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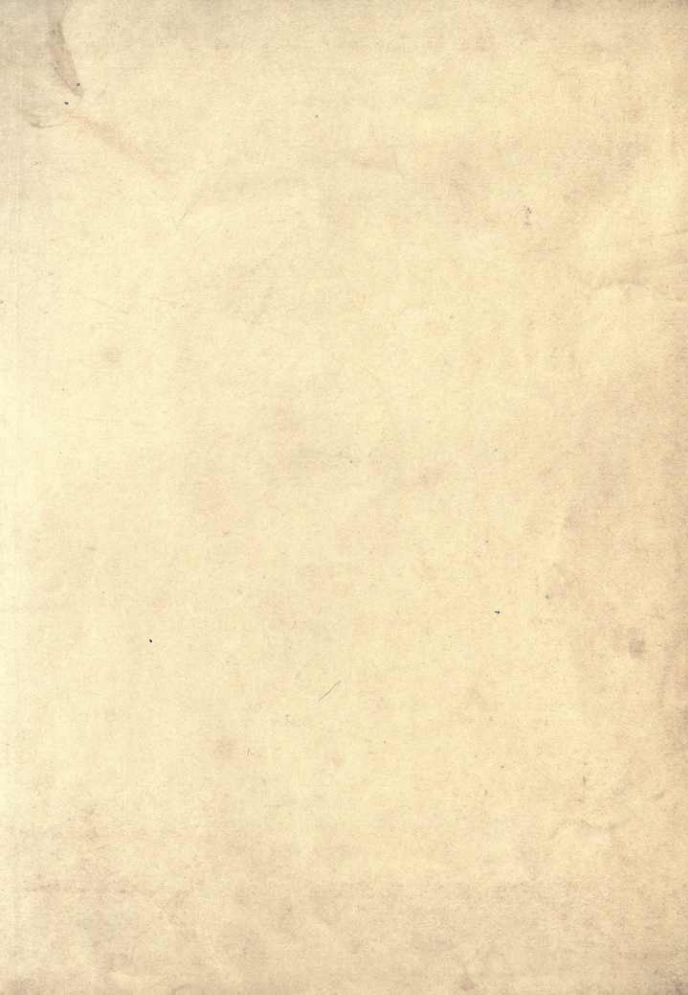
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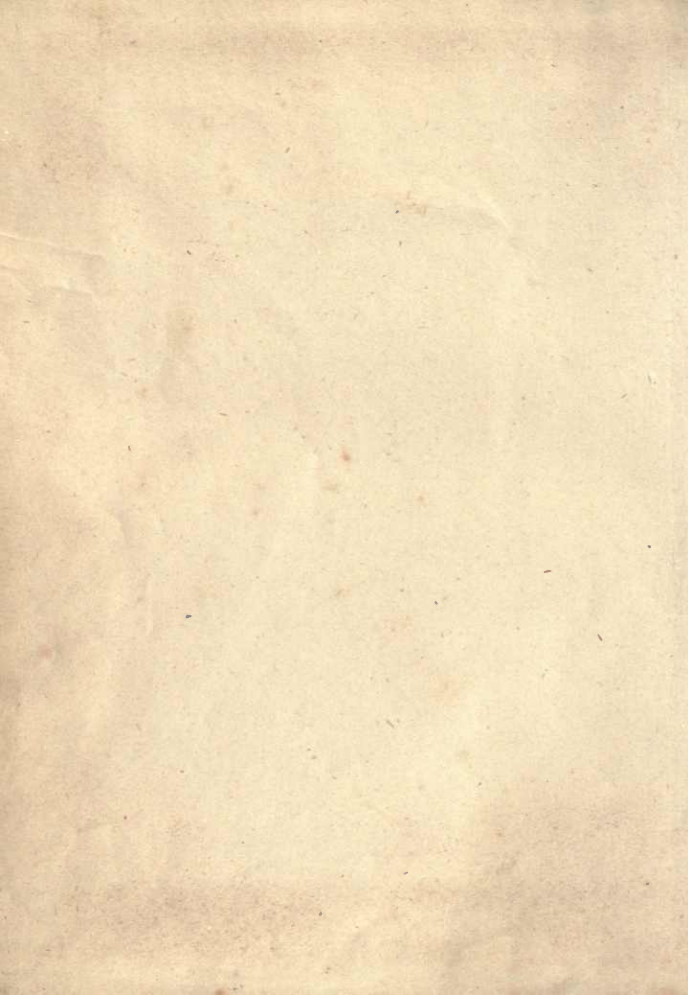
*F. Burrows for Arithmetic, Geom-
etry and Good Conduct.*

Macdon

In the Chair.

December 17. 1872





OUR CHRISTMAS PARTY.

BY

OLD MERRY,

Author of "A Chat with the Boys on New Year's Eve;" "Fireside Chats with the Youngsters;" Editor of "Merry and Wise," &c.



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OUR CHRISTMAS PARTY.

OLD MERRY

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OLD MERRY'S CHRISTMAS PARTY.

PREPARATIONS.



REBECCA, I am going to give a party to some young folks on Christmas Eve, and so you must hold yourself in readiness for the occasion."

Rebecca is my housekeeper, the best-hearted old soul that ever lived ; she perfectly agrees with my arrangements in the main, but feels bound, for some reason which I have never attempted to fathom, invariably to object to them at the first start, and then to fall into them enthusiastically afterwards.

"Lor a mussy, Sir ! them parties—"

I must here say that Rebecca despises the English Grammar ; next to Baron Munchausen, who she somewhat irreverently calls the "father of lies," she objects to Lindley Murray.

It was not very often that she was really "put out" about anything, but when she was her grammar was much worse than at other times. Just as when a foreigner, who has lived in England for years, and knows the language perfectly, gets into a rage, he instinctively falls back upon his native tongue for expression.

"Lor a mussy, Sir ! them parties," said Rebecca, "is a getting too much of a good thing, if I may make so bold as to say it. It's always parties at this time of the year. You'll excuse me a men-

tioning of it, Mr. Merry," she continued, "but if I might make so bold again, I should say why don't you keep a school, or a sylum, or a hinn, and so you could have the young people, as you call 'em, always about you?"

Now you must not think that this was an expression of Rebecca's real state of feeling, nor that I was in the least degree alarmed or vexed at the light in which she viewed my proposition. Faithful old servants, who have lived in one's family for a generation or so, do get queer whims, and contract habits which could not be tolerated in upstart new comers. Rebecca never gives way to an explosion like this if anybody else is present, and I have two or three alternatives always in reserve for pacifying her.

Not wishing to use any of the alternatives on the occasion in question, I merely said—

"Christmas only comes once a year, Rebecca, and I mean, as long as I have health and strength, to keep up the good old custom of giving Christmas parties, and I look to you to carry out the arrangements this year in the same admirable way you have done on so many previous occasions." If Rebecca could have blushed, I believe she would have done so at this compliment, but her blushing days have gone by, so she dropped a mild curtsy, and said, "It shouldn't be her fault, please 'eving, that should prevent this party being the best *we* had ever given."

So a council of war was held on the spot. Amelia and the cook were summoned, paper and pencil were called into requisition, and if a newspaper reporter, or a secretary of a society, had been present, a summary of the proceedings would have been given in something like the following style :—

Moved by Mr. Merry, and seconded by Rebecca—

"That the invitations be issued for six o'clock on Christmas Eve, and that tea be served up in the breakfast room."—Carried.

Moved by Rebecca, and seconded by Mr. Merry—

"That, in the opinion of this meeting, it is desirable and advisable that the fun of the evening should take place in the drawing room ; that supper should be laid in the breakfast room ; that the

dining room be completely divested of furniture, to allow plenty of room for dancing, and that the spare bedroom be appropriated for the necessary costuming required by those who take part in the charades."—Carried unanimously.

Moved by the cook, and seconded by Amelia—

"That if false moustachios are required by those who take part in the charades, young gentlemen be prohibited from using the kitchen fire for burning the corks necessary for that purpose."

Moved by Amelia, and seconded by the cook—

"That it is desirable to lock the cupboard in which the gas metre is kept, and hide the key, as on a previous occasion much inconvenience was sustained in consequence of one of the visitors having turned off the gas."

Moved by Mr. Merry, and seconded by Rebecca—

"That this meeting stands pledged to do its best to make the party thoroughly pleasant and successful, and that all further arrangements be left to a sub-committee, to consist of Mr. Merry."—Carried unanimously.

A vote of thanks having been passed to the Chairman for his manly and impartial conduct in the chair, the meeting broke up amid a general feeling of satisfaction.



THE PARTY.



HE clock was yet warm with its vigorous efforts to strike the eventful hour of six on merry Christmas Eve, when a carriage containing the first arrivals came rattling down the street. There was no mistaking the energetic rat-tat-tat at the door; or, if there had been, the buzz of voices was sufficient to inform those inside that Charlie Stanley and his party were there. As soon as the door was open there was a rush and a scramble, for those mad young people had made many rash stakes as to who should be the first to wish Old Merry the compliments of the season. All stakes, however, were drawn, for the object of their search was discovered simultaneously by all the party; discovered, too, in the act of coming down the stairs, with his frill shirt, bald head, and pumps, glistening in the light of the hall lamps, and a chorus of voices rang out the welcome old salutation—"A merry Christmas and a happy New Year!"

Charlie and Walter Stanley, and Alec Boyce—the lads who went one summer with Old Merry to Switzerland—had been entrusted with the preparation of part of the evening's amusement. They were constituted masters of the ceremonies, and had been charged to bottle up all their fun for at least two days before the party, in order that it might explode and scintillate for the benefit of the company. So, as a host of packages were put down in the hall, Charlie said—

"Here are our properties, Mr. Merry—wigs, crinolines, whiskers, royal robes, banners from the camp of King John, feathers from the chief of the Mohawks, diamonds lent privately by the secretary of Sinbad the Sailor, the shield of Achilles, kindly contributed by Mr. Barnum ; and here—"

But here he stopped, for the rattle of horses' feet outside, and a sharp rap at the door, announced fresh arrivals. Charlie was in a dramatic humour, so, striking an attitude, he cried—

" By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes ;
Open, locks, whoever knocks.

And, guards, what ho ! bear hence our treasures to some secret place."

"Such a getting up-stairs you never did see," as in a twinkling the impromptu guards obeyed the mandate of their chief.

Tom and Ada Martin, and the fiddle, were the next to arrive. The fiddle was Tom's ; his special hobby. No party was complete without it, for if it were not there neither was Tom. His motto was, "Love me, love my fiddle." A merry fellow was Tom ; he could sing and play, and the proudest moments in Ada's life were when she accompanied him in a solo on his violin. Moreover, he wrote poetry (?), rattling, merry ditties, that broke out into exuberant choruses of

And it's heigh, ho, hum,
With a tum, tum, tum,
Fal lal de riddle ho, tum, tum, tum !

Ada Martin was Tom Martin in the feminine ; she had all the boy's humour, with the girl's grace and refinement. Every-

body who knew her knew that she could tell them the last new game, or ask the last new riddle ; and if at a party the fun came to a standstill, and somebody asked "What shall we do next?" the reply would be sure to come in the shape of a question, "Where's Ada Martin?" Ada rejoiced in long curls, treacherous curls, that had made many a lad fall in love with her ; in fact, Frank Edwards was once heard to say that he should like to win her heart by gallantly rescuing her from the power of some grim tyrant ; or, "Better still," said he, "if she would fall into the sea off the pier at Margate, and I could jump in and save her by catching hold of her beautiful curls, it would be so jolly!"

