aboot a `parishment o´ cad,´ but I reckon it´s frettin´ that´s putten Dodie to bed. There´ll be nee forst-foot in Blackerton the morn!"

The solemn midnight´s peal fell upon the ears of the sad-hearted women.

Dodie Grieveson was dying in the tent. "As fresh as a daisy," he had been on Christmas Day. How he got the chill was a mystery. Thrice on the last day of the year the doctor had seen him. At 11.30, for the fourth time, he stood by the sick man´s bed.

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Dorothy was passionately weeping. The hopeless word had fallen from the doctor´s lips.

"What´s tha´ cryin´ aboot, hinney?" Dodie questioned, with love in his tones.

"A´, Geordie, me man!" and she fell on her knees by his side; "it´s nearly New Year´s, an´ thoo´ll nivver be able to be forst-foot again."

"Weel, hinney," he replied, "mebbies I´ve done me share, an´ mebbies we´re gannin´ to hev a change. Bide thee time! It isn´t the mornin´ yet?"

Dr. Maloney dreaded the anguish his words would convey.

"My man!" In every limb the doctor was trembling, and his voice shook as he struggled to speak. "My man! I´ve done the best I could for you, but I cannot do mor!"

"So thoo hes, doctor! I´ll wag thee hand, if thoo hes nee objection. I alwes said ye knew yer business. Ye *hev* done yer best, an´ neebody can deem air nor that!"

The sick man´s eyes fell upon his weeping wife.

"Dorothy hinney, whativer´s the matter? What´s tha worritin´ theesel´ aboot?"

Again the doctor attempted to tell the worst.

"Now, my man, it is my duty to tell you that, if you have any arrangements to make, you have no time to lose."

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"Arragements?" Dodie queried. "Man, I´m feelin´ as nice as can be, an´ I´ve got nowt but the best to think aboot."

"Geordie," said the doctor, "I want you to understand that you won´t get better!"

Full into the speaker´s eyes the sick man looked. There was astonishment in his gaze.

"Doctor! I´m surprised at tha´! Ye´re not a skeptical, I hope. Not get better? Noo, that´s a tale to tell a man like me—a Methodist, an´ a leadin´ singer, an´ the leader o´ the prayer-meetin´s! Why, man, it´s never been onythin´ else than better. It´s alwes better on before!"

Dr. Maloney was nonplussed. Around the tent he glanced his eyes, and in the open space he moved about. He was searching fro words to prepare the dying for death.

Blunderingly they passed his lips. "My man, I tell you you are going to die!"

And the strong man covered his face to conceal the emotion the speech had excited in his own heart.

The eyes of the man on the bed were filled with a strange delight.

"Will thoo just say that again, doctor? Die? I´m gannin´ to die? Just say it again, so that I´ll ken for sartin sure!"

But the doctor could not speak.

There were watchers by the bed, and to

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these the questioner appealed. "Div I understand him to say that I´m gannin´ to die?"

Tommy Gibson nodded his head affirmatively.

There was triumph in Dodie´s face.

"Dorothy, hinney, thoo hears that?" he said, and his voice was tremulous with glad excitement. "There´s a forst-foot comin´ for me; one o´ the angles´ll be on her way to bring the luck! Mind, it´s champion—simply champion! Sudden death an´ sudden glory! She´ll be here, an´ I´ll be there! I´ll hev a clean shot throught! Mind, it´s fine! I´ll start the New Year up above— Send for Mister Robeson, an´ we´ll just hev a sing as a sort o´ send-off. I only wish, hinney, the forst-foot had getten the passport for thoo as weel as me," he tenderly said to his sorrowful wife; "but thoo´ll not be lang in comin´. I´ll tell Him when I see Him, there´s nowt to leep tha´ in Blackerton noo that He´s taken me for His choir above."

The Methodist preacher was standing with the rest.

"She´ll be here in a minute," Dodie proceeded, "an´ there´ll just be time for `The ´Appy hev to keep her gannin´ yersel´s!"

And there, in the solemn stillness, with faltering voices, the watchers sang:

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Give me the wings of faith, to rise
Within the Veil…

"Amen, my Lord, amen!" fervently ejaculated the dying man.

and see
The saints above, how great their joys,
How bright their glories be!

"Ay, ay! I´ll see them! Wait till the forst-food comes, an´ then I´ll see them, an´ taste the joys, an´ share the glories. Champion! Champion!"

Once they were mourners here below,

"Ay, ay!" responded Dodie.

And wet their couch with tears,

"Mony a time! Mony a time!" he interjected.

They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears.

"So they did, an´ bonny an´ glad they´ll be that they´re oot o´ the midst on´t!" he declared earnestly.

I ask them whence their victory came,

"I will! I will! It´ll be one o´ the forst question when I meet them."

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They, with united breath,

Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death

"Dootless! Dootless! None but Jesus! Only Jesus! Victory through Jesus!" he triumphantly exclaimed.

The dying man seemed unconscious as the remaining verses were sung.
The singing had ceased. The watchers were waiting.

Suddenly the light was on his face. With arms outstretched, he welcomed the first-foot. "Here she comes! Glory! Glory! There´s a troop ahint her. She´ll be the leadin´ singer, same as me. Here she comes! A lily-white angel bringin´ the luck… Wheesht! I can hear them dingin´. By sartes, an´ they´re singin´ `The `Appy Prospect´! Come on, thoo angle-hinney! I´m waitin´ an´ watchin´. I´m keen to be within the veil, an´ to see them, thousands upon thousands, an´ they´re watchin´ the forst- foot comin´ for me… Thoo´s welcome, hinney," he said addressing the angel of Death. "Just give us a minute to say good-day to Dorothy. She´ll be bad to come as weel"

His hands were feeling for those of his wife. He tears were flowing as she tenderly kissed his feeble fingers.

"Dorothy," he murmured, "It´s New Year´s

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noo, an´ the forst-foot´s knockin´. I canna bide. Thoo´ll not be lang….. Live an´ sing, an´ sing an´ pray… an´ noo… I´m off."

Campbell Robinson broke the silence of the death-scene. "The New Year has dawned," he reverently said, "and the first-foot had been here. Our bereavement is not hopeless. Though Geordie had not been able to go first-footing round the colliery, he would doubtless be the first-foot at the Gate of heaven."

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THE ROUND-ROBIN.

INTO the fourth month the dispute had been protracted. January was in its third week, and the hope of an amicable issue was almost abandoned. To conceal the consternation was beyond the bravest´s skill. With courageous tenacity the men of the Union had argued their cause, and the women´s cheerfulness had been wonderful. Through the calamitous and turbulent weeks hope had never failed. Dark was the experience through which they had passed, but cheer had come for one and all in the thought of the dawn that was yet to be. The darkness deepened and hope began to fail. There was no rift in the cloud´s thick darkness; even the optimistic lost the art of heartening speech.

The feeling spread that their county comrades were growing impatient with the long-continued strife. Week by week the funds of the Union were being drained for the maintenance of the families evicted. The officials of the County

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Association were pressing for the speediest settlement, and found in the financial liability one of their strongest arguments. Sensitive the local unionists had become in their anxiety and wretchedness. A fierce jealousy possessed them. Any criticism of their policy excited the wildest outcry, and the suggestion of faintest blame was the signal for stormy altercation. When the county officials mentioned concessions they were immediately denounced as traitors and cowards.

"The lang an´ the short on´t is, ye want us to knuckle doon to `Rack´!" Geordie Taylor exclaimed, with vehement displeasure.

"Nothing of the kind," the secretary of the Union sternly replied, "but we must come to terms. The manager wants his way and you want yours. He won´t allow you to have yours, and you want allow him to have his. Very well: they only way out of the difficulty is to compromise."

"Not a bit on´t, Mister Maddeson," Geordie responded. "If ye mention that to Shadrach the game´s up. My notion is we should stick to oor guns an´ mal´ him shift the blacklegs."

"My good man," said the secretary, with kindly impatience, "haven´t you tried coercion, and don´t you see how useless it is? The manger has the whip-hand over you, and you can neither stay his hand nor steal his whip.

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He´s driven you into the field, and there you´ll have to bide, unless we can secure a better understanding. Things cannot go on for ever under present conditions. Think of the charge on the county exchequer week after week! Is it to be supposed that the miners of the county are going to contribute the special levies when they see no hope of an ultimate agreement? Lodge after lodge is enquiring as to what we are doing in the Blackerton case. The sympathy of the county is yours, but I am bound to say, you cannot expect it to be continued, if there is not an honest and strenuous effort made to end the unfortunate deadlock."

The "cramper" intervened at this moment.

"Ye´ll be aware, Mister Maddeson," old Harry began, "that we´re fightin´ for a principle, an´ it isn´t a home-made priciple—a kind o´ privilege we want to keep to oorsel´s—it´s a principle for the county an´ for the coalfields o´ England. Ye ken as weel as me what it is. Is the blacklegs to bide? That´s the question. Is it to gan oot to the county that the Union hesn´t the pluck to stand by its rules an´ regelations? An´ divvent ye see, Mister Maddeson, if, when all comes to all, an´ the worst to the worst, we hev to ride with the blacklegs, an´ if they hev to be the equals o´ the Union men, divvent ye see, I say, that the Union ´ll be knocked into a cocked-hat, an´ ye an´ all the

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`comatee´ ´ll hetta seek fresh job?" and old Harry banged the table by way of emphasis.

"You entirely mistake the executive´s position," the secretary explained, addressing Minns. "We stand by the Union´s principles, and it is our business to seek their enforcement. But we cannot get all we want at once. We must proceed with caution and prudence. By-and-by we shall see the triumph of our aims throughout the entire county. But we must be reasonable for our won sakes. If we cannot have the whole of the loaf we must be content with half. Here is a case where the manager is defiant. We cannot induce him to recognise our view. All has our view. All has been said to him that can be said. It is an open secret that the masters as a whole are backing him up, and probably recouping him the larger portion of his loss. Well, then, we must make the best terms we can with him. Probably they will be unsatisfactory so far as we are concerned. That cannot be helped. You must make the best of them until the time comes that better conditions can be secured."

It required no small courage for the County Secretary to enunciate such wholesome yet unwelcome views. The negotiations of the local leaders with the relentless viewer had embittered their hearts. Sullen were their feelings and hostile was their mood. In his hazardous task

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Richard Maddison never flinched. A born leader of men, he was valiantly straightforward and honest, believing, as he thoroughly did, that mischief dogs the steps of the opportunist. He knew that his counsel was unpalatable: nevertheless, he was convinced of its wisdom and truth. The success would not be apparent immediately, but he had faith in his conviction, and, therefore, was willing to wait.

"Will you allow me to make terms with Mr. Reaveley?"

The men of the lodge had had their heads together. In their faces he read the disappointment and chagrin his words had caused.

