

*RAISIN' HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.*

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TAM FREW was a journeyman corkcutter in the Sautmarket of Glasgow, half-a-century ago.

He was a gey "wide" chap, Tam, and was strongly attached to what he termed "the Auld Kirk o' Scotland," which, in Queen's English, meant a stiff dram.

Indeed, so very fond was Tam of "turnin' up his pinkie," that he latterly lost both his credit and character, surren-

dering himself very much to the blandishments of idleness and street-corner "loafing."

Tam's faithful better-half, who was a mill-lass before marriage, rebelled in vain against her husband's frequent idle-sets as often as they occurred, and which generally consumed about three weeks of every calendar month.

Tam always frankly admitted his fault, expressing unlimited contrition and repentance, and promising amendment for the future—a future which never came. To make ends meet, Tam's young wife was thus forced to return to her former occupation as a steam-loom weaver, while Tam, the muckle ne'er-do-weel, habitually ate the bread of idleness, and hung aimlessly about the street-corners, an interesting specimen of the "man who can't get work."

Things drifted on in this purposeless way for better than a year after Tam's marriage, and would have gone on for long enough, but for the vigorous interference of his spirited mother-in-law, who had a genuine interest in her daughter, and who, according to Tam's version, had a tongue like the "toon-bells," and a temper like ten ordinary women.

Anyhow, it was clear that Tam's mother-in-law was "an able yin," and proved herself the perfect "bubbly-jock" of her worthless son-in-law's idle existence. She faced-up to him in season and out of season; she covered him with ridicule; she showed him her nails; and on one extreme occasion she took him so severely to task that he was fain to cry for quarter, and had to finally fly the premises!

"Talk about legal separations," quoth Tam to himself, when he had gained the safety of the open street, "we've but sma' need for lawyers, an' legal deeds o' separation, as lang's we enjoy the great blessing o' a beloved mother-in-law! As for what's at the back o' that, an' a' the rest o't, let us pray!"

Tam having been thus thrown upon his own resources,

very soon found himself in sore straits, and was fain before long to turn his thriftless hands to any odd jobs that chance might throw in his way.

It was the terrible "resurrection times" in Glasgow, the recollection of which is still referred to with feelings of horror by elderly people. Comedy, however, is proverbially mixed up with tragedy in the drama of human life, and the story I have to tell belongs to the humorous side of things.

Well, to resume, Tam was standing one day at the fit o' the Can'leriggs, within an easy bow-shot of the gate of the old Ramshorn Churchyard. He had been idle as usual for a short time—about seventeen weeks only!—and was in a bad way financially, and, indeed, in every other way. His waistcoat hung frightfully loose on his empty stomach, and his throat was fair cracking with drouth. In point of fact, Tam was just clean desperate, and was ready to undertake any sort of job which might turn him in a penny.

"Hillo! Tam, ye're the vera man I'm wantin' to see," said Johnny Treddles, an oot o' work Radical weaver; "can ye tak' a share in a risky, but guid-peying job?"

"A guid-peying job, Johnny; man, that's what I'm fair deein' for the want o'; can ye put me in the way o't?"

"Can ye keep a secret, Tam?"

"Brawly, Johnny, brawly,—if I'm in the pie, ye ken."

"That's jist what I'm after, Tam—a trusty confederate. Lend me your lug a moment, Tam."

Tam freely inclined his "lug" towards Treddles, who whispered a few startling words in his ear.

"*What!* lift a deid body, Johnny?"

"An' what for no? The money's white the moment the job's dunc."

"Weel, that's certainly a temptation, Johnny, but what about the risk?"

"Oo, Tam, as for that, we'll jist tak' the risk as it chances

to turn out; it's but a triflin' concern that. Are ye on for a share in the job?"

"I'm your man, Johnny; a starvin' stomach canna afford to stan' lang on ceremony."

"That's richt, Tam; leave it there!" and the two friends mutually shook hands over the bargain.

At a late hour that same night, Tam met by appointment his friend Treddles in the back-room of an attic apartment, occupying the gable-corner of a dilapidated apartment situated in College Street, where, for an hour before, a couple of strong-bodied Irish labourers had been anxiously awaiting their arrival.

Here the immediate business of the night was discussed with whispered words and bated breath, lest any of the numerous chinks in the walls, or in the decayed floorage of the room, should reveal the secret of their unlawful purpose.

The town-clocks were heard to proclaim the hour of twelve before the four "resurrectionists" thought it prudent to stir from their dilapidated domicile; but with the stroke of "one" they found themselves scaling the low back wall of the old Ramshorn Kirkyard, carrying spades, a dark lantern, and a large coarse pock in which to steal away the lifted body.

With hushed footsteps they furtively crossed the intervening space, and were presently standing around a newly-formed grave.

"What sort o' body is't, Johnny?" anxiously enquired Tam, feeling nervous a bit at thought of the ghastly job in hand; "is't man, woman, or child we're gaun to lift?"

"Oh, it's a woman, Tam; only a woman! Here, man, see, tak' a 'pull' at that before ye tak' spade in hand." And Treddles handed his nervous associate a half-mutchkin bottle of spirits.

"Is—is—is the 'watch' set a' richt, Johnny, was ye

sayin'?" once more questioned Tam, as he handed back Treddles the half-mutchkin bottle.

"Paddy M'Rory's ahint the dyke," promptly answered Treddles.

"Ye're quite sure o' that, Johnny?"

"It canna possibly be otherwise, Tam, if there's ony truth in arithmetic; Barney Rooney here mak's the third man o' the original fowr o' us. Let's fa' to."

Delay they each knew was dangerous, and with one accord the three resurrectionists applied themselves, pick and spade, to the grim task in hand.

In a few moments they had cleared a foot of earth, and were just beginning to warm to their work, when an eerie cry, as of some ghostly night-bird, startled them, down to the length of their boots.

"What's that?" gasped out Tam, dropping the spade with fright.

"What's *what*?" asked Treddles, resting on his pick.

"What's *which*?" added Rooney, the Irishman.

"It's jist—naething!" said Treddles, with re-assuring voice, resuming suspended operations; "stick in, chaps, we're already mair than half-way doon; the grave's but shallow, an' the warst o'ts owre."

In a few minutes Rooney's spade had touched the coffin-lid, and anxiety reached a climax.

"Get the pock shaken oot an' ready, Tam," said Treddles; "we'll prise the lid open in a jiffey."

Tam did as directed, feeling a kind of cold shivery sweat creeping down his back as he watched his associates applying their spades to lever open the coffin-lid.

"There na, that's it; fine, man!" exclaimed Treddles, a moment after, as Rooney wrenched off the lid; "a splendid *corp*! tak' care o't, Rooney; the pock, Tam, the pock! come doon, man, an' gie's a bit lift in wi't."

Tam jumped into the shallow cutting, and began to lend

a hand in "bagging" the resurrected body, when, all of a sudden, a gleam of moonlight clearly revealed the identity of the corpse to his startled eyes.

With a yell of horror, Tam dropped the body, shouting aloud——

"Stop! stop! put her back, for goodness sake! I—I—I wouldn't unearth that woman for a thousand worlds!"

"What's the matter, Tam? is't your sister?"

"Waur than that, Johnny."

"Your wife, then?"

"Waur than that—waur than even that, Johnny."

"Och sure, then, it must be the devil!" exclaimed Rooney, the Irishman, with a laugh.

"The devil couldna haud a can'le to her," yelled Tam; "put her back! put her back! keep her down, for goodness sake! She's——"

"Who? speak! quick! out with it! who is she?"

"My blessed mother-in-law!!!"