Frank Edwards ! The next rat-tat announced him and his sister, "Little Flo," as he called her at home, though in company she was Florence. Frank was very fond of his sister ; he had a weakness for hair, as we have seen, and hers descended like a cataract, or, as Frank said, like a Great Flow, over her neck and shoulders. A bright, merry little fairy was Florence Edwards, and a very popular young lady. Alec Boyce was nearly on the point of fighting a duel with Walter Stanley one snowy night, when it was proposed at a party that she should be carried to the carriage, and it became a question as to who should do it. Fortunately, however, no blood was spilt, for the boys clasped hands, and carried her sedan-fashion ; and as she had to put an arm over each shoulder, in order to steady herself, what could be fairer ?

Elasticity runs in some families, as gout does in others, and the Edwards' were elastic people. Frank could turn himself into a catherine wheel, imitate Donato on one leg, dance a hornpipe, or stand on his head and fire off sham pistols with

both hands at once ; and as his talent was quite distinct from that of the musical Tom Martin, or the dramatic Charlie Stanley, he enjoyed a popularity as great in its way as theirs.

Rat-tat-tat !

The Misses Clara and Alice Stanley, with their music.

Mr. Stanley, with his microscopes.

Miss Marianne Layton, with her doll—white tulle, looped up with spangles.

Mr. Oswald Layton (his first appearance in stand-up collars.)

The Misses Emily and Nelly Cathcart (with their *bran* new dolls—blue tarleton, looped with snowdrops).

Master Willie Cathcart, with his dog Leo, who barks for lumps of sugar.

Mr. Cathcart, with a prodigious white vest and a black bâton, “as leader of the choir.”

Rat-tat-tat !

Misses and Masters, Misters and Mistresses, *ad lib.*, *ad infin.*

Tea and coffee at six o'clock—and why that should mean from half-past six to seven, custom must reply—is much better than tea at six o'clock. A sit-down tea is a mistake ; it tries the temperament, terrifies the timid, and taxes the talkers, whereas tea and coffee implies wandering about with a cup in your hand, and spilling it as occasion requires ; it makes work for the lads and pleasure for the lassies, and it breaks the ice between strangers. Little groups form and chat, and when a joke has taken with effect, it is passed on to a neighbouring group, and so all the company gets jocular. For instance, Tom Martin was surrounded by his favourites, and was replying to their questions as to how his violin had stood the cold journey.

"Delightfully. But she is now reclining on the couch upstairs, in order to get up her strength for the evening."

"That's all fiddle de dee, said one." (Applause.)

"Why do you call the violin she?" asked another.

"Because I have named her Pysche; she has so much life in her," answered Tom.

"You are her *sycophant*, then!" said another. (Renewed applause.)

"It seems to me your violin always has a very *guttural* sound with it," remarked Alec Boyce. (Laughter.)

"Yes," replied Tom Martin; "and no doubt the poet detected the same thing in other instruments, when he composed those time-honoured lines—

"Hey diddle diddle,
The *cat* and the fiddle."

Then the applause reached its climax, and of course the little jokes were retailed to other groups.

By degrees the company in the tea-room began to decrease. In the cold months, however temperate the atmosphere may be kept, there is always a chilliness in passing from one room to another, and especially at parties. When, therefore, the drawing-room began to fill, Charlie started a proposition—"Had we not better have a dance to warm us?" and he added, "It used to be the fashion to terminate a concert with *God save the Queen*, and now the *National Anthem* comes first, and it used to be the fashion to wind up a party with *Sir Roger de Coverley*, but why should we not begin with it?" Of course nobody knew of any just cause or impediment, and so the proposition was carried without a dissentient voice.

Who can describe a party from beginning to end? It would fill a large book to criticise all the songs and other performances, to chronicle all the jokes, and to tell again all the tales. And how tame on paper are the little stories which are told during a quadrille, when the introduction is given in *La Pantelon*, and the plot commences at *L'Ete*, and the incidents increase in interest till *Trenise*, and the *dénouement* is galloped over in the *Finale*. Well, suffice it to say the fun kept up unflaggingly, and as the evening advanced, and everybody was in high spirits, Charlie Stanley collected his "troupe," and began to make preparations for a charade. While the folding doors were closed for the scenery to be placed in one room, and while the seats were being adjusted in the other, the actors in the charade were in the great excitement of dressing for their parts. The boys had prepared the performances for the evening beforehand, and supplied copies to all who were to appear in the scenes; and, as Charlie was good enough to present Old Merry with complete copies, we will give them for the benefit of our readers, with the condition on which they were given to us, namely, that they should not be too severely criticised from a literary point of view.

A brief overture on the piano, and then Charlie came to the front of the folding doors, and said:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I beg to announce that we are about to act a burlesque charade, and you will be good enough to try and find out our word. It is in three syllables; the first act will give two syllables used as one word, the second act will give the remaining syllable, and the third act will bring in the whole word. The charade is entitled—

THE MEANDERING MUSICIAN ;

OR,

THE VITCH !! THE VOW !! AND THE VOUCHER !!

And will be supported by the following powerful cast :—

BERLINDA]	... ..	The "star" of the evening	... ..	Miss Ada Martin.
RODERIGO PIPKINS	... ..	The meandering musician, in love with Berlinda	... ..	Master Tom Martin.
BANQUO BELVIDERE...	... ..	A Rival	... ..	Master Frank Edwards.
THEOPHILUS BALDERDASH.	... ..	Another Rival	... ..	Master Alec Boyce.
Mrs. THOMPSON	... ..	The Witch	... ..	Miss Florence Edwards.
BERLINDA'S PA	... ..	The Stern Parent	... ..	Master Walter Stanley.
ALONZO NAPOLEON SMITH.	... ..	An American Showman	... ..	Master Charlie Stanley.

Police, peasants, wax figures, perambulators, &c. &c.

A burst of applause followed the announcement, and was renewed when the doors were thrown open and Berlinda was discovered leaning out of a window overlooking the room, with a candle burning by her side to assist her in viewing the stars, on which she was supposed to be gazing.

BERLINDA (*in a rhapsody addressing the stars*).

O ! beaming beauties of the broad and boundless abyss,
Whose whirling worlds seem wondrously whiter than is this.
O ! vision ! vast and various to my view,
Ye stars, which shine "because you've nothing else to do."
I gaze upon your splendours, so superbly spacious—

Good gracious !

A minstrel wanders forth. I'll quench the light
And hear his music on the airs of night.

(*Puts out the candle.*)

Enter RODERIGO.

I see her ! I see her ! I see her at the winder,
It is ! my beating heart ! it is Berlinda !

Come forth, my lute ! ye muses, up above,
Smile while it thus amuses her I love !

(Cats are heard on the tiles in chorus.)

O, rapture ! 'tis Berlinda's voice I hear,
Those *strains* are hers—alas ! I feel so queer—
Courage, faint heart ! thy mistress thou must please,
Pour forth thy lays upon the lazy breeze.

(Tunes his violin and sings to the air of " Beautiful Star.")

Loverly girl, on yonder height,
Sweeter than the (h)owls of night,
Hear thy fond one's voice to you
Genteely asking, How do you do ?

How do you do-oo !

Chanticleer in the distance.

Cock-a-doodle-do-oo !

Chorus of Rivals.

How do you do-oo ?

Lovely Berlinda, how do you do ?

RODER. Ha ! there are rivals—such arrivals much I fear—
Hist ! they are coming, my idea is to hide here.

(Hides.)

Enter BANQUO BELVIDERE. (Anxiously gazes round and then addresses the window.)

Berlinda ! art thou there, my own Berlinda ?
My heart is hot with love—a very cinder—
Alas ! she's gone to bed, she cannot hear,
And I shall go to Bedlam soon I fear.
I place these flowers on the sill within thy reach,
They're better, p'raps, than silly flowers of speech.

(Exit.)

RODERIGO (*comes forth and takes the flowers*).

A sweet expression of my love, but not a *dear* one.

What, another rival? Yes, I think I hear one.

(*Hides.*)

Enter THEOPHILUS BALDERDASH (*with a cold in the head—
sneezes violently during his speech*).

This is a scene indeed to foster love,
Brick walls around and chimney-pots above;
Yon chanticleer the guardian bird is,
To join his voice with distant hurdy-gurdies.
All speaks of love, and shall my voice be still?
Nay, perish! Balderdash, an if you will,
But speak!

Addressing the window—

Berlinda, dearest;

If walls have ears, surely thou hearest;
Hearest thy lover, though his tones be hoarse,
Hearest by means of love's detective force,
Warm at the heart, though with a cold i' the head—

(*Sneezes.*)

(*Aside.*) (By Jove, I really ought to be in bed.)

Accept my love, resist it not, be not so cruel—

(*Sneezes again*)

(*Aside.*) (I really must go in for something strong, and gruel.)
I leave this billet-*do*. Read, loved one, its contents;

(*Aside.*) (And I'll go home and seek my night habillements.)

(*Exit.*)

Enter RODERIGO.

A notability, as I'd ability to note. But see,
A witch! a fortune-teller comes! O, criminy!

I'll bribe the hag to gain Berlinda's bower,
And then I'll carry off my love within the hour.

Enter WITCH. What ho ! midnight marauder.

RODERIGO (*in a whisper, taking her aside*).

Order !

Let's have no rows that may arouse my bride ;
Go you and coax the fair one to my side ;
Bid her to fly with me, her lover and her lord,
And you shall have *this note** as your reward.

WITCH (*raps at window and BERLINDA appears*).

Listen, Berlinda. The stars declare thy destiny is set,
Act now, 'tis well, forbear and you'll regret.

Thy lover waits to bear thee hence—Away !

BERLINDA. Good woman, I have many lovers ; say,
Is it Roderigo Pipkins who is near ?

RODERIGO. I am here !

BERLINDA. Bless you, dear ! Now help me down and fly !
The sun will soon be mounting up the sky.
Farewell, my home ! farewell, my pa and ma !
Accept my last adieu. Ta, ta !

(RODERIGO *carries her off the stage*.)

ACT II.

SCENE—a wood. BERLINDA and RODERIGO seated on the ground.

BER. Alas ! I'm hungry, love can't support itself on air.

ROD. I'm much more hungry ; think how much I've had to *bear*.

BER. Monster ! is it for this I left my frugal home in haste,
To fly with you and see this dreadful waste.

* T. Balderdash's.

Where is our home? where do you mean to go?

ROD. Upon my word, Berlinda, I don't know;
I think we'll pic-nic, drink the morning dew,
And eat the berries,—see, I've got a few,—
And then we'll take a quiet stroll to search
For parson, marriage lines, and church,
And then live happy ever after. What d'ye say?

BER. Why, most emphatically, nay!
I call this treatment shameful, sinful, flagrant—

ROD. Come, come Berlinda, let me have no *vague rant*;
You *wander* in your speech. What is't you need?

BER. My breakfast! oh, I'm dying for a feed.

ROD. I would I were a bird, and then I might your favour win;
Alas, I can but offer you some scrapings from my violin.

BERLINDA bursts into a passionate flood of tears, and RODERIGO plays pathetically "*Home, sweet home.*" By-and-by the sound of voices and the tramp of feet are heard in the distance.

BER. O! Roderigo, we're pursued! they're armed! what shall we do?

ROD. When they've mustered, we shall both get peppered, we are in a stew.

Is't *meet* that we should wait, or shall we fly?

BER. I would *I* were a bird!