"Not likely!" Geordie Taylor ejaculated. "Not varry likely! Ye´d give us away as soon as lookin´ at us. Rack´ll twist ye roond his little finger as easy as can be. It´s as clear as daylight what ye´re efter. Ye´re that nervous aboot the money, ye´ll say yes to

`is ivery wish an´ whim. If the t´others is o´ my way o´ thinkin´, they´ll see the finish o´ what they´ve started, without outside interferin´."

The local treasurer voiced his comrades´ thoughts.

"I have only one other thing to say," the County Secretary observed, preparing to leave. "I am authorized by my committee to announce that a sum of £5 will be paid to each evicted man who leaves Blackerton and finds work else-

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where. If we reduce the number of the evicted that will make a settlement easier in the end."

Instantly the room was in uproar, and angry cries resounded. "Lads, we´re sold!" Geordie Taylor passionately thundered. "Sold! an´ be them that professed to be oor friends. It´s a dory trick o´ you an´ your `comatee´; an´ ye can tell them when ye gan back to Bishopstoon that there isn´t a man in Blackerton as´ll touch yer filthy money!"

The local leaders made no secret of the Executive´s "bribe," and were amazed when it became known that some of the evicted miners had taken the gift and complied with its conditions. In the days ensuing the departing pitfolk were collecting their household effects. Little was said as the shifting was being expedited, but the union stalwarts watched with disdainful eyes. To them it seemed the beginning of the end, and the more so when lifetime colliers took to other avocations. Various were the employments which attracted the miners expelled. Samson Anderson´s was the most original. His knowledge of clocks was popularly known, and extensively he had used it in the years preceding the eviction. Samson turned his skill to profit, and set off day after day to the collieries surrounding, on clock-cleaning expeditions.

It was galling to the Blackerton leaders to

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see the thinning of the evicted ranks. Still, they held together and stolidly faced the foe.

From the beginning of the trouble they had been in cordial agreement on every vital point. The concord was broken; the leaders were at variance. Harry Minns wanted a mass meeting. He saw his way to an honourable truce; at least, he hoped his "idée" might lead to that, and he proposed that a meeting should be called for the following Sunday afternoon.

Tommy Gibson was in opposition. "I´ve nee objection to meetin´, but there´s nee occasion to hev it on a Sunday."

"Why, Tommy, I´m astonished at tha´!" old Harry exclaimed. "The better the day the better the deed."

"Nowt o´ the sort, Harry," Tommy replied. "It depends on the deed. If the deed´s bad, it´s bad, an´ all the badder if it happens on a Sunday."

"But ye surely divvent mean to say that it´s a sin to hev a meetin´?" the "cramper" queried, with some spirit.

"Not in nee way, Harry, me man," the local secretary responded. "If a mass meetin´s held I´ll be there, that is, if it´s held on a proper day; but ye may as weel understand, once an´ for all, that I winnet attend ony Sunday meetin´s."

"Why, Tommy, thoo´s getten varry narra

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in thee views," Taylor remarked, in an expostulatory tone. "What does it signify which day we fix on?"

"I´m glad to hear I´m getten narra. In that case, I´m in the reet direction, because the Buik says the way to the Kingdom´s narra, an´ bad to keep; as for what the day signifies, ye ken as weel as me what the Sunday´s for. If ye decide to hev the meetin´ on Sunday forst, I beg to signify that I winnet be there, an´ that ye´ll hetta get somebody else to keep the buiks."

Tommy´s religious scruples irritated many of the commintteemen, and provoked banter, jovial and sarcastic. Tommy confounded them with his happy repartee.

"These cadwatter chaps is alwes crusty!" one declared. "ye hetta be see partic´lar like not to ruggle their feathers. They´re as touchy as touchy can be. Why, Tommy, thoo´d be vastly improved if thoo liked thee glass. Man, it wad mak´ thee hair grow!"

"There´s nee occasion," Tommy retorted. "I´ve a good crop without it."

"There´s alwes mischief wi´ these Methody men!" was the verdict of one of the others. "They´re that ackward in their opinions. They´re reet, an´ iverybody else is wrang. They nivver seem to see that moderation´s the soondest sense. It´s the case in drinkin´. I divvent howld wi´ drunkenness, but surely to goodness

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a man can be a moderate drinker in a small way, an´ still be as good as he need be."

"Since ye´re see varry free wi´ what *ye* think," Tommy pointedly made answer, "ye´ll mebbies not be huffed if I say that moderate drinkers, at the best, is only the good end of a bad lot."

For awhile it seemed as if the official conclave would part in ill-will. Reconciliation was effected by an unexpected intervention. The "Atheist" demanded a hearing. Tom Foster was indignat and ashamed.

"We´ll be the laughin´-stock o´ the place if this gets oot," he exclaimed. "Here we be, the `comatee´ o´ the lodge, wi´ an eviction to get squared, an´ we´re squabblin´ aboot `Paddy´s eye-watter.´ I´ve said a thoosand times that wheriver the drink is, ther´s quearrelin´ an´ fightin´ ; but , marcy on us, ye find yer fightin´ form when it´s even mentioned. Noo, I´m not a religious man mesil´, as ye´re aware, but, in this case, I´m boond to side wi´ Gibson, A man should alwes be true to his principle, an´ Sunday´s a principle o´ Tommy´s, an for the matter o´ that, only in another way, it´s one o´ mine. I never fancied Sunday wark at any time. Six days a week´s enough for me, ay, ower much, if I mist be honest. Noo, does ony on ye think there´s ony occasion to call this meetin´ on a Sunday? It could be held on Setterday just as weel, an´ it might, though it´s

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hardlies likely, but it might keep some o´ the wet hands oot o´ the pub. Noo, I make a motion that Harry hes his way in hevin´ a meetin´, an´ that Tommy hes his way on the day in question. It´ll be agreeable to all parties to call it for Setterday, an´ I hope when this is passed that neebody ´ll iver let on that we differed amang oorsel´s."

The agreement was unanimous, and, somewhat ashamed, the leaders dispersed.

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Harry Minns was in "fettle" on the morning of the day of meeting. His great "idée" was to be revealed, and, in the anticipation of its jubilant reception, he scaled to glory´s height. Not a hint would he give to any of his cronies. "Noo, I´m gannin´ to mak´ ye all alike," he would sy, to "stave off" curiosity. "keep yersel´s in hand, an´ when the meetin´s fairly opened, ye´ll hear auld Harry´s idee."

The pitfolk gathered to the place appointed. All the celebrities were there, the lodge leaders on the platform, and Bill Gibbons and Franky Coulson well to the front. The clerics put in an appearance, and the irrepressible Teddy Turner, having got wind of a new move, had made the journey to test its value.

"Noo, me lads," old Harry began, when he faced the crowd, "it was me that wanted a

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meetin´. Weve a ticklish job on hand, an´, I´m boond to say, it´s taken us all oor time. We´ve tried Mister Reaveley ivery way up. Depetation efter depetation´s been to see `im, an´ it´s matterless what we say; he´s as hard as nails. Noo, it´s as plain as a pikestaff that we canna gan on depetatinin´ for iver an´ iver. We´ll hetta dee summat fresh, summa toot o´ the ordinary. We divvent want to be daft, an´ we´re not daft. All we want is to get cannily back to wark, an´ at the same time to keep oor bit Union. An´ so I was thinkin´ we might get up a roond-robin an´ send it to Mister shaderach. Ye´ll

all knaw what that is. It´s a sort o´ petition in a roondaboot way, " he explained, accompanying the words with a gesture circulatory.

"A reg´lar clivver thing´s a roond-robin. It gets ye all in, but there´s neebody in the front seat, so to speak. Ye see, when ye send an ivery-day letter, an´sign yer names, somebody hes to come forst, an´ the faffer´s likely to think that number one´s the mainspring; but when ye send a roond-robin, theres neither start nor finish, divvent ye see! Noo, my idée is, we should just ax Mister Reaveley if he dissent think it´s aboot time we wagged hands all roond. It canna be good for him to hev the pit stannin´ idle an´ it´s bad for the likes o´ us. He´ll mebbies see be this time that he only made a middlin´ bargain in takin´

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sides wi´ the blacklegs. He´s had to give them their moneys as usual, an´ keep them all like gentlemn… Onyways, it´ll dee nee harm to let him see that we´re opne to reason an´ willin´ to hear what he thinks. The roond- robin ´ll say all we want her to say, an´ nivver let wind as to who signed fort or last."

The "cramper" resumed his seat, assured of the good impression his wisdom had produced.

The rank and file were "taken" with harry´s notion. "He´s a queer `un, is Auld Harry!" was the comment in several quarters.

"He knows a thing or two!"

"What a headpiece the cramper´s getten! Neebody wad hev thowt o´ sich a thing except hissel!"

"Hest ha got her ready?" Franky Coulson shouted.

"I´ve got her here!" was Harry´s reply, feeling in his pocket for the projected round-robin.

The agitator created a startling diversion. Impatienly he had listened to the "cramper´s" speech. Now that the robin seemed "catching on," he entered his protest. Angrily he reached the platform, and savagely denounced his crony.

"So this was yer secret, ye auld villain" Nee wonder ye waddent let oot what ye had in yer

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noddle. It wad hev been mair to yer mense if ye´d kept it there. An´ this is the advice ye hev to offer to yer an flesh an´ blood? Ye should burn to the bone wi´ shame; an´ so ye wad, if the root o´ the matter was in tha. This is fine palaver to hear fra´. Union men. My sarties, it wad be a thing to come doon to roon-robin´. If ye´ve got owt to say to `Rack,´ say it, straight oot fra´ the shoulder. What are ye feart on? Whee´s he, that Blackerton pitmen should gan boobin´ aboot tiv him? If ye dee as harry Minns advises ye," he continued, addressing the excited throng, "I´ll tell ye this. I´ll shake the dust o´ Blackerton off me feet, an´ nivver darken yer doors again. It´s fair scandalous to think on´t! To crawl on yer hands an´ knees to Mister Shaderach Reaveley, an´ to snivvle an´ whimper efore his face, an´ to say, `If ye please, Mister Rack, we diddent mean it. Let´s off this time, an´ we´ll never dee it nee mair.´

"Is that what ye´re ganin´ to dee?" he asked, with fiery energy. "Efter all these weeks o´ splendid fightin´, are ye gannin´ to show the white feather? By hinnies, ye´d deserve to be walloped ivery Jack man o´ ye, an´ to be trod under foot like the scum o´ the earth! Harry Minns!" he exclaimed, turning to his old crony, "I´m deceived in tha. If onybody else hed telt me that thoo wad hev done as thoo hes done, I´d hev axed them hoo lang it was since they´d

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finished their crack wi´ thee auld namesake. Auld Smuttyface an´ thoo´s getten middlin´ friendly when thoo takes to tricks like this. If thoo doesn´t get up an´ take back thee words, thoo can rest assured that I´m done wi´ tha!"

None but the "champion" would have dared to give the reminder to Teddy Turner. Bill Gibbons was fearless.