ROD. And so do I.

But, see, your father comes—his passion's at a pitch,
And he is followed by the rivals; and the witch—

BER. Which it is. O! goodness, what will now become of me?

I'll climb—but no, they'll think I'm "up a tree."

They come. Down, Roderigo ; down upon your knees.

ROD. It's not *an easy* place, but anything to please.

(*Enter Infuriated Parient, Rivals, Witch, Policeman, and a Perambulator.*)

BERLINDA'S PA. Rogue ! villain ! rascal ! Lend me your ears
That I may pierce them with my taunts and jeers.

I come to claim my daughter you have borne away.

ROD. (*aside.*) 'Twere better she had not been born, I say.

BER. PA. And you shall answer for this day's affray.

ROD. I'm much afraid I shall ; but pray be calm.

My hand upon it—I would never do her harm.

BER. PA. Silence, base rogue ! My friends, the time is fleeting,
I think we'd better now prorogue this meeting.

RIV. Not till we've fought, and thus expressed our hate.

ROD. Good Sirs, I deem that I am *fortunate*.

I'll fight you on the morrow—not to-day.

Excuse me if I'm acting in a *sordid* way ;

But—

BER. PA. Ho ! guards, bring forth the prison van, and bear
her hence.

(*They carry BERLINDA to the perambulator—en route she says :*)

Dear Roderigo, dreadful is suspense ;

But write to me, prepaid, and when you see your way

All clear, be good enough to name the day.

ROD. (*weeping.*) Farewell, Berlinda, fairest of the fair !

BER. Good-bye, cheer up, old chap, and take that ere (hair).

*Door closes while RODERIGO kisses the ringlet flung to him by
BERLINDA from the perambulator.*)

ACT III.

Before the doors are open a servant in livery enters the room, in which the company are seated, and puts up a placard with the following notice :—

“GREAT ATTRACTION FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY!!

Mr. Alonzo Napoleon Smith, of the Boundless Prairie, America, begs to announce that he will exhibit his unrivalled

WAX-WORK FIGURES.

Admission free. Children half-price.

N.B.—NO MONEY RETURNED WITHOUT IT'S BAD.”

Prior to the opening of the doors Berlinda takes her seat among the audience.

The door opens. A row of figures, covered over with sheets, stand on rout seats round the room. One or two reclining figures in the foreground. Overture on the violin, “How doth the little busy bee,” by Roderigo Pipkins, the meandering musician.

A servant in livery then enters, and uncovers the wax-work figures, revealing—

JOAN OF ARC, represented by *Miss Florence Edwards.*

QUEEN OF NIGHT ,, *Miss Emily Cathcart.*

FIELD MARSHAL THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON *Master Alec Boyce.*

RICHARD III. *Master Walter Stanley.*

Lay Figures, &c., &c.

Enter Alonzo Napoleon Smith, as Lecturer.

Ladies and Gentlemen, at the request of the Universe, seconded by the United States of America, I have brought my caravan from the Boundless Prairie, in order to raise the tone of the fine arts in your country, and to devote the proceeds of

the entertainment to the liquidation of your national debt. No, no! not a word of thanks, I beg. Such an audience as this before me fills me with awe, and I speak with authority when I say that had I not a dash of Minerva's wisdom my nervous system would hardly stand the ordeal.

I will not trouble you with an account of how I collected the information which will be contained in my brief lecture. Suffice it to say that a friend having presented me with a copy of the Bodleian Library, and having taken apartments in the British Museum for some time past, not to mention the fact of a visit to the Alexandrian Library prior to the late disastrous fire, has posted me up in the points which will be brought under your notice. But as Homer very beautifully says in his last little work, we have—

“Ad referendum in loco, viva voce summum bonum videlicet.”

Let our business be to show the product of the busy bee, namely, these “neatly spread” wax figures.

And first let me call your attention to Joan of Arc.

(Joan of Arc moves her head, and raises her hand *mechanically*).

Much mystery attaches to the young person now before us. It is supposed that she was called Joan *d'Arc*, because we are in the dark as to her birthplace, unless we accept the idea that she came from Arcadia. She suffered much from nightmare, and fancied she was riding over France as its victoress. Consequently she adopted men's clothes. It is well to observe too that she cut off her hair before she arrived at *Chinon*. She headed an army, so the tale goes, of 7,000 men; and with the strength of her arms the foe was defeated. After which she came to ruin (Rouen), that is to say she was burnt there.

Virtue and manliness always succeed in the long run, however, and her successes have been immortalized in Paris by a gorgeous tombstone, entitled the Arc de Triomphe !

The next figure I shall introduce is one of a paragorical nature. The Queen of Night, represented by a daughter of Eve. Unseen she spreads her mantle over the earth, and thus acts the part of an *itinerant* angel. The umbrella in her hand is also an emblematic figure, representing the pernicious influences which attend upon her, and is called the deadly nightshade. In the absence of any further proofs of the authenticity of this character there will be an interval of a minute, during which the band will play.—*Exit.*

Roderigo Pipkins immediately strikes up, but suddenly leaves off, takes out the ringlet from his pocket, and waves it before the audience. Berlinda hides her face in her pocket handkerchief.

Roderigo advancing, and whispering to Berlinda—

“Berlinda is it you dear? do you love me now as then?

O! wilt thou be my bride, love, and not fly off again?

You will? Then come up quickly—Smith will come ere long;

He'll be puzzled when he reckons, you're another *figurant*!”

Berlinda stands on a pedestal beside the wax figures, and Roderigo covers her with a sheet.

Enter Alonzo Napoleon Smith.

I shall now briefly introduce another well-known character—Field Marshal the late Duke of Wellington—he will be easily recognized from the fact of his nasal probus being the most prominent feature of his face. I will not go all over his history. You remember all about Magna Charta, and the

formation of a body called the Chartists. You know how the Spanish Armada was defeated in Trafalgar Bay, and how Wellington cheered on his men, saying, "I'll be your leader." You remember that little affair with the Duchess of Salisbury at the ball at Brussels, and how the Duke was made a knight of the Garter. Having brought the history thus far up to the eve of Waterloo, let us confine our attention to that event. And first, I notice it was not a *bootless* expedition, for ever since that event Wellington and Blucher boots have become an institution of your free and enlightened country. Second, it is a popular fallacy to suppose that His Grace was in any way connected with the trade of a hatter. When he said "Up boys and (h)at 'em," he merely wished his men to give the foe a bonneting! Moral from the life. He earned a glorious reputation as the Iron Duke, and his monument overlooking Hyde Park is the finest bit of *irony* extant.

Let us now turn to the figure of Richard III. A bad figure, as you will see; and we learn on the very face of our subject that though deformities may be put behind one's back they are not therefore altogether out of sight. Richard was Duke of Gloster, and it is generally admitted that it was not the cheese for him to seize the crown in such mighty haste. As you are aware, one of the main features of his reign was the introduction of the pillo(w)ry, by which he smothered the two little princes in the Tower.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, I must draw my entertainment to a close—

ROD. (*aside*). Now screw thy courage to the sticking place.

Here goes!

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope I don't behave—

A. N. SMITH. Silence, slave !

ROD. Good sir, I crave permission just to say
Before this worthy audience goes away,
There's still one figure more to show—

A. N. SMITH (*in surprise*). No !

ROD. Indeed there is—one worth her weight in gold.
Berlinda, Roderigo's bride, behold !

(*Uncovers the figure and leads BERLINDA to the audience*).

Ladies and gentlemen, we've played our little game—
We're satisfied (aint we, Berlinda ?) we hope you are the
same.

And now as all the parts of our charade you've heard,
It only rests with you to say the word. [*Exit.*]

The applause was deafening ; never did the drawing-room echo back such clapping of hands and hearty bravos as it did that Christmas Eve ; the doors were closed, but long and loud shouts for Alonzo Napoleon Smith were raised, and they had again to be opened, for the performers to come in and make their bows to the audience. Roderigo led in Berlinda, Richard the Third came arm in arm with Joan of Arc, the Duke of Wellington chaperoned the Queen of Night, and the livery servant brought in the meandering musician's fiddle !

And then came the puzzling part of the affair, to try and find out the word. One guessed "Audience," awe-die-hence ; another "Entertainment," enter-tàen-ment ; a third "Over-looking ;" and others the most absurd and improbable words possible, and words which were never introduced into the charade at all. At last one sharp boy, who had been taking

notes between the acts, stumbled upon the right word, and it was _____.*

A question now arose as to whether there should be any more charades, or whether the rooms should be cleared again for more general fun. The set entertainments carried the day, however, and after an interval for refreshment, and a little variety in the way of some songs by some of the young ladies, the loud bell of the town crier was heard in the hall, and Master Willie Cathcart, who represented that institution, announced—"O yes! O yes! O yes! a great Reform Debate and Demonstration will take place in this place on Christmas Eve, of which all persons interested in the great questions of the day will be pleased to take notice. God save the Queen." In double-quick time the company fell into position, and then came

THE GREAT REFORM DEBATE AND DEMONSTRATION.

THE demonstration came first, and consisted of a procession all round the drawing-room. "See, the Conquering Hero comes," was struck up on the piano, and Tom Martin accompanied it on the violin, but having forgotten to get his instrument in tune with the piano beforehand, played excruciatingly as he headed the procession. Then came Edward Barnes—

Clenching in his hand, as in a vice,

A banner with the strange device,

"Here we are again!"

* As some of our young friends may like to guess out the word for themselves, it is withheld, but will be published in the January number of "Merry and Wise."

A motley crew of reformers followed, some with flags, and some with rosettes ; one boy had some pieces of paper, and was chanting a parody on Tennyson's lines, "Sweet and low." The first verse ran thus :—

"Bright and Lowe, Bright and Lowe,
Members of high degree ;
Lowe, Lowe, spout and blow,
But Bright's got the better of thee."

Last of all, arm in arm, came the reform agitators. The cheering that greeted them was loud and long, and when they had elbowed their way through the crowd, which was purposely arranged so as to make it difficult, they ascended the platform, which had been reared on the spot lately occupied by the wax figures. And then, by one of those transformations which are so easy in fiction and on the stage, the scene was changed from Hyde Park to the House of Commons, represented by the platform. Charlie Stanley took the chair as Speaker of the House, and to the right and left of the table, in places marked "ministerial" and "opposition," the members arranged themselves. This arrangement was not on the ground of political opinion, but it was deemed desirable that, when any cries of "oh !" or "order !" were to be introduced, it would be better for those on one side of the speaker to cry down those on the other side. It was not a full house ; only four honourable gentlemen appeared on the platform beside the Speaker, and they were Messrs. Walter Stanley, Alec Boyce, Arthur Mortram, and Oswald Layton. Edward Barnes having carefully arranged his banner so that the motto should appear above the head of the Speaker, acted as Usher, or Master of the Ceremonies, and not being very familiar with the pro-

ceedings in the House of Commons, commenced by crying "Silence in the Court," which immediately produced an uproar. However, this was soon put down, and then the Speaker rose and said—

GENTLEMEN,

I think you will agree with me, it would be quite beside the mark

For us to sift the question of the riots in Hyde Park,
Or even bring that *railing* accusation up again,
Which most suppose was settled then by might and *Mayne*.
We will not name the *Bright* ideas in fashion long ago,
Nor condescend to thoughts that may be anything like *Lowe*.
Reform debates are very sober things, but still
They don't go on successfully without a *Mill*.
Stick therefore to your points, and let us hope you'll bring,
For all who are inclined *to roam*, a *Whalley-ping*.
We meet to-night to take the young idea by storm,
And quote the latest standard for reform.
We vote for Boyhood suffrage—that's our motto,
We want no Dull uns' cave, or hole, or grotto,
But urge that all our boys should boldly take their stand,
And in a solemn League go hand in hand,
And try to put down all the wrong that rules
In play-grounds, workshops, cricket-fields, or schools.
"Reform, complete and genuine Reform," that is our maxim,
No bribery or corruption, or £7 rate to tax him ;
But let each boy, who has a good opinion he can quote,
Be free to use, as best he can, his vote.
Now, Gentlemen, the weighty question lies with you,
Sift well its points, and show us something new.

Don't fear, in studying the welfare of a lad,
To say of shuffling measures, "*Dis really* is too bad."
Don't fear the Opposition, and to each who axes,
Say "Every one for all, and bother taxes."—(*Cheers.*)

Mr. ALEC BOYCE *rose and said*—

I take it that this point is ceded,
Namely, that Universal Boyhood Suffrage is needed.
I fear—(*Opposition, hear ! hear !*)
I fear the subject is too vast for me to hold in hand,
So just upon one point I take my stand.
The point, in fine, is this ; it's plain and clear as day,
Reform is greatly needed with our boys at play ;
I take it that in this debate the use is,
To "let fly" at our popular abuses.
Now what is it we see in almost every school ?
Why right is the exception, wrong the rule.

Mr. WALTER STANLEY (*interrupting*).

I think, if, Mr. Speaker, I might make so bold,
The honourable member should be told—

SPEAKER.

Hold !

My duty is to take down several pegs
Whoever spars at any member when he's on his legs.

Mr. ALEC BOYCE *resumes*.

The thread of my discourse is tangled ; what I want to say
Is this, that boys are often awfully unfair in play,
Trench on the rights of youngsters, tease and frighten,
Make heavier the burdens which they ought to lighten,
'Turn bullies, fag the weakest, and, in short,
Do many things which members of a play-ground never ought.

I know a school, not many ⁴hundred miles from here,
Where practices prevail which at the least are queer.
For instance, I have sometimes heard a boy declare,
With all the bombast of a champion's air,
That he was best man in the school ; and he would prove his right
By calling any trembling unfledged urchin out to fight ;
Now fighting, gentlemen, is not to be applauded, and I say
That he's the better man who does not fight, but runs away.

(Opposition, Nay !)

Neigh as you will, ay, even till you're *hoarse*,

(A racy bit of humour comes of course,)

I'll say *nae mair*, but still, if fight he must, I hope
You'll recommend his joining Garibaldi or the Pope.
And in that self-same school an evil still prevails,
Of settling disputes by means of heads and tails.
I hold it, Sir, unparliamentary for us to toss in air
The likeness of our sovereign lady fair,
And make her settle, whether or not she chooses,
Such points as "Heads I win, and tails he loses."
I move, therefore, as one important clause in our reforming rules,
Leave fighting for the Pope, and "tossing" for his bulls.
Time will not now permit, or I would seek to show
How many more important measures we might take in tow,
And change *in toto* many evil things which sway
The conduct of Young England when at play.
But as the hour advances, I feel, Sir, it is meet
That I should—er—hem ! er—take my seat.

(Satirical cries of "Hear, hear," from the Opposition, and immense applause from Arthur Mortram, the other member on the Ministerial bench.)

Mr. WALTER STANLEY.

I rise in some surprise, to tell my noble friend,
Who brought his speech to such a cheery end,
That however much he is inclined to tax his mind,
Great faults in play-ground practices to find,
I have no hesitation, er—hem ! in declaring,
That while in some degree his feeling sharing,
I cannot be in ignorance of the fact how much he lacked
A forcible expression of his views, and, did I chose,
I think I should be justified in saying
He made foul statements on fair playing.
He stated in a most decisive way—

Mr. ALEC BOYCE.

Allow me just to say—

Mr. WALTER STANLEY.

Eh ?

Mr. ALEC BOYCE.

I wish to say in explanation, and for fear—

Mr. OSWALD LAYTON.

Hear ! hear !

Mr. ARTHUR MORTRAM.

I rise to order, Mr. Speaker, and should like to know—

CHORUS.

Oh ! oh !

Mr. SPEAKER, *in a passion.*

Chair, gentlemen ! To wonder now at Balaam's ass were weak,
It seems the custom for such animals to speak.

Mr. WALTER STANLEY *resumes.*

The point I wish to touch upon, if not amiss, is simply this—
An evil very great prevails, on which some folks are often joking,

I mean in sober seriousness the evil habit some boys have of smoking.

I cannot walk in London through a street
Unless some little rag-a-muffin boys I meet,
Smoking their pipes ; or if young gentlemen they are,
Perhaps they sport a penny pickwick, or cigar.
I fear that many honourable members will get warm
At hearing that this habit needs a great reform.
I will not say a word about the habit as indulged by men,
Or raise the question of the "Counterblast" again ;
Let each man please himself who's old enough to know
Whether it's good or bad, respectable or low.
But if there is a thing that makes me sad,
Or drives me into desperation, nearly mad,
It is to see behind a great cigar
A youngster who, if his good pa and ma
Knew what the little fellow was about,
Would quickly put their tempers, and his smoking, out.
But arguments are needed ; it will not take me long
To find a backer to my statement that tobacco smoking's
wrong.

And first—If I'd a puppy, and I wanted all to know
That I could stop his growth and keep him low,
In very early dog days I'd begin
To dose the little fellow well with gin ;
And if I wished to enervate a boy,
The fire and vigour of his life destroy,
And all his brightness and his briskness mar,
I'd daily give the little fellow a cigar.
Second—To keep my dog respectable, I'd make him stay at home,

He'd lose his character were he with other dogs to roam ;
He'd learn to fight and quarrel, bite and bark—

Mr. A. MORTRAM.

“It is their nature too.”

Mr. WALTER STANLEY.

(The Doctor's quite beside the mark.)

And when a boy likes smoke, he's sure to try and find
Some other smoky fellows suited to his mind,
And very soon his native goodness they'll destroy,
And he will soon become a bacca-nalian boy.

Third. If my pup has been and gone and done what is not right,
'Tis pitiful to see him slinking home at night ;

His ears are back, his tail is down, his eyes
Have lost their merriment, and don't look wise,
And while he suffers justly his disgrace,
He throws a gloom and coldness through the place.

So with a boy who smokes, or acts in any sort
His better sense and conscience seek to thwart,
He soon grows sly and underhanded in his ways,
He spoils his future in his early days ;

He apes the man, and when he comes to man's estate,
The love of boyish recollections turns to hate.

If any one, I care not who he is, is careless as a lad,
Dishonourable, sly, or mean, he's sure to “turn out bad.”

And he who does a foolish thing, like smoking, let me say,
At once should give it up—it'll give it him some day.

So, gentlemen, I beg you take this smoking citadel by storm,
And vote for anti-bacca in your measures of Reform.

Mr. A. MORTRAM.

I think the honourable gentleman who just now spoke

In such a piping tone of boys not consuming their own smoke
Should bear in mind in what direction he would cast his pearls,
Our movement takes in boys but not excludes the girls.

(Cheers in the Ladies' gallery.)

And therefore his ideas are narrow, unless he meant to try
And show that it was equally injurious for girls to pipe their eye.
The subject of my speech is—to be brief—

Mr. OSWALD LAYTON—That's a relief.

Mr. ALEC BOYCE—Chair ! chair !

Mr. ARTHUR MORTRAM.

Gentlemen, forbear ! The sentence I began
Is this. The subject of my speech is "slang ;"
We need Reform, a radical reform ; we ought to teach
The Saxon, Lindley Murray parts of speech,
Use sparingly flash words imported from abroad,
Not always echoing the late Arsenius Ward.
We want to root out words that pass as English in the town,
Learn lessons from, not imitate, a Sketchley's "Mrs. Brown."
We ought to cry down common phrases such as these—
"It's all my eye," I'm certain that is "not the cheese."
'Twere better for a boy or girl to sit quite still and dumb
Than call their Father "Governor," or Mother "Mum."
Some call their fellows "bloke," or "thing," or "cove,"
Appeal to Jingo, Gimini, and George, and Jove ;
Are "awfully" delighted, or "hideously" pleased,
Are suited "all to pieces," or "villanously" teased.
If any man is tipsy they say he's "screwed," or "tight ;"
Is any one ill-dressed ? then he's a "horrid fright ;"
If one's removed, he's "mizzled," "hooked it," or else "cut ;"
If any one is crazy, then he's "off his nut ;"

If appetite is bad, a man is "off his chump ;"
Who pays for anything, must first "shell out," or "stump."
And so on—I might give a hundred sayings more,
But you would think me green, or p'raps a "bore."
Yet, gentlemen, I cannot take my seat until I stoutly say
These slang expressions spoil the converse of our day.
They make young people flippant, loose in thought and speech,
And not worse English than worse morals do they teach,
For serious subjects have their slang expressions, but I dare
Not quote them here, so, Mr. Speaker, I forbear.
Yet ere I take my seat, I trust, my honourable friends, you will
Bring in the measure I propose in your forthcoming Bill.

MR. OSWALD LAYTON.

Mr. Speaker, gentlemen, a certain sage
Was pleased to call our present time the iron age ;
I will not argue on that point, but let it pass,
It seems to me the present is the age of brass.
At borrowed phrases the last speaker made a shy
In borrowed jokes allow me to reply—
Well, that the speech last heard was sound, it cannot be denied,
Grant that, and then it will be found, it's little else beside.
The speech, no doubt, will be immortal of our friend,
For he who hears it, hears it to no end.

(Mr. W. Stanley, hear ! hear !)

We must admit, though, that his speeches have great weight,
We've found it hard to bear them oft of late ;
And also that his arguments are quite profound
For not a bit can anybody see the ground.
"Some say his wit's refined, thus is explained
The seeming mystery—his wit is strained—

No wonder, therefore, the debate falls dead
Beneath such close and constant fire of lead."
I will not occupy the meeting very long,
I wish to ask one question,—Am I right or wrong?
Each gentleman *exposed* the faults he had been chiding,
Would it not be better, Sir, to give those faults a *hiding*?
I think we have been nibbling at our subject all the night
Instead of saying all we ought to say outright.
I say, Let every boy and girl throughout the land
On radical reform come boldly out and stand;
Fight against wrong in every shape and dress,
Gain for our slighted cause a sound redress;
Be manly, womanly, in everything they do,
And keep the true and blessed ends of life in view;
Succour the weak, be kind to foe and friend,
Tell old men it is not too late to mend;
Take children tempted into wrong and sin,
And seek for better ends their hearts to win;
And show through life's dull day, and cloud, and storm,
The peace and shelter found beneath Reform!

(Loud cheers)

The Speaker vacates the chair and comes to the front of the platform—

MR. MERRY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, it is proposed that we should now go into a Committee of the whole house.

You've listened patiently to all that has been spoken—

You listen still, and so we take it as a token

That you approve the measures that we think are needed,

And which, we fear, by many folks are scarcely heeded;

So, you who would enroll yourselves beneath our banner,
Will signify it in the usual manner.

The Government and the Opposition, everybody in the room, and the servants who were crowding round the door, held up their hands immediately, and the Bill was carried amid such enthusiasm as is rarely seen even in the House. And as the speakers came down from the platform, headed by Tom Martin, who played "We won't go home till morning," (no doubt under the impression that that best expressed the habits of Members of Parliament,) they were cheered all the way to the refreshment room, where they amicably settled their political differences over lemonade and sherry.