"Beggin´ thee pardon, Teddy," he remarked, "but thoo´s carryin´ things wi a high hadn, in a manner o´ speakin´. I´m not captivated wi´ the roond-robin´ idee mesel´, but hooiver, thoo´s venturesome wi´ thee plainness. I wasn´t aware that thoo was one o´ the `victed. Thoo hes nee business to be see highty-tighty when thoo isn´t consarned in the affair. Speakin´ for mesil´, I´m not inclined to let Auld Harry be blackguarded, be thoo or onybody else."

The agitator was mightily surprised. It was a novelty in his experience to be taken to task so openly. He peered into "Europe´s" face with undisguised displeasure.

"Thoo can glower as thoo likes," Gibbons said, laying his hand on Teddy´s head. "I respects tha for thee bravery, but thoo shouldn´t be see severe when thoo´s vexed. Auld harry means nowt but good, an´ it isn´t the thing for two auld cronies like ye to be fallin´ oot."

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"Ain´t I here to keep ye right?" Teddy persisted. "Isn´t it me that understands these matters? I say that roond-robins isn´t the constitution. Negotiations must be carried on on proper official turnpikes. There´s nee mention o´ roond-robins in the rules an´ regelations. Mark my words, when ye leave the rules and regelations ye run into danger."

Teddy Turner´s antagonism ruined the chances of old Harry´s "idee." The meeting broke up without any action being taken.

Harry´s missis was "sair put aboot" ehen he returned alone. She had "fettled" a dinner in the expectation of the agitator´s presence. Harry had arranged to ask him to join them at the meal. The "cramper" had lost his appetite.

"Ye needn´t be see pawky wi´ yer victuals if ye hev been taken aback at the meetin´, "she snapped, as she watched him playing with the food before him.

In her heart she was sorry for "her man," and meant to tell Teddy Turner "hoo his impidence strack her."

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That night Harry´s missis took action. Without a word to him, she proceeded to execute his "idee." Not once, but many a time, he had declared that "the roond-

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robin wad dee the trick." She resolved that the "trick" should be done. If the men would not do it, the women would. If the rules and regulations hampered the unionists, the women-folk were free. She had seen the draft of the round-robin Harry had sketched. She would have taken her a week at least to have written the appeal. Writing, to Sarah Minns, was hard labour.

Lucy Gallon was the "varry man." She was distinguished for her beautiful penmanship. A fine scholar was Lucy. She could read "like all that," and she had a marvelous memory. Her handwriting was "copperplat." Curiously enough, Lucy could never read even what she wrote herself.

"Ye want me to write the robin!" Lucy repeated, when Sarah Minns had whispered the plot.

Sarah nodded.

"But I divvent ken hoo ta start!"

"I´ll be here to tell tha!"

"But Reaveley ´ll now me writin´!"

"That´s matterless, canny body, matterless. The middle part o´ the robi doesn´t coont. It´s the signatures that´s the funny business, an´ ye´ll jist be one o´ the rest when the names is signed."

Mistress Gallon was reluctant.

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"But isn´t it contrariwise to the rules an´ regelations?" she queried.

"Hoots, woman! What´s the likes o´ thoo an´ me got to dee wi´ regelations? Is thoo in the Union ony mair nor I is? Tell me that!"

Lucy was still hesitant.

"Weel, Lucy Gallon," Harry´s missis went on, "I never thowt that thoo wad hev been frightened. Thoo was game wi´ thee ky-an-pepper when they torned tha oot o´ thee hoose. Ye´re not gannin´ to be chicken-hearted efter that, surely.

Lucy was searching in a box. A pound packet of tea was in her hands. The cord was cut, the tea poured into a canister, and the sheet of paper smoothed out. The paper, silvered on the outside, was white within. She found a pen and a bottle of ink.

"Tell us what´s the like on´t," she said, when she was ready to begin.

"Noo, the hint we want to gi´e to Shaderack must be put in the middle, an´ ye mun leave room all roond aboot for oor names," Sarah explained.

The writing expert was waiting.

"Ye can begin in this way, Lucy: `I write these few lines hopin´ to find ye all weel, as it leaves us all at present.´"

Lucy laughed aloud.

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"Why, woman, ye´re thinkin´ it´s a letter we´re busy wi´. Ye´re forgettin´ it´s a roond-robin."

"So I is! I hardlies knaw what I´s deein´, I´s that exited!" Sarah confessed, apologetically.

Eventually the appeal was complete. Neither of the collaborators could read it, but the sense of it they understood.

It was as follows: —

"We rite these fue lines to you Mister Shadderack Reaveley esquire just to let you no that the femailes of Blackerton is sick and tired of bein oot of the hooses.

"theres no reeson why the bairns and us should be made to suffer bekaase you and the men foaks canna agree. Weve been oot lang enuf as it is and we think ye mite

let bygons be bygons and give oor men a arly start. Yil see be this time ye made a mistaik in backin the blacklegs. its us as noas the union men and it's the truth to say they are all canny chaps and the best of fethers. if ye wad just yummer them a bit ye wad find them easy to manish. hoo wad ye like to see yor Mary livin in a feeld and if that lad of yours heddent become a angil hoo wad ye hev liked if he hed hed to sleep in a dowley tent. Were sendin this roond robin unbenoans to the men. Weel be killed if ye let on to them aboot it. hev a bi

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crack with your Mary and for Gods sake divvent be lang in sendin the kees."

Lucy Gallon signed her name. She guided the hand of Harry´s missis while the latter affixed her signature. Round the tents went Sarah with the round-robin in her bosom, and the pen and ink beneath her apron. She was careful to avoid the men, and only proceeded with her plot when the coast was clear.

The circle of names rapidly filled up. The women were keen on the project. Martha Gibson signed, and Maria Anderson, and Molly Golightly, and Nancy Gibbons, and thirty others.

The round-robin was ready for presentation, and the women as Molly Golightly said, were as "happy as clowey."

At the last moment, discomfiture stared them in the face. They had forgotten the all-important thing. Who was to place the round-robin in the manager´s hands? All were fearful. As the wives of the evicted miners, they feared their presence would incense the rage of "Rack."

"Kitty´s the boy for a job o´ this sort!" was the gleeful suggestion of one. "She´s the match for twenty Racks. Let´s away up!"

Kitty´s kitchen was crowded.

"Oh, I see!" she said, when they had explained their errand. "Ye´ve been tryin´ to dee without me, an´ noo when the shot´s to be

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fired ye hetta come to me. Weel, mebbies I can oblige ye. He canna be crusty wi´ me, seein´ that I´s an independent party. But, be gox, I´ll hev me an name on, sink or swim, deed or alive!"

The women looked at each other incredulously.

It was known that Kitty could not write.

"Open her oot, an´ I´ll put me cross! . . . Noo, that´s the finishin´ stroke!" Kitty cried exultantly, as she beheld her signature.

Lucy Gallon had penned the words. Kitty herself had put the cross between her baptismal and her marriage names.

"Kitty X Fagan—her mark."

"He´ll stare when he sees I´m to the front!"

Tony´s mistress marched to the manager´s house to present the women´s appeal. For the better part of an hour her constituents watched and waited. They knew that hope was quenched when Kitty was seen retuning. Tears filled the women´s eyes when Kitty´s mournful visage met their gaze.

"I wad hev manished him nicely if Tony´s ghost haddent been there, but there he was, as brazen as brass, in one o´ the gaffer´s big chairs. `Tony,´´ says Rack, `can ye varify your Kitty´s signature?´ an´ the ghost had the impidence to laugh. `Ha! Ha!´ he says, `varry nicely done, a work o´ art, I do declare; an´ yours, me darlin´ Kitty, is the most extinguished. "Kitty

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Fagan, her mark!" An´ what a nice crisscross; quite hartistic, to be sure!´ An´ the twosome roared an´ laughed, an´ held the roond-robin up to the light, an´ put it against the wall."

Then the discovery was made.

"Why, Kitty, it´s on thee back, as sure as life!"

Kitty´s face was frenzied. Women held their breath. The round-robin had been pinned on her back by one of the two with whom she had spoken. All the way she had trudged unconscious of the insult.

Without a word she retraced her steps. The floodgates of anger had been opened. She vowed vengeance on "that varmint Tony." It was he who had dared to shame her in the eyes of her sex.

"I meant to leave him abee, seein´ he´s set up shop as a ghost," she muttered, as she tramped, "but sarcumstances alters cases; ghost as he is, I´ll make me criss-cross on his back, an´ then he´ll laugh. `What´s this, Tony?´ his brother ghosts´ll say, an´ there it´ll be in black an´ blue, ´Kitty Fagan—her mark.´"

Tony watched her from the window, and succeeded by flight in postponing his evil day.

The sun went down on kitty´s wrath. When the day died, hope died in the hearts of the Blackerton women.

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The round-robin was the last appeal. It was born in faith; its sequel was a fiasco.

The round-robin was never seen again. There were none who wished to see it. It disappeared when the hopes it had inspired were rudely banished.

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For the Love of Long Ago.

"I WADDENT swap places wi´ Mary Reaveley for all the brass there´s in the world!" Martha Gibson was the speaker. Tommy was listening. "Mind, it´ll be a trial to live wi´ a man like `Rack´! Not that he´ll use her badly; he wad be the divil´s an sel´ if he hurt a hair of her heed. But there´s heaps o´ ways o´ punishin´ folks, aside strikin´ them. There´s mony a woman wad be fain an´ glad if a bat noos an´ thens ended the mischief.

It´s reached its height then, an´ it´s all ower till the next time. But when ye´re toed to a nasty, crossgrained, black-featered fellow, he keeps ye danglin´ an´ dotherin´ fra´ mornin´ to neet. This is wrang, an´ that´s wrang. Ye canna speak to please `im. He pokes intiv all the corners, until dear knaws what he finds. Ye durno look at `im, or he´s there at once wi´ `We are ye lookin´ at?´ An´if ye say, `A happeny cat can look at the Queen,´ he´ll double his fists like winkin´. By hinnies, a woman that´s tied tiv a man like that is to be pitied.

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"Poor sowl! She´s a slave, an´ nee mistake. She hes to dee nowt but mind her p´s an´ q´s. Her sowl isn´t her an. It´s as much as her life´s worth to be oot when he comes in, an´ when his tongue´s on the wag she durna play cheep. I really divvent think I could stand it. Sad I might be at forst, an´ then either bad or mad. I wad either finish ´im, or he wad finish me, one o´ the tow. Poor Mary! To think she should come to this! She made a mistake when she took ´im. In her case, an´ I hev good groonds for what I´m sayin´, though the parites divvent knaw that I knaw, it wasn't her onlyu cance, an´ though she wad hev´ been in the same plight as us, she´d hev´ been happier than she is. It´s mebbies reet that when ye´re married ye´re married, hard an´ fast, but I´ve known cases where the knot proved uncommon ackward. But what´s the use o´ talkin´ this way? She´s his wife, an´ his wife she´ll hetta be, unless she lingers to be his widda. But there´s nee sich luck for that! All the same, I pity her, from me sowl, I pity her, an´, by the livin´ Harry, she needs it."