How fast time flies when the evening is being merrily spent ! Who would have thought it was supper-time already ? But so it was, and the lads and lasses were fast pairing off for that event, when a loud rat-tat was heard at the door.

"What, fresh arrivals at this time of night ! " said one or two.
"I wonder who it can be ! "

"It is a surprise of some sort or other," said Ada Martin ;
"I am quite sure it is. I can tell it by the twinkle in Mr. Merry's eye."

Rat-tat, again and again, at the door.

"I can't bear this suspense any longer," said Emily Cathcart ;
"I must peep." But the door was closed, and a firm hand on the outside kept it fast.

"I say it's a Punch and Judy," said one.

"No ; I say it's Christy's Minstrels," said another.

"I believe it's fireworks, to go off on the lawn," said Arthur Mortram.

And in the midst of the speculations the doors were thrown open, and the visitors were announced :

Mr. W. H. G. KINGSTON.

Mrs. MONA BICKERSTAFFE.

Mr. R. M. BALLANTYNE.

Mr. SIDNEY DARYL.

Mr. EDWIN HODDER.

Mr. R. HOPE MONCRIEFF.

COUSIN CYNTHA.

As each name was announced a buzz of welcome was heard, for every name was associated with bright and happy recollections, and every one in the room felt (as every child in the land feels) that the authors of the tales which had been their delight for years could not be other than their friends. So there was a great deal of hand-shaking, and many a kind and cheery word given to the youngsters, and then Old Merry said :

“ Let us give one good hearty cheer of welcome to our friends, and then off to supper. And when that is over we will have our chairs brought round the fire, and I may promise you, on behalf of my good friends here, that each in turn will spin you a Christmas yarn. Now, hip ! hip ! ”—and if the visitors had not been thoroughly accustomed to youngsters they would have been stunned and staggered at the “ hurrah ! ” which burst from every lip.

The fund of conversation which the new arrivals furnished for the supper table was unlimited ; but anxiety was so great to be back again in the drawing-room, that the time usually allowed on such occasions for refreshment was very much curtailed.

The chandeliers glistened and the fires burnt as they only do on Christmas Eve. A large ring, with double rows of seats, was made all round the room, and then the stories commenced. We will give them in the order in which they came, and omit the occasional interruptions which attended, and the questions and criticisms which followed, every story.




"In a few minutes an Esquimaux, with his seal spear in his hand and his dog by his side, stood before us."—Page 52.

FROZEN UP ;

OR,

MY POLAR EXPERIENCES.

By WILLIAM HENRY KINGSTON, *Author of "Peter the Whaler,"*
"Washed Ashore," &c., &c.

 YOU ask for a yarn, my friends. I'll spin you one with all my heart. You are all agreed that Christmas is a merry time. It ought to be so with you who have many kind friends around you, a warm, blazing fire, plenty of roast beef and plum-pudding, and other satisfactory things ; and good houses, and warm clothing, and numberless other blessings, spiritual as well as temporal. But, I say boys, that should not allow us to forget that there are thousands of our fellow-creatures, and of our fellow-countrymen, too, who are perhaps at this moment starving and freezing—dying of cold and hunger. Those who have never suffered themselves are apt not to think of the sufferings to which others are exposed. I, however, can never forget a winter I spent—where do you think ? In Scotland. Oh, no. Shetland ? Further north. Iceland ? Further north still. At the North Pole, or, at least, not far off it. I went to sea in the old "Grampus," Greenland whaler, from Hull, for a summer trip, hoping to be back with my friends by the end of October. The old "Grampus" was barque-rigged, 350 tons burden carried six whale-boats, three

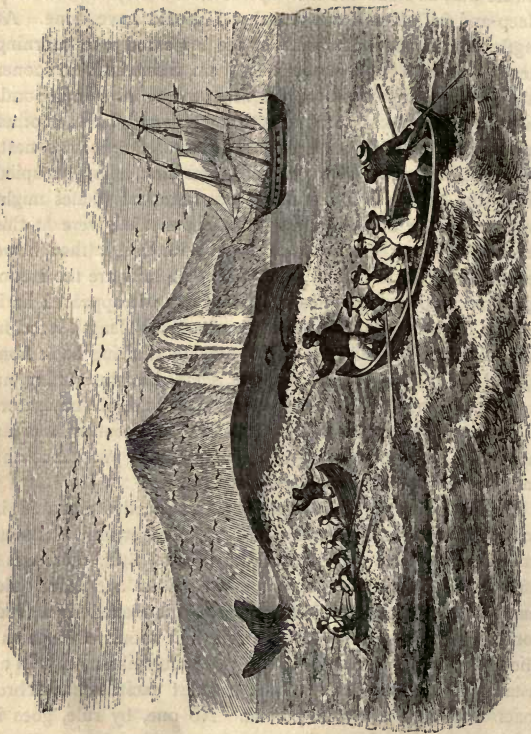
hung up on each side, and a crew of fifty men, all told—consisting of harpooners, boat-steerers, line-managers, coopers, carpenters, foremast-men, landsmen, and apprentices. Each man was to have a share in the profits on every whale caught, so that all were interested. The ship was very strongly built, with ice-knees to withstand the pressure of the ice. When I examined her, and observed that her bows were one mass of wood, I thought that nothing could harm her. I little knew, at that time, the tremendous power of masses of ice when grinding together, though no storm is raging over head, and the sea beneath may seem calm as a mill-pond. Our courses, that is our lower sails, were differently shaped to those of an ordinary merchantman, being narrow at the foot, and fitted with booms, so that they would swing round of themselves when, as was often the case, a few hands only were left on board to work the ship. But an important feature in our ship, in common with other whalers, by which she might be known at a distance, was the “crow’s nest” at her maintop-gallant-mast head. It was like a big cask, and contained a seat, and a place for a telescope, a speaking-trumpet, a flag, and a few other articles. Here an officer was stationed, when whales were supposed to be near, to watch for their appearance. Our boats were different to those in general use aboard trading vessels, the stem and stern were alike, and were about twenty-six feet long. Each carried six whale-lines, of 120 fathoms in length, and harpoons and lances, an axe for cutting the line should it foul, and many other articles. The boats pulled from four to six oars. The captain, or one of the mates, acted as harpooner, the boat-steerer ranked next to him, and the line-manager took the third place. The crew were formed into divisions

according to the number of boats, and thus each division consisted of a harpooner, boat-steerer, line-manager, and four or five rowers. The harpooner had command, and when in pursuit pulled the bow oar. I looked forward, with great delight, to the cruise. To see a real, palpable iceberg—not a mere painted one in a panorama—and huge living whales caught, was, I thought, worth going all round the world for, and would amply repay me for any danger I might have to overcome during the short summer trip I expected to make. Captain Blowhard, the master of the “*Grampus*,” was a relative of my mother, and had offered to take me as a supernumerary in his own cabin. If I liked a sea life I was to continue in it as a profession, but if not, I was to return on shore and learn to wield a pen or a yard measure, instead of a harpoon or a sword. The full complement of our crew, including some of our best men, was to be made up at Lerwick, in Shetland, where we called to take them on board. We remained three days in the Sound, off the chief of those treeless but highly picturesque islands, and, I must say, that a more hospitable, kind-hearted, pleasant-mannered people I never met. They have, however, one grievous cause of complaint. The map-makers will persist in putting their group of islands up in an out-of-the-way corner of the maps, so that a very large proportion of the human race do not know where they are really to be found. In spite of this, however, they are a tolerably happy and contented community. Away we sailed on our voyage, which was anything but a smooth one, for we were tumbled and tossed about by the big waves in a manner which I thought must shake even our stout ship to pieces. They did not, however; and, towards the end of April, our captain showed me our position on the

map, not far from Davis Straits. The next morning, going on deck, the sky very blue, the sea tolerably smooth, and the sun shining brightly, though the air was unusually keen, I saw close to us, towering up high above the masts of the ship, a white, floating mountain—an iceberg—pure as alabaster. Curiously shaped peaks formed the upper part, which seemed to rest on a base of arches, forming the mouths of caverns, of the most delicate blue tint. The peaks glittered brightly in the sunbeams, and every instant seemed to change their shape, either as the berg moved slowly round, or we passed by. I exclaimed that I had never seen anything so magnificent. "Wait a bit, youngster, you'll see stranger sights than that before long," observed Sam Grummet, our first mate, who had followed the fortunes of Captain Blowhard for the best part of his life. I had one shipmate of about my own age, "Jack;" he had another name, but he was never called anything but Jack. He and I soon became fast friends, though he was before the mast and I was in the cabin. Then there was Sandy Dow, a boat-steerer, a true-hearted and an honest Shetlander. He took an interest in me from the first; not a mere fancy, but because I was young, thoughtless, and inexperienced, and he earnestly wished to do me good. A few days passed away after we got among icebergs, and we were in hourly expectation of making the ice. Even in calm weather it requires great vigilance to discover an opening into which the ship may sail, but when blowing hard, as it did when we entered Davis Straits, it was a very anxious time. The danger was, however, chiefly from the washing pieces of ice, which are often large masses just even with the water. An experienced hand was stationed at each yard-arm throughout the night to look out for them. My

wonder was, as I saw the men up there, that they did not drop asleep and fall off, as I am sure that I should have done. At length, a collection of sheets of ice appeared one morning ahead of us, with passages between them, into which no sooner did we run than we found the sea smooth as a mill-pond. Gaily we glided along, sometimes through narrow lanes, at other times across broad lakes bordered by ice. Our crow's nest, and boats, and gear, were got ready, the first being occupied during the day by a look-out, for any moment whales might appear, and the boats would start in chase. We were at this time sailing along the coast of Greenland, and, although we were from twelve to twenty miles off it, so lofty are the mountains, and so pure the atmosphere, that often it appeared as if we were close under them. Indeed, when we at length stood in for the land, it seemed as if it was actually drawing back from us, so long did we sail on and yet seemed to be getting no nearer. I remembered the story of some of the old navigators who, in consequence of this, thought the country was an enchanted one, and rather than venture on it put about and made the best of their way home again.

As the season advanced, the days gradually increased in length, till the sun itself was visible at midnight, and darkness was banished from our part of the globe. Still, there was a difference, for the night always seemed calmer and more quiet than the day. At length, our ears were gladdened by a shout from the crow's nest of "A fish, a fish ; she spouts, she spouts." The crew had till then been moving leisurely about, but, in an instant, all were in a state of the greatest excitement. Three boats were sent away in pursuit. No one, by rule, goes in the boats except those who row or steer ; but just as Sandy



"There was a whirling in the waters, and the monster's back rose gradually out of it."—*Page 41.*

Dow's boat was shoving off I slipped in, and so eager was everybody to be off that they did not stop to put me on board again. Away we dashed, the water foaming up at our bows. Sandy's practised eye had marked the spot where the whale had gone down, and well he knew where it would come up again. On we went, and there was a whirling in the waters, and the monster's back rose gradually out of it, while a column of steam-like vapour ascended into the air.