Martha was right. The Reaveleys were unhappy. Week by week, ay, day by day, through the terrible eviction, the breach had widened between the manager and his wife. He had never sought to win her to his way of thinking. Such a condition was a con-

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tingency unthinkable. Her sympathies were with the class from which she prang, and especially for the women and children to whom the trouble was torture. From the

beginning she had espoused their cause, and risked her heart´s and her home´s peace to speak the words in their favour. She was careful, as she had need to be. Seldom she spoke, unless he offered the opportunity. Daily he determined to keep the business to himself, yet daily the vow was broken. Something would occur which excited his vanity or roused his displeasure, and, all unthinkingly, the news would escape him.

"Look at that!" he would say when he opened the morning´s letters, throwing a business sheet to her end of the table.

"Ye see that everybody that´s anybody thinks I´m right. Sir Henry says what all the owners and agents say. The men´s views are out of the question, and they all see that it´s the thin end of the wedge, and that I´m fighting for the existence of the coal trade."

His wife´s eyes were on the blue-tinted paper. She was reading the exhortation of the titled coal-owner. Her heart protested against the selfishness of the capitalist´s view. The skepticism was in her face. She was too true a woman to act a falsehood.

"Oh, of course!" he sneered, as he read her face, and lapsing into the vernacular, "Sir

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Henry´s a neebody, a parfect ignoramus. *You* think that Harry Minns an´ Geordie Taylor an´ Tommy Gibson knaw mair aboot pits an´ minin´ than all the maisters an´ their understrappers put together; or mebbies ye think," and there was an evil gleam in his eye, "that Franky Coulson´s the great authority?"

Into his eyes she looked, fearlessly and haughtily, and before her gaze he cowed.

Or, perhaps it was later in the day, and he had returned from the colliery offices. In his pockets were secrets he could not keep. He would taunt her with these. She was the readiest victim, He kept them back till he was settled in his chair, and then he dragged them out.

"Two o´ yer friends been tryin´ their hands this time!" he would say. "It´s the best o´ luck they wish me, the best o´ the divil´s providence. If threatenin´ letters was legitimate business, some o´ yer friends need never swing a pick again. They´d have

fortunes in nee time. What´s tha think o´ that?" And he would lay a miserable scrawl upon her knee. A tremor would pass through her frame as the ominous words met her glance.

`Hev a cair Mister Rack wat yer efter. Foaks hev disappeared in queer ways afor the days. Div ye mind of the man which was foond at the shaft bottom. Neebody could rekonise

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his face, but his missis new the culler of his shart. Take cair o´thesel´ Mister Rack. Theres some on us wad like to hear thoo yell as thoos topplin."

"For God´s sake!" Mary would cry, in a passion of fear, "why do you show me these? The men may mean what they say. You´re driving them to murder."

"Of course," he would reply. "It´s my fault. They´re nice fellows who write such things as these; an´ me, I´m as black as sin can make me."

He would wait for her to continue the disputation. The silence would thus be broken.

"But this one goes one better. It´s a decorated threatenin´ letter, this. There´s the skull an´ cross-bones at the top. Take it; ye needn´t be see nice about touchin´ it! One o´ yer friends ´ll hev fingered it!"

The horrible words seemed to burn themselves into her brain. "This is to sertefy that Mister Rack Reaveley hapined a acident in krosin the kollery sidins. Some says a shot was fired but naebody was aboot at the time and so we canna be sartin, but he´s deed, and the world´s the better noo he´s oot on´t."

"Oh, my God!" she would exclaim. "When is this to end? Can nothing be done to prevent such crimes? The men are growing desperate and blood will be shed before long."

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And in the fever of her fear she would pace the room.

There are unimaginable depths of cruelty in human souls. In the soul of Reaveley there was fiendish joy in his wife´s distress. The worst within him, long-slumbering evil passions, had sprung to life in the battle he was fighting with the crowd of foes without and the feeble woman within.

"I should think that the skull and crossbones is the handiwork o´ yer old sweetheart. There's neebody wad be mair pleased if I was deed an´ done for than Franky Coulson."

Then Mary would burst into tears in the shame of his evil speech.

No wonder she weakened in health and drooped in spirit. Daily she declined, and for longer hours was driven to her couch. Her husband noticed not; his mind was full of other things. The skeleton of the home no longer kept the cupboard; on the hearthstone it stalked, and through the house. Fortunately the door was barred to prevent its egress. None knew, few guessed, of the terrible breach between the manager an his wife.

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It was quite by accident that Franky Coulson heard of the plot against the viewer. To the threats and rumours of threats he

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had paid no heed. The extravagances of braggadocio he had regarded them. In the "black Horse," before he followed "Europe" in his policy of abstinence, he had heard the schemes of vengeance, the plan to tar and feather the man of odious name, to "dook" him in the reservoir, to dangle him over the pit-shaft, and the wilder schemes which breathed of murder. To these Franky had listened and laughed. To the liquors he attributed their origin. When sobriety succeeded intoxication he doubted not the schemes would be forgotten. In the tents and thoroughfares he had seen the gleams of hate, the gestures of malice, and heard the vengeful hopes of the manager´s fate. Men and women alike had wished him evil, and audibly prayed for the worst to befall. No

concern had these occasioned Frank. Indeed, he was forced to acknowledge that he, himself, had uttered libelous things. It would have been foreign to Franky´s notion of human nature if threats had not been spoken. They were inevitable in the pangs of pain and the extremities of wretchedness they were undergoing.

That night he discovered the plot, the deliberate design of the desperadoes. He had just left his ally, and was making for his bed. Round the tent-field he had wandered, finishing his pipe, when, in the darkest corner,

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he heard the whispered mention of his name. Hardly knowing what he did, he stopped and stooped. Behind the dyke, with their backs against it, were some of the wildest of the men. His name and "Europe´s" had been mentioned as probable accomplices, if invited. He was pleased to hear that the suggestion of their names was not acceptable. Their recent teetotalism was their exclusion from the plotters´ circle. Enough he learned in those terrible minutes to understand that death was dogging the steps of Reaveley. With beating heart he strained to hear. How? when? where? Were the unspoken yet persistent enquires of his excited curiosity. Close to the dyke he crept, flinging his pipe away and breathlessly waited in the hope that all might be rehearsed.

Bewildered he stole away, seeking solitude to think. The knowledge of the plotters was his. The names of the gang he knew. The hour, the place, the method, the sequel of the contemplated crime were in his possession.

What was he to do? Thought chased thought through his excited brain. Plan after plan emerged and disappeared. Should he go at once and denounce the plotters to their face, shame them with exposure, and threaten reprisals? They would wreak their rage in him, and dub him as a sneak. Should he inform the local

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leaders an leave them to outwit their desperate comrades? The truth would then be out and the fate of the miners and the hopes of triumph would be doomed.

Should he inform the police, and fling the gang into the cells? His heart revolted. He saw himself in the court, confronting men he knew, they in the felons´ dock, and he in the witness-box, and speaking the words that would send them to shame.

And then the demon whispered in his soul. "Why trouble about it at all? This is no business of yours! Why should you concern yourself about Reaveley? Has he ever been friendly to you? Was it not he who robbed your heart of the love you longed for? Was it not he who captured her you wanted as your bride? Has he not made your life a blank, and compelled you to live these long, long years in hopeless singleness? Supposing your positions were reversed" the demon persisted, "would Rack lift a finger to save you? Not he! He would be as mum as the grave. He would gloat in the prospect, and be wishing that the deed was done. You´ll get yourself badly liked if you interfere in the slightest degree. Keep yourself quiet and never let on that you´re as wise as the wisest."

Franky Coulson was in misery´s grip. The words of the demon found a response in the

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Wish of his hear. The past was back again before his eyes—the past he longest to forget for ever, the past which robbed the present of all such joys as might have been. Ay, he loved her before she had changed her name. Good God! He loved her still. He had never dreamed that his rival would be his victor. He cursed for the thousandth time the hesitancy which had delayed his offer. But surely she should have seen through his shyness, and discerned that he wanted her, body and soul. And the fearless rival had outmanœuvred him, and left him to a life´s desolation. Why should he be anxious for the man who had wronged him this? It would be a fitting ending to the unjust beginning.

The demon was there again. "Do as I bid you! Let things take their course. Haven´t you the sense to see that the disappearance of Rack will give you a second

chance for Mary Gascarth? Fool that you are, be wise for once, and be as secret as the dead."

Franky was distracted. Hope and fear, duty and inclination, good and evil, heaven and hell, God and Satan, were tearing at his will.

"What am I to dee?" was the despairing cry of his tortured heart. "Im feelin´ like a scoondrel, yet I divvent want to be one!"

Out into the gloom he wandered, stagger-

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ing on his way. On and on, beyond the tenantless houses, and beyond the colliery boundaries, on to the place where the dead were sleeping.

He knew the place he wanted. How often he had thither gone! To the side of a child´s grave, and that child the son of the woman he loved, and that child the son of the woman he loved, and of the man who had stolen his love.

"Oh, my God!" he groaned, falling on his knees in the winter´s snow, "the bairn might hev been mine but for him!"

There was no sleep that night, nor for three succeeding, for Franky Coulson.

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The plot had been conceived and arranged in Reaveley´s absence from the colliery. It was to be executed on his return. At the darkest part of the turnpike, where the overhanging trees so closely met, thin half-a-mile of his own doorstep, he was to be done to death. Into Yorkshire he had been, doubtless scheming their defeat, the plotters thought. He was returning by the train near midnight and must needs be driven in from Bishopstown. These desperadoes had gathered the facts and arranged accordingly. The place, the hour, the night´s dense darkness favoured their design. From his convert, the tremulous Franky watched their stealthy exit from the

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tents. Masked and armed, they crept to the rendezvous.

The watcher had hoped against hope that, at the last, the schemers would have better thoughts. They were keen to do evil. There was no escape for him. Without creating suspicion, he had verified the desperadoes´ information. To stay the assassins´ hand, if it was to be stayed, was the task for him.

There was no time to lose. Crossing the fields, he set his face towards the adjacent town. Field after field he crossed, dyke after dyke he leaped, until he reached the highway far beyond the plotters´ lair.

There was peace in his heart, though his pulses thrilled, and his nerves were quivering. It was the right he was seeking to do, to "save a soul from death," and to "hide a multitude of sins." He had thoughts of the hated manager, but more for the spirits, wild and fierce, who were then peering into the darkness with looks of murderous will. Still more he thought of the ailing woman, who, all unconscious of the calamity impending, would be waiting for the sound of the dogcart´s wheels and the greeting of her husband´s voice.