Our harpooner, who pulled the bow oar, rose from his seat. For an instant he stood with his weapon in hand, then darted it with all his strength against the side of the whale, into which it sunk deeply. We were fast. Downwards plunged the whale, the line flying out with lightning rapidity, making the timber over which it passed smoke with the friction. We had but short time for breathing. "She'll soon be up again," observed Sandy. So, indeed, she was, when we again hauled up to her with the line, and three lances were plunged into her sides. The agony made her spring almost out of the water. Then down she went, as if she could thus free herself from her tormentors, but the depths of the ocean are no permanent home for the whale, she must come up to breathe. She soon, therefore, appeared, and again we were at her. As we drew near, I saw a huge body in between us and the bright sun, and instantly afterwards there was a loud flop, and a thick shower of a ruddy liquid descended on our heads. We had reason to be thankful that the whale's tail did not strike us instead of the water, or there would not have been much left either of the boat or crew to pick up. We backed out of the monster's way, for she was, in her flurry, twisting and turning, and lashing the water, till she was surrounded by a mass of crimson foam,

while our crew cheered lustily at the thought of the prize they had won, for such a whale as we had now killed is worth not much less than five hundred pounds. Meantime one of the other boats had got fast to another whale, a huge monster, which was giving a great deal of trouble. As soon, therefore, as our capture turned over on her side, and showed that she was dead, we stuck a flag into her, and, hauling in our lines, went to the assistance of our shipmates. Fearing that the whale would after all escape them, they closed in on her, to plunge a fresh harpoon into her side. Loud cries for help reached our ears. With one sweep of her tail she had knocked the boat to pieces, and we feared had killed some if not all of the crew. We dashed on with redoubled speed. "Make fast to her, make fast," shouted the harpooner, whom we met swimming towards us. All the other men whom we saw had secured oars with which to support themselves, and seemed in no way distressed. We accordingly approached the whale. Another harpoon, and a fresh shower of darts, were fixed in her, and not till then would the crew consent to be taken on board. Two poor fellows had, however, been struck by the whale, and must have been instantly killed, for they sank immediately.

But I have not time to give you an account of all the whales we killed. We were unusually successful for the season of the year and that side of the bay. We had now to cross over to the west side, in some of the bays on which coast whales were said to abound. To effect this, we were obliged to pass through the middle ice, a work of great labour and often of danger. The route chosen by our captain was round by the north, across Melville Bay. At first we got on merrily enough, a course of northerly winds having blown the



"With one sweep of her tail she knocked the boat to pieces."—Page 42.

ice to the southward. After a time, however, the favourable wind ceased, and the ice drifting slowly back, we were obliged to commence cutting our way through it. While it moved thus gently, with our ice saws we cut a canal towards the nearest piece of clear water we could see ahead, and towed the ship along it. Then, perhaps, we were able to make sail for an hour or so, once more to find a barrier drawn across our course. Sometimes for a whole day together the crew were sawing and towing, and I heard some of them say that they might have to go on that way for a month. Still they kept their tempers, and worked with a will, in the hopes of getting a full ship at the end. I was awaked, however, one morning, by hearing the captain summoned on deck, and when I followed him there I saw nothing but long faces, and not without good reason. The clouds were flying rapidly overhead from the S.S.W., and the ice was moving along and upheaving in a peculiarly ominous manner. No time was lost in getting out the ice saws to cut a dock into which to tow the ship. This is a work of great labour, but all hands worked with a will, for they well knew that the safety of the ship depended on the speed with which it was accomplished. The ship had just been towed into the dock, when the ice to the southward began to lift and heave more violently than before. I saw the captain, Mr. Grummet, Sandy Dow, and other old hands, looking out anxiously, and I guessed not without good cause. There was a loud rumbling crashing sound, something like thunder, and yet more terrible. Not a single spot of clear water could be seen, but far as the eye could reach towards the south there appeared huge masses of ice rising with their edges uppermost, leaping and overlapping each other, tearing

and crushing those below them to pieces. Still on they pressed, mass behind mass, the places of those which rose up in front immediately supplied by others in the rear. The ice surrounding us was in violent commotion. Closer and closer it pressed around. Suddenly, as if pushed towards us by some unseen giant's hand, a huge floe came gliding on. "A nip, a nip," cried the crew. Calmly the captain had stood watching the upheaving of the icy sea. He now ordered all hands to bring their bedding and clothes on deck. Some casks of provision had already been got up. These were lowered on to the ice alongside, and rolled to a distance. The crew followed, each man laden with as much as he could carry. Captain Blowhard brought up the rear with his chronometer, compass, sextant, and other nautical instruments and books. He had scarcely got thirty yards from the ship when she was caught between two huge masses of ice, which came sweeping by. Her stout timbers could no more resist the prodigious pressure than could a wicker basket. One moment I looked round, and she stood with her yards and rigging complete ; the next, a grinding and crashing sound reached my ears, and when I again looked she was a mass of wreck, her tall masts falling, and her sides literally pressed together till they met.

Part of the floe had gone underneath her, and then rising, had cast up her cargo and stores, scattering them around, with portions of the deck and bulwarks, and the boats. "I never knew anything happen but what it might be worse," observed Sandy Dow, as he stood looking at the wreck. "There, see what Providence has done for us. Our good ship is lost, there's no doubt about that ; but the provisions, and stores, and boats are saved, and with their help we may yet see our

homes again." These words roused the drooping spirits of our men, few of whom had before seen so complete a wreck as was our good ship the "Grampus." All hands were immediately set to work to collect the various articles, and to drag them to that part of the ice which appeared most secure.

Scarcely had the mischief been done than the commotion ceased, in consequence of the wind falling, probably to the southward, and also of the strength of the barriers which had been thrown up outside us. Looking north, there appeared to be one unbroken field of ice, while some thirty miles away we could see a lofty cliff, which showed us our position. That distant sight of land, barren and inhospitable as we knew it to be, somewhat cheered our spirits, as we hoped that, should the ice again break up, we might then at all events find firm footing for our feet. We had no lack of materials for building huts or tents, and these having been erected, and fires lighted, the men were ordered to refresh themselves, and take some rest. In a few hours the men were ready for work, when they commenced constructing sleighs on which to drag our stores to the land. Later in the year we should have been safe where we were, but it would at present have been hazardous to remain, lest the ice should move away to the southward, and break up before we could escape from it. Our boats, too, had received so much damage, that they were incapable of conveying us to any of the Danish settlements before they had received a considerable amount of repair. Though the cape looked so near, we found it a very long journey to get there. Most of the crew made three trips before all the articles we required were conveyed to the spot which had been fixed on for our encampment. We still entertained the hope that other

whalers might pass by within sight of the cape, and that we should get on board them. A large quantity of stores and provisions were still left on the ice, which it was supposed we should not require. Week after week, however, passed by, the ice remained firm, and no whaler appeared to take us off. Captain Blowhard began to look very grave. I observed to him that I thought we might make ourselves very comfortable where we were till another season. "You do not know what an arctic winter is, my lad," he answered. "But it is not that. It is bad enough to lose one's ship, but I am thinking of those at home who will be mourning us as dead. It is the thought of their grief which makes me sad." Our good old captain always thought of others more than of himself.

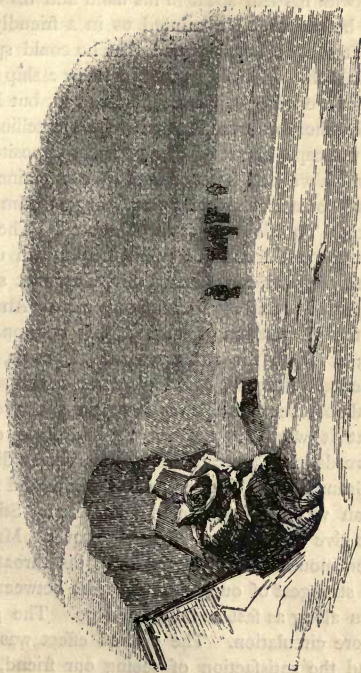
I might spin a very long yarn about all the things that happened to us, but I have not time. The cold of an arctic winter soon began with all its rigour. We had built huts with stones and earth, and parts of the wreck which we had dragged over the ice, but we were very much cramped, and when the cold began in earnest it penetrated into the interior, and we could not keep ourselves warm even with our thick clothing in bed. As soon, however, as the snow fell, the captain ordered ice-huts to be built, the snow serving as mortar. Large slabs of ice were cut out and built up as if they had been blocks of stone, and with them eight huts were formed of the shape of bee-hives. Each hut held from three to five people comfortably. A long passage led to it, with three different slabs, which served as doors; a slab of clear ice was placed on the top to serve as a window. The bed-places were built of snow, covered over thickly with the twigs of a low shrub which grew on the hill side. This, the captain told us, was exactly the

fashion of the Esquimaux huts. We had brought several casks of whale's blubber, and this served us for fuel, and gave us light and warmth; without it we could not have existed. We had a number of shallow metal washhand basins, these were filled with oil, and along one half of the edge of each a row of wicks, made of moss, was arranged; on the opposite side a piece of blubber was hung up, which, as it gradually melted, replenished the basin with oil. This was in imitation of the lamps used by the Esquimaux. One amply warmed each hut. By thus taking a lesson from those we were accustomed to call ignorant savages, we were enabled to exist, and retain our health, when otherwise we must have perished. Our only fear was that the blubber would not hold out till we could make our escape. Our first huts had been built close under the cliff; but, for the convenience of obtaining ice, we had placed those we now occupied at some distance, close to the water, or, rather, where the water would have been had it not been frozen. Our boats, and a good many of our stores, had been left under the cape. One night—now that the winter had begun the night occupied the greater part of the twenty-four hours—we were aroused by a tremendous rushing, thundering sound. I slept in a hut with Mr. Grummet, Sandy Dow, and the youngest mate. They hurriedly put on their clothes and ran out. I followed their example, though I felt almost frozen in an instant by the bitter wind which met us, for a storm was raging. By the twilight which prevails in that region during night, we could see huge pieces of the cliff and masses of snow come tumbling down in quick succession, one after the other. It was a perfect avalanche, and in a few minutes the whole spot where our summer huts had stood, and

where our stores and boats now were, was completely overwhelmed. Some of the men even ran away from our present abode, thinking that that also would be overwhelmed, but the captain shouted to them to stand fast, as he was sure that the falling cliff would not reach us, nor did it.

With foreboding hearts we once more hurried back into our huts. Our boats, on which we might have to depend to escape from this inhospitable region, were destroyed; a large portion of the fuel, without which we could not exist, was buried deeply under rocks and snow. As soon as the men had finished taking their necessary rest, and had breakfasted, all hands set off to the scene of the disaster to try and recover some of the stores. On arriving at the spot the task appeared hopeless, so vast was the mass of ruin which covered them. After exploring the ground and digging in various spots, in the hope of finding only snow, we were obliged to return homewards. When Mr. Grummet and I reached our hut, we found that Sandy Dow was not with us. Mr. Grummet asked when I had last seen him. I could not tell, but thought that he must have gone into one of the other huts. We waited dinner for him for some time, but still he did not appear. At last I offered to run round to the other huts and enquire. A snow-storm was raging, and I found it no easy matter to make my way from hut to hut. I did so, however, but no one had seen our friend. When I went to the captain he said that Dow must have certainly remained at the cape, and that a party must set off immediately and try to find him. I smuggled myself in with the party, though the captain was unwilling to let me go, fearing that I might not be able to endure the cold and fatigue. Mr. Grummet led the party, and off we set,

thinking that there would be no difficulty in finding the way in spite of the snow-storm. We went on and on, supposing that we should every instant arrive at the cape, and that the snow hid it from our view. Still we did not reach it. At last Mr. Grummet, in a tone of vexation, declared that he had lost his way. The distance was so short, and we had been so accustomed to be guided by the high cape ever in view, that we had come without a compass. The snow came down thicker and thicker, and the prospect of finding our way appeared more and more hopeless. We shouted, thinking that we might possibly after all not be far from the huts, but there was no answer. Mr. Grummet and another officer, who had guns, fired them off, but no report was heard in return. If we remained quiet we might be frozen, for the cold was intense, so we pushed on in the hope that we might before long sight either the huts or the cape. Some of the men proposed that we should halt, build up a snow-hut, and shelter ourselves in it till the snow was over, but to this our leader would not consent. He expressed his belief that the snow might fall for several days, so that we might be completely covered up and unable to work our way out of our hut. Besides, we had come to look for Sandy Dow, and nothing should induce him to give up the search as long as he could move a foot forward. So on we went; every now and then a gun was fired, and we all shouted at the top of our voices. We continued this practice, though with little hope of an answer. We were, therefore, still more surprised when a shout was heard very like ours, and which came from no great distance. Again we shouted, and again there was a reply. Was it only an echo? It was not quite like enough for that. Directly after we heard a bark, and in a few minutes an



“We could discern a figure seated on a rock and almost bent double, as if to try and avoid the icy blast.”—Page 52.