On and on he raced, never meeting a wayfarer, till the town´s outskirts were reached. To the half-lighted station he hastened, and stood at length at the platform´s gate waiting

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for the endangered viewer. He bethought him of the manager´s coachman and dodged his eyes, when, for a moment, the latter left the horse to enter the station.

The ringing of the bell and the upturning of the lights was the signal of the coming of the express. The coachman was on his seat awaiting his master´s appearance.

Franky´s eager eyes discerned the object of their quest. At the same moment, Reaveley´s eyes fell on Franky´s face. He scowled, all unconsciously. Franky´s heart was hardened.

With a finger-signal he called the manager aside. The cold and cruel eyes were on his face.

"Well, what do you want at this time of the night?" was the impatient and offensive question.

"Give me yer word of honour that you´ll nivver split what I´m gannin´ to tell ye!" Franky demanded, whispering hoarsely.

"Are you daft or drunk, man? Speak!"

"Promise me that you´ll nivver breathe what I´ve come to tell ye, then I will."

"How can I say until I hear?"

"Then you´ll nivver hear if ye divvent promise, an´ in that case it´ll hardly matter."

"I cannot be bothered with a fool like you," Reaveley retorted turning on his heel.

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"It´s you that´s the fool when you´re playin´ skittles wi´ yer life," Franky answered meaningly.

"Speak, then, and explain yourself!" A thousand thoughts, fearful and atrocious, flashed thorough the viewer´s brain. The sight of Franky revived the eviction horrors.

"Speak, ye fool, speak!"

"Not till I hev yer promise!"

"Then I promise!"

"What d´ye promise?"

"What ye want me to promise!"

"What´s that?"

"Oh, ye fool, I promise not to split on what you´re going to tell me!"

"Certainly! certainly!

"Then take yer oath. Draw yer finger across yer throat an´ say, `Cut me throat efore I die!´"

And the manager gave the strange compliance.

Franky unbosomed the secret. "There's men watchin´ for ye the neet at the robbers´ den. They mean to take yer life. Ye´ll hev nee chance against them. Ony one o´ them´s a match for ye. They're masked an´ armed, an´ thirsty for yer blood."

"This is nonsense, Coulson. They would never dare to do it."

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"Weel, ye can trust them if ye like. Please yersel´!"

"Then how do you know of this?"

"Quite be accident. It was on the sly, but I didn´t man it. I happened to hear them talkin´ on the other side o´ the dyke, an´ heard all they meant. An´ I´ve seen them this carry neet makin´ their way to the spot!"

"Then what am I to do? My wife´s expecting me, and the trap will be waiting."

"Ye´ll just hetta bide in the toon for the neet, an´ send yer man back wi´ word for yer missis that ye´ll be oot in the mornin´ ."

The manager thought for a moment.

"Yes! I´d better do that. I can stay at the Rose Hotel. There´ll be no fear of their ill-using my man?" he queried suddenly.

"Not the slightest! What´ll they touch Coachy for? They´ll be at ´im, in course, but he´ll just say what ye tell ´im, that ye find ye canna get oot the neet."

"You will ride back with him then?" the manager said, turning to the station exit.

"Not for worlds! They´d guess direc´lies Id given ye the tip, an´ they´d murder me. I´ll wait aboot till ye an´ `im´s oot o the way, an´ then I´ll get back as I came."

Side by side they walked a few steps. Then the manager halted, and looked at his informant curiously.

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"You´ve done a good turn for me to-night, Coulson, and I´ll not forget this. Perhaps I´ve suffered for it, God Knows! I´ll not forget this!" And he wrung the hand of the sturdy pitman.

Again in the darkness Franky was tramping. He was unconscious of the loneliness. He had saves "Mary´s man." The danger he had risked for the love of long ago.

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"WONDERS NIVVER CEASE."

"YE can lay yer life on´t, summat´s gannin´ to happen!" Such was the prophecy repeatedly uttered in the eviction-field. It was towards the back-end of February that this expectation took possession of the Blackerton mind. The belief was the outgrowth of fact. The happenings of the month´s earlier days were interpreted as warnings of a big event in immediate future. Without ceasing, the unexpected had taken place—the unexpected in every guise, in the most unlikely places, and in numberless instances. Astonishment became a surfeit. "What´ll be next?" was the invariable interrogation when "Wonders nivver cease!" had been ejaculated.

"A´, be gox! Divvent say nowt," Kitty Fagan would protest. "What´ll be next? Noo that´s a question when the world´s getten all atwist, an´ iverbody´s tryin´ to see what they can dee. There´s nivver been such carryin´s on in my time efore. Iverybody´s

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showin´ off an´ strainin´ theirsels´s to take the shine oot o´ iverybody else. There´s things ye might hev taken yer oath on, an´ what´s the consequence? They´ve taken the reest be way, of a change, an´ upset yer calcelations. An´ there´s other things ye might hev´ said was oot o´ the question all togither, an´, be Jove! In they´ve come for all the world as though the place was theirs. I´ve alwes been able to see what Luck was

preparin´ to send, but, by hinnies, she´s tryin´ her doges, an´ just lettin´ us see what she can dee when her monkey´s up. A while back I wad hev said that the sun wad gan to bed the neet, but I winnet venture to say he will for sure, for as like as not he wad have an all-night stroll, just to show he winnet be bossed be me, or onybody else. It´s my opinion that it´ll be better to say nowt, an´ to take all that comes an´ still say nowt."

The experience of the community had created general bewilderment. Men who had been "marrows" and women who had been friendly for years quarrelled on the question at issue. Bitter words were spoken, angry looks were exchanged, and the good feelings of a lifetime were engulfed in a moment´s wrath.

More wonderful were the reconcilements effected. In the common misery of the calamity, those who had been estranged were brought together, and families who had eyed.

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each other evilly, found ties of friendship in their mutual woes.

Strange were the changes in the demeanour of individuals. Conflicting were the mental and moral effects of pain and stress. The garrulous became taciturn, the secretive became talkative, the proud were meekened, the humble were emboldened.

Day succeeded day, and youths, and maidens were on the move. Girls were setting off for domestic service, and colliery lads were venturing forth to seek their fortunes in distant towns, on foreign soil, or in the service of the Queen.

The wonders never ceased in the employments of the pitmen "to fill in time." Some were making fenders, in the hope of a glorious hearthstone by-and-by. Others were busy with furniture, from chests of drawers and writing-desks to knife-cases and soap-boxes.

Even the clerics were working wonders. The priest was "laying his hands on money," and administering extensive relief. How Mr. Robinson financed the youngsters´ tea-parties was a problem baffling to the wisest. The curate´s exploit was a prodigy of valour, and raised him to the hero´s pinnacle. Some of the sick he visited

were badly needing coal. With the manager´s permission he descended the shaft alone, found his way to the face,

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hewed a tubful of fuel and ascended to bank with his treasure.

And the women were devising means to help the exchequer. Not a moment was wasted. Chatting together they were stitching and knitting, and the aprons and stockings were the stock-in-trade with which they tempted the women of the neighbourhood surrounding.

In the eviction-field there was daily something fresh—a new invention, some novel manœuvre, a daring undertaking, a comic contrivance, a tragic departure. The wonders never ceased. Each and all contributed to the popular diversion.

In the end it was found that there were wonders *and* wonders. When Lang Tom the Lazy `un coined a new name for an old disease it was said in Blackerton that he had "taken the biscuit." The "biscuit" was not long in his possession. It was transferred to Peter the fiddler when it was known that he had officiated as the revivalist´s flunkey.

Peter´s pre-eminence was short-lived. All preceding wonders were "capped" by Kitty. She took the game into her own hands in the end, and was indifferent to the astonishment and stupor her action excited. There was nothing else to be done. The "biscuit," the triumph´s trophy, was hers. Whether Tony shared the biscuit the sequel will show.

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When Lang Tom "excelled hissel´" and became the colliery´s talk, the folk began to wonder whether their previous estimate of his character had been correct. Scotter was not actually a native, but, as good as one, through long residence. "He´s as

lazy as he´s lang an´ as lang as he´s lazy!" In theses words his characteristics were described.

"Man, Tom! stir theesel´ a bit, an´ let´s hev a good shift for once!" his marrow once said to him coaxingly.

"Isaac, me lad!" he responded, "thoo´s getten´ agetated."

"Nowt o´ th´ sort, but I want a rattlin´ good pay!"

"Noo, thoo´s puttin´ thee case ackward like. I nivver like to see a man greedy, an´, for my part, I´m not inclined to encourage tha´ in thee meanness. If thoo just gets enough for meat an´ drink thoo´ll be deein´ vary canny."

"Tom, me man!" the other replied, "thoo´s laziness parsonemefised. Here thoo hes the chance o´ easy money, an´ plenty on´t, an´ ye´re that listless ye´ll just mak´ game on´t. I wad be ashamed o´ mesel´ if I was thoo!"

"Didn´t I tell tha, thoo was getten agetated? Thoo, *is* agetated, and vary badly agetated. Noo, I´ll reason the thing wi´ tha. What do we wark for? To keep oorsel´s alive! That´s the lang an´ the short on´t. Then what´s the

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use o´ killin´ yersel´ to keep yersel´ alive? I suppose we´ll hetta live, an´ hetta wark to dee that. Divvent ye see that if ye kill yersel´ wi´ workin´ ye´re defeatin´ the object ye hev in view? Thoo should be reasonable, me lad. Thoo doesn´t live to wark, thoo warks to live. Wark´s a misfortune, but it´s the only way to live, an´ so my motta is, the littlest wark for the langest life."

Tom Scotter was true to his principles, and made no secret of them. He was constantly bantered for his idleness. Not one whit was he moved. "Ye can laugh as ye like, but I´m the only honest pitman on the place," he would say. "Ye pretend to like yer wark. Ye´re pleased when the caller comes, an´ ye whistle when ye´re gannin´ to the pit as if ye were off to a picnic. Ye´re a pack o´ hypocrites! The only difference atween ye an´ me is that I say what I mean, an´ ye divvent. I divvent like wark o´ any kind, big or little, hard or easy, good money or bad money. I´ve been consistent all me life. I´ve

alwes done as little as I could, an´ as seldom as ivver possible, an´ to tell the truth, I mean to continee."

Various stories were current in Blackerton concerning Long Tom´s laziness. He was only a "rattle o´ bones," and had no flesh to speak of. Still, it was said, he was often overheard whispering to the flesh he had. "Noo, flesh,"

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he would soliloquise, "divvent get theesel´ excited. There´s nee occasion to tire theesel´ the day. Take her easy! We hevvent done see badly this while back, an´ thoo´s entitled tiv a day off noos an´ thens. Keep theesel´ calm for the day, an´ when the morrow comes, I´ll take it oot o´ tha´!" Naturally Tom never had any difficulty in persuading his flesh to take his own point of view.

"In a jiffey" was a favourite phrase of his. Its obvious signification was one of eager speed. In the mind of Tom it meant a date in the indefinite future.