Esquimaux, with his seal spear in his hand and his dog by his side, stood before us. He saluted us in a friendly manner. To our great satisfaction we found that he could speak a few words of English. He told us that he knew a ship had been lost, and that we were in the neighbourhood, but he did not know exactly where we were located. On our telling him that it was near the cape, he set off in a perfectly opposite direction to that in which we had been going. We explained that we were in search of a lost shipmate, and begged him to help us in our search. To this he at once consented. The snow fell thicker than ever, still our new friend led on with unwavering steps. I felt very sad, for I heard Mr. Grummet say that he scarcely expected to find my friend Sandy alive. An expressive action of the Esquimaux confirmed this opinion. Still we pushed on ; at length the cliff appeared before us, and as the snow slackened a little, we could discern a figure seated on a rock and almost bent double, as if to try and avoid the icy blast. That it was Sandy Dow we had little doubt ; we hurried towards him ; we called his name, but he did not look up. Mr. Grummet and others went up to him and shook him. A low groan was the only sound he uttered. Still that was sufficient to give us hope that he would recover. Mr. Grummet poured a few mouthfuls of brandy down his throat, and then two of the strongest of our party took him between them and hurried him along as fast as they could go. The great thing was to restore circulation. The desired effect was produced, and we had the satisfaction of seeing our friend, under the care of the doctor, himself again. Sandy had stopped behind to explore, when, the snow coming on, he had been prevented reaching the hut, but fortunately found his way back again to the cliff.

Our new friend Upnick told us that he was one of a small party of natives settled for the winter in a bay about ten miles off, and that he was out on an expedition to catch seals when he fell in with us. He was a merry, happy fellow. We wanted him to stop with us, but he replied that he must go back to his family to supply them with blubber and oil for their lamps, and that then he would come back to us. Some of our men agreed to accompany him. When they came back they did not give a very tempting account of the Esquimaux mode of life. Upnick accompanied them. His appearance somewhat raised the spirits of our party, which were getting very low. Our oil was well-nigh expended, and it seemed doubtful whether our provisions would hold out to the spring. It was also a weary time, for though our captain and officers did their best to amuse us, we had but few books, and the weather often kept us for days and days within our huts. Upnick, however, offered to show us how to catch seals, which would give us both food and fuel. He went off some distance from the land, where there was less snow, and his dog hunted about till he found a small hole. To this hole he said the seals came to breathe; he then told our men to sit quiet. They had to wait a long time, till a sound of blowing was heard. Quick as lightning Upnick darted his harpoon down through the hole. The tightened line showed that it had got hold of something; he then began to work away with his ice-knife till he had considerably enlarged the hole, when he drew forth a full-sized seal. He killed three others in the same way, which he and our men dragged to the huts. We gave him some coloured pocket handkerchiefs and a hatchet in return. This afforded, indeed, a seasonable supply of fuel.

and we were also very glad of the flesh for food. It was found, however, that though Upnick had showed us how to catch the seals, our men could but ill follow out his lessons. In the first place they had great difficulty in finding the holes, and when found they were not in time to catch the seals, or did not hear them blow, or did not properly direct their harpoons.

We had hung up the seals on spars just outside the huts, that we might chop off as much as we required. We had been for some time asleep one night, when Dow awoke, saying that he heard a peculiar noise outside. He instantly jumped up, and slipping on his clothes, ran out with a harpoon in his hand. He had not been gone long before we heard him shouting for help. Mr. Grummet had been meantime putting on his clothes, and followed with a loaded musket. I slipped out after him, when what was my horror to see Sandy Dow in the embrace of a huge white polar bear! "Fire, fire, or he will squeeze the breath out of me," he cried out. Not only was the monster squeezing poor Sandy, but he was threatening to take a piece out of his shoulder with his huge jaws. No time was to be lost; Mr. Grummet advanced cautiously and fired close past Sandy's head down the animal's mouth. Another man came up the next instant with a whale spear, which he plunged into its side, when the bear, letting go his hold of Sandy, rolled over, and was very soon dead. The creature had been attracted to the place by the seals, of which he had already eaten a large piece. He was welcome to it, considering that his own carcass afforded us many a welcome meal. We carried Sandy into the hut, for he was very much hurt by the bear. "It's an ill wind that blows naebody guid," he

observed. "If the bear had na grabbed me, we should have gane without his steaks."

The supply of fresh meat was very valuable, and restored most of the invalids to health. Still there was the want of blubber for our lamps. Upnick, however, on seeing that we could not catch the seals as well as he did, made a bargain with the captain to act as our hunter. Some of the men by degrees became more expert, and with his help obtained a sufficient supply to keep our lamps burning. One day, however, he told us that he must go away, and, in spite of all the captain's expostulations, he took his departure with the treasures he had accumulated, and we were left to our own resources. Oftentimes we were reduced to a very sad plight, and to make our oil last longer, we had all to congregate in two or three huts; this increased the heat certainly, but, as there was no means of ventilation, it was far from pleasant. Such was the state of things when Christmas day arrived. Our crew were divided into two parties; our fare was seals' blubber, and twenty-five of us were seated round one oil lamp in a hut about twelve feet in diameter. We had materials for a plum pudding, but as hot water was too valuable to throw away we had mixed it porridge fashion: Still we tried to make ourselves as merry as circumstances would allow. Now and then one of the party would brave the snow-storm raging outside for the sake of carrying some amusing message to our friends in the other hut, knowing that we should get a facetious answer in return. After this, however, matters grew worse; in vain the best hunters went out to catch seals; not a pint of oil remained, and even inside our huts we could not have existed twenty-four hours without the warmth of the lamp. We talked

once more of trying to dig down to our stores, but the crew soon found that their strength was inadequate to the undertaking. And now that Christmas had gone by, that time which we had all expected to pass with our families in comfort and happiness at home, the true horrors of our situation burst on us. The scurvy, that scourge of mariners, broke out, and several of our poor fellows could scarcely move hand or foot. All those who could get out were engaged in seal killing ; their success was small, though they procured just sufficient to keep two and sometimes three lamps burning at a time. Week after week and month after month passed by, and we began to fear that we should not escape from our perilous position till late in the summer, when perhaps some whalers might pass within sight of our encampment. How many of us might be alive then was the question. Death had already begun to thin

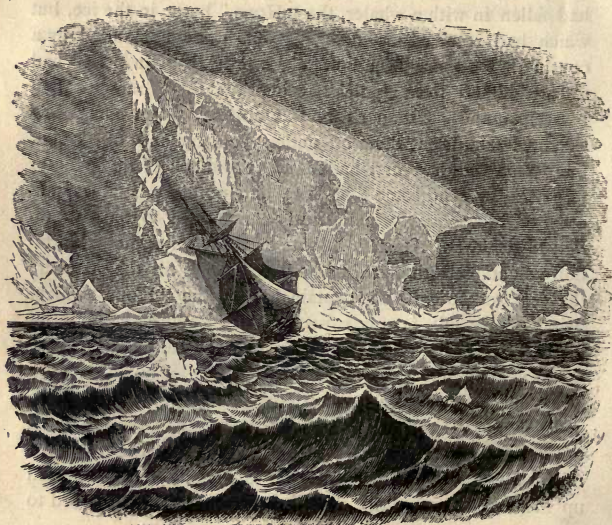


our numbers. One day, Jack and I, who had kept our health better than any of our shipmates, were amusing ourselves at a little distance from the hut, when we saw, approaching, several sleighs drawn by dogs, with an Esquimaux walking before the first to lead the way. We ran into the hut to announce the coming of the strangers, and then ran out again to meet them. The first man was Upnick; the next we took to be an Esquimaux, but a cheery voice in English hailed us, and we soon found that this was an expedition sent expressly for our relief.

Upnick, on leaving us, had travelled south, and at length had fallen in with a whaler, the "Hope," beset in the ice, but which had received no damage. She was commanded by a cousin and an old friend of our worthy captain. He had satisfied himself from Upnick's account that the "Grampus" had been lost, and, as soon as he was able to collect some dog-sleighs, he had sent them off under the command of his son, the person who had first hailed us, to our relief; he had not forgotten to send some lime-juice, and potted vegetables, and other anti-scorbutics, which greatly contributed to the restoration to health of the sick. Some of our men without hesitation volunteered to remain where they were till the summer; the rest set out with the captain to join the "Hope," which, being nearly full, it was expected would return home early in the summer, or as soon as she was released from her icy prison.

We were warmly welcomed on board the "Hope" by Captain Tom Blowhard and his officers and crew, and soon forgot all the toils and dangers we had gone through. Many people might have pitied us having to live on board a whaler frozen up in the ice, but we did not pity ourselves, for, compared to

the life we had so long led, we considered that we fared luxuriously. Even, however, when the sun shone brightly and the days grew long we were not free of the ice, and I heard some of the crew remarking that we might possibly remain beset the whole summer through. The captain replied, when he heard of this, that if an inch of water was to be seen within a mile of the ship we would work our way to it. He was as good as his word, and before long the ice-saws were set to work; and, by hard toil, often sawing away for a fortnight, we were once more free of the ice and bounding over the heaving waves



on a southerly course. We had still, however, reminders of the northern latitude in which we were sailing, in the shape of icebergs, to avoid which, during the night, we had to keep a very bright look out. One afternoon, dinner just being over when I went on deck, a very fine one, on which the sun shone brightly, appeared right ahead. As I stood watching it, the top appeared to be bending forward; so it was, there it came, the whole mountain mass collapsing in the most extraordinary manner, till a few fragments alone appeared above the waters to show where it had been. It was fortunate that we were not close under it, or we might have been overwhelmed by the ruins.


This was the last among the many providential escapes for which I had to be thankful during my trip to the North Pole. Three weeks afterwards, we were gladdening the hearts of our relatives and friends in Hull, and sending some of the more sensitive into hysterics in consequence of our sudden re-appearance after they had so long given us up as lost. Terrible as were our sufferings at times, now that they were over I could look back at my adventures with pleasure, and never grew weary of benefiting my friends with the yarn which I have just spun for your amusement.



A RESCUE IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

By R. M. BALLANTYNE.

Author of "*The Life-boat*;" "*A Tale of our Coast Heroes*;" "*Silver Lake*;
or, *Lost in the Snow*," &c.

UITO was a young brave of the Tsekanie Indians, one of the tribes which dwell among the Rocky Mountains of North America.