Nobody wondered at his inexpertness as a miner. Work was so hateful to him that awkwardness was the natural consequence of his unwillingness. Almost daily he damaged himself somewhere. It was said at last that he was "a handy man with his *feet*".

It might have been thought that Scotter would have disguised his repugnance of work when the officials were about. Not he. There was a twinkle in his eye when he suggested the amendment to the manager´s proposal. There was extra work on hand, and Reaveley had offered terms for a longer shift. All the others readily consented. Tom demurred.

"Just mention yer offer again, Mister Reaveley!" he said.

"Instead of working from 6 a.m. till 6 p.m.,

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start at 5 in the morning and go on till 7 at night, and I´ll give you 6d. a day extra!"

Scotter was cogitating.

He saw his way eventually.

"That´ll hardlies suit the likes o´ me, gaffer! But I´ll tell the´ what I´ll dee, an´ it´ll be all the same in the total. I´s a bad getter-up, so I´ll start at sivin in the morning´ instead o´ five, an´ give ower at five instead o´ sivin. There´s nee difference, thoo sees!"

With a laugh the manager turned away, and found a candidate for overtime elsewhere.

Scotter was not in the Union. He was one of the nine. Things suited him nicely in the early weeks of the struggle. He had little to do, and was extravagantly paid for the doing of it. He could have lived on terms like these and wished for none better, if other things had been equally satisfactory. Tom was married, and married to Dumpy Bridget. Bridget was easy-going as a rule, but when she found "the place" all upset with the eviction and herself despised as the wife of one of the blacklegs, she found her tongue and her family temper.

"Scotter!" she said one night, "if there´s to be peace atween thoo an´ me, we´ll hetta shift. This job´s gannin´ to last for a while yet. It´s all reet for the likes o´ thoo, getting´ oot ivery day, but here´s me, locked up from mornin´ to neet, an´ looked doon upon be the

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women o´ Blackerton. Noo, thoo´ll get theesel´ off an´ find a spot somewhere else."

And so "the lang and lazy `un" went on tramp, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by one or other of the nine who were equally anxious to get clear of the mischief.

One morning, in the small hours, Bridget heard his step. She was knitting, and had been for several hours, to keep herself awake. She knew that Tom was off to a colliery seventeen miles away. He had hesitated at the thought of the distance, and only her sarcasms had spurred him on.

"Scotter," she had sneered, "ye should be ashamed o´ yersel´! A man like ye, wi´ such a pair o´ shanks, to think a minute aboot a stroll o´ sivinteen mile. It´s just as weel I´m the only creeter to hear yer whimperin´!"

"Yis, Mistress Scotter," Tom retorted, nettled with her sneer, "but it´s sivinteen mile there, an´ sivinteen mile back, an´ that´ll be foweran´-thirty!"

"Ye divvent mean to hint, Scotter," she exclaimed with spirit, "that I wanted ye to bide there. I was lippenin´ on ye comin´ back, an´ didn´t think there was need to say see. Of course you´ll come back when ye get there, an´ it´s sivinteen mile—sivinteen there, sivinteen back, as I said at the forst—it´s sivinteen mile there an´ back."

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She heard his step, and the door was opened on the instant.

"Scotter, is that thoo, me canny man?" she cried.

"Ay, it´s me, an´ the disease!" he replied, appearing at the threshold.

"The Lord presarve us! Thoo an´ the disease! What disease? Is´t the cholere?" and Bridget was beginning to cry.

"I´ve getten the foot an´ mooth disease, if thoo wants to know, an´ if thoo dissent be sharp, an´ get us summant to eat, both me an´ the disease ´ll be deed an´ done for," and Tom dropped into a chair.

Bridget was "on the job," and soon put him in the way of curing the mouth disease, and with gentle fingers attended to his blistered feet.

When he was feeling easy, he announced his success. She was candid enough to say that to hear such news was worth a bad attack of the "foot an' mooth disease."

It was Bridget who told the story to Kitty Fagan, and for half an hour she tasted the bliss of Kitty´s congratulation.

"I´m glad to hear the news, Bridget, for reasons mair nor one. I´m glad the men as isn´t in the Union is makin' tracks, and I´m glad that that lang an' lazy man o' thine hes actualies walked sivinteen mile there an' back, an' I´m glad he sees the fun on't, an' hes fettled

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a new name for an auld complaint. Mony a time I´ve said `Wonders nivver cease!' but this is the most wonderfulest o' the lot, an' I´ll let it be known to Scotter´s advantage."

And so it came to pass that Long Tom was the hero of the day.

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If Scotter had had "list" to be jealous, Peter Golightly would have been the victim. It was the clearest case of supersession Blackerton had known. Various were the phrases used to express the fact.

"Why, Peter, thoo´s fairly knocked the wind oot o' Lang Tom´s sails!"

"Peter, me heartie, thoo´s hoyed the lanky lazy un' nee mistake!"

"Peter, thoo should soothe his feeling´s when thoo´s sotle his fame!"

The supersession was undoubtedly true. Peter Golightly was the favourite. It happened in this way. The fiddler had made up his mind that there could be no objection to his fiddling for pay. He had time on his hands, and money was lacking. It was weary work to Peter to "hang aboot the field," and the endless confabulations on the threadbare subject vexed him sorely. He mentioned the matter to the "missis," and secured her approval.

"Ye can gan on one condition, Peter," Molly had said, "an' only on that condition;

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an' that is that ye make yer ways home ivery neet. I canna hev ye sky-larkin' at midneet away fra' me. Men-folks is alwes best when they hev to give an account o' the day´s proceedin´s when the day´s done."

Peter had no objection. All went well for a time. In the morning Peter set off with his fiddle and returned ere midnight to render his account to the faithful Molly.

One night Peter broke the faith. Molly was hopeful up to midnight, incredulous at 1 a.m., undoubtedly anxious at 2 o´clock, and utterly frantic when the morning´s third hour had come.

She was unconsolable all the day. "He´s mebbies been locked up in the kitty, or been murdered in a wood. Mebbies he´s been copped be the press-gang for the Noodles´ Band!" These were some of the fears which tortured the soul of Molly.

The second night passed and still there was no sign of Peter.

"Hoots, woman!" Kitty Fagan observed. "Ye´re makin' yersel' ridic'lous! One wad think ye had Peter tied to yer apron-strings. Ye needn´t be showin' off efter that fashion. Peter wasn´t one o' the henpecked sort. For my part I never liked to see a man atween a woman´s finger an' thumb, wi' the exception o' one man, an' poor sowl! He´s a ghost noo. … Just divvent bother yer heed aboot your Peter.

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He´ll be as reet as the mail, an' he´ll be turnin' up in the mornin' an' jinglin' his brass in the laps."

Kitty´s forecast was fulfilled. Peter appeared in time for breakfast. With a "whirliwig o' music" he introduced himself to the people in the field. Soon it was known that Peter was so hilarious that Molly was feared he was "off his chump."

Everybody went to see.

"Where hev I been? Peter repeated, when questions were asked by the curious colliers. "Where hev I been? Ha, ha, ha! Just wait till I laugh to mesel'. Ha, ha, ha! I´ll hetta tell the parsons. He was one o' their sort, a dandy California clargyman. Oh, what a farce! Divvent be see impatient! I´ll get ye telt if ye gi'e me time. It was this way. I was playin' the `Keel Row' in Sunnyside, an', as I was givin' her gip up come his riverence.

"'My good man,' he says, `d'ye want to earn a honest shillin'?'

"`Me canny man,' I says, `ye´ll understan' I´s on for business, an' there´s money on the job, ye´ve just to say yer say.'

"`Weel, then,' he says, `I´ll tell ye what I want. I´m a revivaller, an' howldin' meetin´s in the Methody chapel. When I heard ye playin' it occurred to me that a solo on the

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voiolin wad be a mighty attraction, an' work wonders among the sinners an' saints. If you´ll come to the meetin' the neet, an' give us a selection after the sarmon, I´ll gi'e ye a shillin'.

"`It´s a bargain!' I says, noddin'. `Mind,' says he, `it´ll hetta be somethin' sootable, an' somethin' in the same style as the discoorse.'

"`But what´s the gannin' to gas aboot?' I axes him.

"Weel,' says he, 'I was thinkin' o' speakin' aboot the "Translation o' `Lijah.´"

"Couldn´t be better!' I says ´Leave it to me. We´ll dee the trick atween us!'

"An' accordin´ly I was there sittin' weel to the fornt an´ in a corner seat. A fine thing he made o´ `Lijah´s Translation,´ an' when he was done he says to the folks: `Noo, my friend in the corner´ll give us a voiolin solo'.

"Up I gets, tunes her up, gives a bit flourish to get the style, an' sets off tooth an´ nail wi' `Up in a balloon, boys!'

"The young `uns laughed an´ clapped, an' stamped wi´ their feet.

"His nabs wasn´t varry pleased, an´ said I´d taken him back a wee bittie. Hooiver, he axes me to stop for the next neet, an' promises another shillin'. Be jove! The place was crammed, an' his nabs was moontains high. I knew I wad fettle him this time, `cause he was runnin' an auld horse that neet. He was on aboot that

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prodigal lad. He did it as nice as could be, but it was easy seen the folks was wishin' he was done. By-an'-by, he says, Amen! an´ gi'es me the wink. Before I started I jist said that varry likelies iverybody wad ken the words, as I was gannin´ to gi´e them an auld

favourite, an´ that they could join in if they felt inclined. So off I gans wi' `Johnny comes marchin' home again!' By hinnies! I was glad to get oot. If onybody had said that his reverence had a nasty temper I waddent hev believed them. He raved, an' hammered the pulpit, an' called me iverythin' he could lay his tongue tee. I wanted to reason the thing wi' him, but he waddent be civil. Oh! I got the shillin', an' a bonny good clap as I made me way oot."

Roars of laughter had punctuated Peter´s recital. Long Tom´s walking exploit and linguistic facility were as nothing to the notion of Peter´s performance as the evangelist´s flunkey.

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The fiddler was in the shade. The "starch" had been taken out of him. In the heyday of his popularity he had stayed at the eviction scene, repeating the story of his "revivalin'" to all comers, and giving himself airs as the centre of the latest wonder. When kitty entered the competition he resumed his rambling modes He was "neewhere where she comes."

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People refused to credit the news. "Ridic'lus! Impossible! Barney! Parfect nonsense!" were the answers to the popular tale.

"Kitty wad nivver be see soft," one of the women was heard to say.

"If the report be true," concurred another, "she´s a ruined woman."

The rumour was the truth, and the truth was the wonder which eclipsed all wonders preceding.

The desperadoes, baulked in their designs on the manager, had made a dead set at the non-unionists remaining. Moonlighting and secret attacks had convinced the local blacklegs that flight was the way of safety. With the departure of these, vindictive passion had only one outlet. Tony Fagan was "the marked man."

The spy was finding that double-dealing was the bankrupt´s game. He had sold his soul to Reaveley, and Reaveley ground him down. To meannesses unspeakable the spy had been subjected, and, when all the schemes to outflank the unionists had failed, Tony was the scapegoat of the viewer´s malice.

There are limits even to the hireling´s servitude. Resentments began to burn in Tony´s soul. The manager´s persistent cruelties were the fuel for anger´s fires. Out leaped the flames at length, the fiery words of the shamed and maddened heart.

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"Rack" gripped his serf by the neck and hurled him from his door.

It was night, and the desperadoes were on the trail. Tony was in their power, helpless to resist their will. Their vengeance wreaked, the masked gang flung him at Kitty´s door. There she found him—gagged, bruised and bleeding, a hideous object to behold.

In that moment Kitty forgot all else in madness at the scoundrels, and pity for their victim. She had him within the kitchen and settled on the couch. With busy fingers she released him of his fetters, and bathed his wounds. The sight of the frightful scars brought the tears to her eyes. She kissed his bleeding temples, and with endearing words enquired where the pain was keenest.

Dr. Maloney was summoned and rendered his aid to the hapless Tony.

Kitty´s indignation was boundless, and her language was such that Meg Toppin put her fingers in her ears.

"The dorty blackguards! The scoondrelly murderers, to set on my canny man in this fashion! Clivver they´ll think theirsel´s to tak´ a little bit fellow like mine in the dark, an´ him biv hissel'. An' this is what the union means, an' this is hoo they´re gannin' to win? If they hev to be cut-throats an' highway robbers to get rid o' the blacklegs it´ll be better for the

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country at large to keep the blacklegs an' hang the t'others. By hinnies! but I'll bottom this business, an' if there's law an' justice in England, they'll hev a spell o' penal sarvitude."

A moan would escape from Ton's lips, and at once she was there to arrange his pillow, to moisten his lips, to bathe the bruises.

Meg Toppin, looking and listening, wondered at Kitty's inconsistency. She did not dare to voice her thoughts, and solved the difficulty by concluding that Kitty had an unsuspected "soft spot."

In Kitty's present feelings the past was as through it had never been. She had meant to make "her mark" on Tony. Now that others had made the marks, she could have seen them hanged and quartered, and enjoyed the spectacle.

"Kitty, where is I?" Tony confusedly asked, beginning to awake from the shock and stupor.

"Thoo's where thoo hes a reet to be, my canny man. Thoo's in thee an hoose, an' wi' me."

"But hoo've I getten here?" was the enquiry of his bewilderment.

"Noo divvent excite yersel'. What does it matter hoo thoo's getten here when thoo is here? Thoo's here, an' thoo'll stop here. Take a sippe o' this, an' just gan off to sleepie again!" and Kitty tucked him, in, and touched his cheeks with her lips.

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When it was known in Blackerton that the "ghost" had resumed his mortal life, and that his "widda" had received him with open arms, it was felt that anything *might* and that something *would* happen. The world might come to an end—or the dispute.

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THE WHITE FLAG.

IT was known that Mary Reaveley had "taken her bed." She had been "trailin' aboot an' keepin' an eye on things" during all the anxious weeks. For years she had "nivver been nowt to crack on." Since the day of the "fateful speech" she had "fair wasted away." It was said in Blackerton that she was "Peace´s an sel'." No privation had she experienced in the colliery feud. As the wife of the manager her home was inviolable and her provision abundant. But none had suffered more than she, and few so much. The pain was in the mind; the suffering was in the heart. Strife and unpleasantness were previous to the gentle soul. The knowledge that others were stricken poisoned the springs of her life´s joys. Try as she might she could not cleave her heart from the village pitfolk. She was one with them; she was one of them. Their point of view was hers. Her ascent in the social scale had failed entirely to change her earlier feelings. She could not do other than "side" with lifetime friends.

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The women guessed that, long before she gave in, her strength had been exhausted. It was her "spirit" which had kept her up. Now that she was bedfast, nothing but the worst was feared.

Throughout the colliery hearts were compassionate and sorrowful. The poorest had ever known they had a friend in Mary. The vicious and wayward, men and women, young and old, had always been sure of a friendly greeting.

"Hoo is she this mornin'?" would be a woman´s question when she joined the circle of pitmen´s wives. "She´s only moderate as far as one can larn!" would be the doleful answer. "They say she just lies in her bed an´ moans an´ cries. When it´s mornin´ she´s wishin´ it was neet, an´ when it´s neet she´s wishin´ it was mornin´."

Then sacred reminiscences would escape the lips in the passion of grief in Mary´s illness.

"She was a good friend to me was Mary Reaveley," Effie Gleaner exclaimed in a choking voice. "I´ll nivver forget her. The measles was in the place an´ of course all

mine took them. You´ll mind on´t? I had me hands full, I can tell ye. It was forst one an´ then another; forst the little ‘un, then the big ‘un, them the middle ‘un—I was footsore an’ back broke. Nivver a wink o´ sleep could I get, I was that anxious. I mind the varry hoor when Mary

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Reaveley lifted the sneck an´ walked in. ‘Effie, hinney!’ she says, `I was thinkin´ ye´ll be han´ tied, an´ I´ll relieve ye a little bit if ye´ll let me!’ So I laid me ways doon on the lang-settle, an’ she took my place in the front wi´ the bairns an’ the measles. She *is* a good sowl, an´ there´s not mony like her!” Effie concluded, tears preventing futher speech.

“She can dee things that nicely” Maria Anderson had resumed the grateful confession. “She nivver made ye feel as if ye was behowldin’ to her, an´ all the time ye felt that she was a parfect God-sent angel. It´ll be ten years this month since Anderson had the ploorisy. Maloney was clean licked. Mary was in, an´ when he was pullin´ his gloves on, she had a word wi´ him be hissel´. I saw they´d ‘greed on somethin’. One o’ th’ toon doctors was oot that night, an´ him an´ Maloney got Anderson roond the corner as nice as could be. I made it my business when Anderson was back to work to ax Maloney what the toon-doctor´s charge would be. He just whistled, an’ said if I iver said me prayers I was to put in a few words for the maister´s missis. A bit efter that, when I meets Mary, I broached the subject. ‘Ye´re a varry cur’us body, Maria,’ she says, wi’ a bit smile. `The toon doctor was very glad to help Samson, an’ was easy seteesfised in the way o’ pay.’ She waddent hear tell o’ me givin’ her

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the money. She was highty-tighty in a minute, an´ said if I mentioned such a thing, the next time Anderson had the ploorisy, he wad just hev to hev it. That´s her way, ye ken!”

Bell Rymer had never breathed her secret to living soul. She could not keep it back now that the praises of Mary Reaveley were being sounded. Silence, she felt, would be sin. Her eyes were wet and her speech was broken. Her apron was in all shapes before she reached the end.

"I mind when my poor man was waiting for his burial. Nivver was woman in such a plight as me. There was nee unions in them days. When men was off wark, there was nee money comin´ in. My man was on the sick-list for nineteen months an´ fortneet. I had both him an´ me to keep. It´s a bonny bad job when you´ve a sick man to get nourishments for. They´re that expensive, an´ they´re done in nee time. When he deed, poor man, he was that anxious aboot me, an´ he fairly worrited hissel´ at the last. I wad nivver tell him hoo we were stan´in' in the way o' brass, but he knew there couldn´t be much. The varry last thing he said was that he wished he´d gone into the poor-hoose an´ then I waddent hev been see badly left. He nivver knew. I hadn´t a farthin'. An' there he was, laid-oot, an' the funeral the day efter the morrow. I

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was nearly oot o´ me mind when I sat me ways doon to think. It was *her* that gave my man a respectable burying!"

Bell´s voice was a scream, and her harn apron covered her face.

Others of the woman had tales to tell, and they were told. Simple were the tributes, but genuine was the gratitude for the works of faith and labours of love of Mary Reaveley.

In the Blackerton mind were beneficences more recent. It was frankly admitted that in the eviction circumstances the manager´s wife would be tongue-tied and purse-bound. Notwithstanding, she had helped and healed and heartened and befriended. Many in the direful days when "sair put to" had found God´s Providence in Mary Reaveley.

Now that she could not leave her bed, humble hearts united in grief. Weary days passed slowly. Gloomy as the outlook was, the loss of Mary Reaveley would be the

gloom´s dense deepening. It was idle to cherish hopes. The conviction was profound that Mary herself had lost heart.

To be bedfast was to be hopeless.

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It was an important day for the Blackerton viewer. A meeting of the proprictors was to be held in Bishoptown, and he was donning

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his "Sunday best." Dressing, his brain was busy, forecasting the proceedings when he should render his account to the principals. He had little doubt that his actions would secure their hearty endorsement.

"Isn´t tha' gannin' to get up the day?" he asked of his wife in playful banter, using the dalect of his youth.

"I´m afeared I´ll hetta lie in the day as well, father," was her tremulous reply.

He stepped to the side of her bed, startled with the tone of weakness.

"What´s the matter this mornin', hinney? Isn´t tha' feelin' better?"

"I hardlies know what´s the matter wi' me, my man. I feel as listless as can be, an' inclined for a long sleep."

"Thoo hesn't been up to the mark lately," he observed, scanning her face with kindly eyes.

"I´ve been me usual, off an' on; never the same two days together; but I´ll be all reet in the mornin' dootless."

She was struggling to conceal her soul´s dark fears.

Reaveley was beginning to see. The fact that his wife was ill had never really occurred to him. Now that his fears were aroused, her wasted cheeks, her whitening hair, her sunken eyes made panic in his soul. Love

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leaped to life, to ten-fold life, within him. It was a revelation to himself of love´s endurance. Brief as the moments were, his heart was riven by feelings most divergent. Hope and fear, love and hate, remorse and resolution gave poignant pain. From his eyes the scales had fallen. He cursed with bitterness his selfish blindness.

"Noo, thoo´s bad, Mary, my woman," he said, tenderly lifting her hand, "an' thoo´s tryin' to deceive me!"

"I´m not see varry bad," she protested bravely; "just tired like an´ sleepy."

"Nee doot!" he affirmed; "but it isn´t thee way to lie abed, an' here thoo´s been this while back. There´s somethin´ the matter wi' tha! Tell us what it is!"

"There´s nee occasion to put yersel' aboot, father! I´ll be as reet as ninepence in the morn!"

"I´ll not gan to the meetin' the day!" he declared, coming to a swift conclusion. "The directors´ll hetta manage be theirsel´s. There´s nowt to be done till the men gives in!"

"If ye bide at home for me, I´ll get oot o' bed this minute!" And Mary was proceeding to arise.

"What a thing it is to hev a woman to manage! Lie doon, ye contradictious body! Ye wad gi'e yersel' yer deeth o' cad ta get yer

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an way? Settle yersel' in the blankets, an' I´ll send for the doctor, an´ when Im´ in the toon I´ll see if I can get a norse fra' the hospital."

"By hinnies! If I´s not bad, I soon will be if one o' them creeters wi' the dandy caps is installed in the hoose. If ye bring one o' them here, I´ll give her a gliff. I´ll not bide in the same hoose wi' any such dardanelle. If ye want to please me, father, send for Martha Gibson. She´ll mebbies be willin' to dee me turn for a day or two."

The shadow was on his face, the shadow of the anger against the class to which Martha belonged. It was only for an instant. It fled in the anxiety he was feeling for his wife´s consolement and betterment. “Noo, thoo´ll rest quietly till I come back,” he said, when he was ready for the drive to town. “I´ll hurry the meetin’ on, an’ as soon as it´s over, I´ll be back. Martha Gibson ´ll be sure to come for the sake o’ auld lang syne, an’ she an’ the doctor´ll soon get tha’ on thee feet.” He kissed her before he left. From the light of his eye, Mary knew there was love in his heart.

It was “getten-on for tea-time” when the manager returned. Entering the bedroom he found Martha and the doctor in attendance. The latter gave the viewer a frigid nod. Dr. Maloney was in no mood for hypocritical politeness.

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“What´s the matter wi’ my wife? the viewer asked of the doctor after speech with Mary.

“If you´ll step downstairs you can put you question and I´ll answer them. A sick room is no place for talking. Now, Mistress Reaveley,” he continued, turning to the invalid, “ye must keep your heart up, and take all the fine things Mistress Gibson gets ready, and if she doesn´t be kind to you, you can tell me when I come tonight and I´ll give her her notice. And now, Martha,” he proceeded, blithely meeting her eyes, “ you will see that you do all that I have specified, and if that body on the bed won´t take her medicine just grip her nose and open her mouth and pour it down.”

“He´s a funny ‘un is Maloney,” was Martha´s remark to Mary when they were alone. “He puts heart into folks wi’ his cheery ways.”

But there was no banter in the doctor´s speech when he confronted Reaveley in the room below.

“The matter? What´s the matter with your wife? You´re a confounded scoundrel, sir, that´s what you are!”

Patrick Maloney was roused. He had long wanted to relieve his mind to the viewer, and welcomed the chance.

"Not content with cursing the folks on the place, you´ve set yousels to break your wife´s heart. There´s nothing the matter with her, and there´s everything the matter. It isn´t her body

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that´s bad, it´s her mind. She´s broken.hearted. The trouble youvé got the colliery into has settled on her spirits, and she´s just collapsed. That´s what´s the matter! It isn´t physic she wanst; it´s peace and quietness!"

Reaveley was listening in fear and anger. The doctor´s words appalled even his haughty mood, yet in the terror, malice burned against the other.

"Ye´re uncommon severe in your language, doctor," he managed to say. "Ye´ll be chargin´ me wi´ murder next."

"Oh! you see my meaning! That´s precisely what I´m after. You´re killing that woman as sure as can be. She´ll die and nobody can stop her, and you´ll have her death on your conscience. You´ve broken her heart, and, when I fill in the death certificate, I´ll put it down in black and white."

Patrick Maloney was pacing the room, speaking in burst of passion, and enjoying the sight of Reavelay when he winced with pain.

A strained silence followed, broken only by the tread of the doctor as he paced the floor.

Neither spoke.

The manager sat in his chair with such easiness as he could summon. He was thoroughly alarmed; all the horrors `receding were as nothing to this. Ir incensed him; it humbled him. It intensified his sullennes;

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it appealed to the latent tenderness. He resolved to be defiant; he was tempted to be gentle. His eyes flashed; his lips twitched; his brow contracted; his cheeks flushed. There was a demon in his soul; there was also an angel.

The doctor was standing at the window, and, in the terrible stillness, the moaning of the woman in the room above was distinctly heard. It was an appalling sound. A cold shiver ran through the viewer´s frame. It moved him to the quick.

"Good God!" he cries, "an' is she to die like this? Can nowt be done to save her?"

"A broken heart cannot be mended!" was the other´s cold reply.

"I´ll send for a doctor fra' the toon!" was the exclamation of Reaveley´s despair.

"I´ll save ye the trouble. I´m on my way to Bishopstown, and I´ll fetch them out, the physician for you broken-hearted wife, and Superintendent Blackburn to secure your arrest."

It was well that the doctor escaped. Reaveley´s rage was madness.

He was alone in the room, and in misery´s deeps. The verdict of the doctor he never doubted. His wife would die. It was anguish. The thought was terror. The loneliness and stillness cowed and frenzied him.

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In the room above were whispering voices. To the stairs he stole; the door of the sickroom he crept.

His wife was praying.

"Oh, my Father!" he heard her say, "Thoo´s in Heaven, an' that seems a foreign land when Blackerton´s to be mentioned. It´s only a pit-place, but they´re canny folks that lives here. Is there nowt Thoo can do to put things straight? I´m only one woman, an' I´m like to die wi' frettin'. An' I divvent want to die. My man´ll nivver forgive hissel' when his eyes is opened. Thoo sees hoo hard he´s getten. Oh, my Father! Make him tender, an' soft, an' pitiful, an' forgivin'. Nudge him on to be as good as he used to be. Let him see hoo fine a thing it would be to make iverbody glad-like. Thoo wad

mebbies let me bide to be a better wife than I hev been, if he wad be canny wi' the folks in the field."

So she prayed, disjointedly in language but connectedly in thought.

Reaveley was trembling from head to foot. When Martha Gibson spoke, it seemed to him as thought the voice were distant.

"Thoo´s prayed varry sensibly, Mary hinney. The lord hes an open coorse efore Him. There´s nee reason why this business shouldn´t be settled. All the blacklegs hes gone, an' there´s not likely to be ony mair on the place,

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an' if the Lord wad just give the gaffer the nod, they could divide the credit atween them!"

Reaveley fled to the room below. His fears were heightened, his heart the more distraught. What was he to do?

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"Martha!"

It was an hour later, and in that hour the miserable man had been deeply thinking. It was gall and wormwood to seem to bend. He had meant to make the pitmen cringe. Even the thought hardened his heart. But "Where was the need?" the good within him persistently whispered. Had not the unionists suffered severely, and had they not seen the ravages of strife in the miseries of their families? Why should the antagonism be continued? The men upon whom he had relied had played him false. The nine had vanished, and Tony Fagan was beyond his reach. And then the thought of his dying wife would reappear to reassert its claim. She was broken-hearted, dying with the grief of the eviction woes. She would die with bitter thoughts of him, and happiness would be impossible throughout the future. If peace were made, the joy might give her life. If that were not to be, her life´s last hours might be filled with sweet content.

He was better for the thought and imagined the wild delight such news would excite. Then

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his mind leaped the years of the past, and be remembered the woman he loved, when he wooed and won her.

His heart was wildly beating. His eyes were moist with tears.

"Martha!"

He had heard her step in the passage, and guessed she was on her way to prepare some tasty morsel for his dying wife.

"Martha!"

She was on the threshold, waiting for him to speak.

"D'ye think the men could stat in the mornin'?" he asked, endeavouring to speak as though the interrogation were commonplace.

Martha had a dish in her hand. She deliverately set it on the table, and facing him said: "What´s that you say? I mun be dreamin´!"

There was the shade of a smile on the viewer´s face.

"I was wonderin´ whether the men could start in the morn, if they could get the gear ready, an' that sort o' thing."

"Ye´re makin' game. Ye´re hevvin´ us on!" Martha replied suspiciously.

"No, my woman, I mean it. D' ye think they could start? Wad they be willin'?"

"I´ll tell tha´ this, Shadrach Reaveley! As

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sure as thoo´s thoo, and my names´Martha Gison, if thoo want them to ride the morrow, they´ll ride. Folks alive! What news!"

"Well, then, Martha hinney!" he continue, "when thoo can leave Mary for a few minutes thoo can tell Tommy to tell the men to be ready, an' we´ll make a new beginnin' in the mornin'!"

"The Lord be thanked!" Martha fervently ejaculated. "God bles tha'. I´ll up to Mary an' tell her. She´ll be singin' `Yankee Doodle' in a minute, an' then I´ll be off;" and Martha was up the stairs and informing her patient before Reaveley was on the fifth step.

Mary Reaveley cried and laughed, and uttered praises and blessed "her man."

"Noo, I´m off," Martha cried. "Ye´ll be all reet noo, Mary hinney. Ye´ll mend like a hoose on fire. Just sit yer ways doon, Mister Shadrach, an' ye´ll see her mendin' like all that. By sartes! But there´ll be jollifications when I get it telt. Ye´ll be hearin' `Hip! Hip Hooray!' There´ll be bonfires, an' dancin', an' prayer-meetin´s, and love-feasts, an' dear knows what beside! But I´m off? I´ll be daft if I divvent make sharp an' get me tale telt!"

What a scene was that when Martha appeared on the field waving her white pocket-handkerchief as the flag of peace!

Her story was discredited.

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"She´ll hetta hev a straight-jacket, an' thoo´ll hetta fasten her in the loonatic asylum, Tommy!" one and another remarked to Martha´s man.

"Noo, stop thee caperin,' an' divvent be hevvin' us on!" Tommy impatiently commanded.

"Ye´re just a lot o' infidels, a crood o' unbelievers!" Martha sarcastically shouted, "but all you scepticals doesn´t alter the fact. The pit starts the morrow morn, Hip! Hip! Hooray!"

Faith came at length.

"Then we can get into the hooses?" the women were saying to one another.

"Sartinlies! The hooses are oors. We can gan in the neet if we like!" was Martha´s proud announcement.

"There´s nee time like the present!" Maria Anderson sententiously affirmed. "Ye can all please yersel´s, but I´m off to seek Anderson an´ make a start!"

Through the night the work proceeded. All were busy. All were gladsome. Ere morning dawned, the houses were homes.

Mary Reaveley mended. It was said that the light of a pitman´s lamp was like a dose of physic, and that the sound of the colliery buzzer was meat and drink. And when the little tankie was shunting the trucks and the big locomotive had its number in tow, Mary simply galloped to health and beauty.

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On the Sunday after the settlement Teddy Turner and Tommy Gibson accosted Tony Fagan in the eviction field.

"Tony, thoo little spitfire," said the agitator, "we´ve licked that friend o' thine."

"Thoo ´s an aulder man nor me, Teddy´s," Tony retorted, "but I´m boond to say, as far as I can see things, that ivery pitman on the place, an´ ivery pitman´s missis, an' ivery pitman´s bairn´s been licked, an' badly!"

"Noo, ye´re both reet, an' ye´re both wrang," Tommy Gibson intervened. "The gaffer´s lost an' won, an' we´ve lost an' won. Shadrach tired, but he´s nivver flinched on the blackleg question. An' so we´ve lost because he´s won, an´ the only satisfaction is that we haddent to beg his pardin. An' so, him an' us, the whole bag o' tricks on us, can all cry ´Quits'!"

THE END.