The squaws said of him that he was tall as the pine tree, gentle as a woman, yet strong and bold like the grizzly bear; and there is no doubt that much truth lay in what they said, for the young Tsekanie could throw the spear, hurl the tomahawk, bestride the wild horse, or kill the buffalo, better than any man in his tribe; although, unlike his brother braves, he never boasted of his prowess, nor talked big swelling words of what he would do to his enemies when he got hold of them! In fact, Quito was unlike a savage in many respects, and very like to a civilized gentleman in some things; for, notwithstanding his well-known courage and physical powers, he did not delight in war. He never went on the war-path except when he believed there was very good reason for so doing. He never scalped an old man, or a woman, or a child, which is more than could be said of most of his comrades. It was even said of him that on more than one occasion he had spared the life and the scalp of a prostrate foe.

On the other hand, Quito was fond of meditation and study.

Of course he did not study printed books, such silently eloquent and sweet companions being utterly unknown in those far western regions, but he studied the book of nature, and was wont to say, in a quiet way, that he loved to look into the works of the Great Manitou, by which term he meant God.

Quito did not say this to everybody, for he was very reserved ; he said it to his wife, whose name in the Indian language was Laughing-eye.

Laughing-eye had a loving and sympathetic heart, and Quito treated her as an equal, in which respect also he differed widely from his brethren, who were more or less addicted to beating their wives.

Once Quito went a long journey to the southward, and it so chanced that he met with a missionary in his travels, who did not miss the opportunity of telling him of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Among other things, he learned from this missionary that Christians were usually united in matrimony by a clergyman, which, the missionary explained, meant a servant and preacher of the Lord Jesus. Quito had been married in the regular Indian fashion—that is to say, he had gone to his father-in-law's tent, demanded Laughing-eye for his wife, paid down the price required in the shape of cloth, gums, beads, and trinkets of various kinds, such as are supplied by fur traders, and then carried her off to his own wigwam.

A strange but strong desire now seized the young Indian to be married after the Christian manner to Laughing-eye, so he returned to his home in the Rocky Mountains, resolving to take his wife to the mission-station without delay.

Quito had a bosom friend, named Bunker, a white man and a hunter. Bunker might well have been ashamed of his name,

as far as sound went, but he was not. He was proud of it. He was wont to say, sometimes, that "the Bunkers was comed of a good stock, an' had bin straight-for'ard hunters in the Rocky Mountains, off an' on, for nigh a century, an' he hoped he would never disgrace his forefathers." There was no fear of that, for Bunker was as sturdy, and honest, and simple-minded a man as ever shot a grizzly bear, or trapped a beaver. He, too, was fond of meditation, and had great delight in the society of Quito.

On his way home the young Indian met with Bunker, who said he was going to visit some traps, but that he would follow his friend's trail the next day, and might perhaps overtake him before he reached his village.

It was a beautiful autumn evening when Quito approached his mountain home. Not the finest park of the greatest noble in our land could compare with the magnificent scenery through which the Indian walked; with his gun on his shoulder, and his yellow leathern garments—fashioned and richly wrought by the fingers of Laughing-eye—fluttering with innumerable fringes and other ornaments in the gentle breeze. His dark eye glanced from side to side with that sharp restless motion which is peculiar to red Indians and hunters of the far west, whose lives are passed in the midst of danger from lurking enemies and wild beasts, but the restless glance was the result of caution, not of anxiety. Quito's breast was as calm and unruffled as the surface of the lakelet along whose margin he walked, and, although he kept a sharp look-out, from the mere force of habit, he thought no more of enemies at that time than did the little birds which twittered in the bushes, unconscious and unmindful of the hawk and eagle that soared high over head.

There were woods and valleys, through which flowed streams of limpid water. Here and there were swamps, in which thousands of water-fowl and frogs filled the air with melody, for the frogs of America are a musical race, and a certain class of them actually whistle in their felicity at certain periods of the year; their whistle, however, is only one intermittent note. Elsewhere undulating plains, or prairies, gave variety to the scene, and the whole was backed by the lofty, rugged, and snow-clad peaks of the vast mountain range which runs through the whole continent from north to south.

On reaching the summit of a hill, on which Quito had often halted when returning from his frequent hunting expeditions, to gaze in satisfaction at his village in the far distance, and think of Laughing-eye, a shade of deep and unmistakeable anxiety crossed his grave features, and instead of halting, as he was wont to do, he hastened onwards at redoubled speed, for his eye missed the wreaths of smoke that at other times had curled up above the trees, and one or two of the wigwams which used to be visible from that point of view were gone.

The terrible anxiety that filled Quito's breast was in a short time changed into fierce despair, when he suddenly turned round the base of a cliff, behind which his village lay, and beheld his late home a mass of blackened ruins. Little circles of grey ashes indicated where the tents had been, and all over the ground were scattered charred bones and masses of putrefying flesh, which told of ruthless murder.

Savage nature is not like civilized. No sound or word escaped the desolate Indian, who now knew that he was the last of his race, but the heaving bosom, the clenched teeth, and compressed lips, the fierce glittering eye, and the darkly

frowning brows, told of a deadly struggle of anguish and wrath within.

While Quito was still gazing at the dreadful scene, he observed something move among the bushes near him and darted towards it. It proved to be an old woman, who was blind and scarcely able to make herself understood. She was evidently famishing from hunger, so Quito's first care was to give her a little of the dried meat which formed his store of provisions. After she had devoured some of it, and drunk greedily of the water which he fetched from a neighbouring stream in a cup of birch bark, she told him that the camp had been suddenly attacked, some days before, by a war-party of enemies, who had slain all the men and old women, and carried the young women away into captivity—among them Laughing-eye.

As far as outward appearance went, Quito received the news with calm indifference, but his subsequent actions told another tale. His first step was to erect a sort of hut out of the broken fragments of wigwams that lay around, into which he led the old woman, and placed within her reach a large vessel of water with a small bark cup. He then gave her all his provisions, sufficient for more than a week's consumption, and told her he would return to her as soon as possible. The poor creature appeared grateful, and sought to detain him, but this he would not permit. Having learned from her the name of the tribe that attacked the village, and that she had escaped in the general *mêlée* by crawling into the bush, he asked which way their enemies had gone. When she had related all she had to tell on the subject, Quito left her, and divested himself of nearly every article of unnecessary costume, placed a tomahawk and scalping-knife in his girdle, slung a short bow and a

quiver of arrows on his back, and, throwing his gun on his shoulder, prepared to quit the spot. Before leaving, he kneeled beside the old squaw and said in her ear :—

“In a day or two Bunker will be here. Tell him I have gone to the west by the Mustang Valley, and that he must follow my trail quickly.”

The old woman promised to do this, and then Quito took his leave.

For several days he followed up the trail of the retreating Indians with the perseverance and unerring certainty of a bloodhound. He took so little rest and went on with such unflagging energy that he gradually drew near to them, a fact which became evident from the heat that still remained in the ashes of their camp fires when he came upon them.

At last he reached one of those mighty rivers which traverse the great continent from west to east. Here he found that his enemies had crossed, and he prepared to plunge in and swim over, though the current was turbulent, deep, and broad. Tying his powder in a piece of leather on the top of his head to keep it dry, he was about to take the water when he espied an old Indian canoe, and proceeded to examine before launching it. While thus engaged he was arrested by one of the most astonishing sights that had ever met his gaze.

Rapidly and perceptibly the great river that rolled before him began to diminish in volume. Accustomed as he was to all the varying aspects of lake and stream in their conditions of flood and drought, Quito had never seen anything at all resembling that which now occurred before his eyes. His wonted reason and sagacity were at fault ; it was utterly unaccountable !

Naturally his untutored mind began to look upon the phenomenon in a superstitious light. At first he was alarmed, and sat down to gaze in silent wonder, while the water continued to sink in its bed, began to flow sluggishly, then collected into pools, and finally ceased to flow altogether, leaving the bed of the river quite dry in many places. After a time it occurred to the Indian that this might be a direct interposition on the part of the Manitou, to enable him to cross on foot and pursue his enemies without delay. Full of this idea, Quito rose, and, with feelings of deep awe, went down the bank of the river and began to walk across its bed.

He had got about half way over when he was arrested by a peculiar sound, something like distant thunder but more continuous ; he stopped, and listened intently. He was more perplexed than ever, for no sound of the wilderness with which he was acquainted at all resembled it ; it seemed to come from the mountains, but a bend in the river concealed the distance from his view.

The sound increased gradually in strength until it became a continuous roar, louder than the fiercest gale that ever blew. Quito stood erect and motionless with eyes and nostrils distended, uncertain what to do, when suddenly a mighty flood of waters came thundering round the bend of the river above him. On it came, with deafening clamour, a wall of water full twenty feet high, tumbling mighty trees and huge stones over its gleaming crest like playthings, and licking them up again to hurl them on in mad fury !

Quito bounded across the dry bed of the river for his life, and reached the opposite bank only a few seconds before the rushing torrent swept by, leaving a very chaos on its surging breast.

Fetching his breath quickly, the Indian turned and gazed long in solemn silence at the magnificent scene. Then the thought of Laughing-eye recurred to him. He turned at once and pursued his way with redoubled speed.

Only a few miles above this spot he discovered the cause of the phenomenon he had just witnessed. A land-slip, on an unusually large scale, had occurred. It had been caused by the water undermining the soil of a high bank. The half of a huge hill had tumbled into the river and dammed it across, so that no water could escape. Trees were heaped in wild confusion—some with their heads in the earth and their roots in the air; piles of stones and rubbish crushed the shattered limbs, and great fissures yawned everywhere in the mass.

Ere long the searching water had cut through the obstruction, and, bursting away in all the strength of its recovered freedom, had produced the startling results which we have described.

Day after day Quito followed the trail of his enemies, and night after night he lay down on the hard ground to snatch a couple of hours' repose before resuming the chase, regardless of fatigue or cold, for hope steeled his muscles, and his heart was warmed by love.

At last, one evening he came upon them. He saw their wigwams on a little plain, which was free from shrubs and trees, although surrounded by the latter. The smoke of their fires curled up in straight columns, for the air was so still that the sound of the horses' jaws munching their food could be distinctly heard at some distance from the camp.

Quito lay down until the shades of night fell, and watched his enemies. He saw them post sentries for the night; he noted the silence that gradually stole over the scene as the

savages lay down to rest, and he saw the fires die down until the whole camp was shrouded in darkness. During the hours that he watched there he lay as still as a fallen tree—only his dark eyes moved about, restlessly.

At last he rose and prepared for action. Leaving his quiver and bow behind him, he took his gun and advanced—at first in a crouching attitude. He might have been a shadow, so noiseless were his motions. The edge of the forest gained, he sank into the long grass of the prairie, like a phantom, and disappeared. Thenceforth his progress was like to that of the serpent. Pushing his gun before him he gradually worked his way forward until he had passed the line of sentries and gained the midst of the camp. Here his proceedings were cool and daring.

He first crawled among the horses, and made up his mind as to which two of them were the best. Then he went to the chief's tent, and, gently raising the curtain of skin, looked in. His enemy was there sound asleep. He could have stabbed him to the heart, as he lay, with such deadly certainty, that he would have died without being able to utter a cry, but Quito's object was to rescue, not to avenge. He observed that the chief lay alone in his tent. A grim smile crossed the Indian's face as he lowered the curtain and again sank among the grass.

There was a large tent near to that of the chief, and Quito knew that there were women in it, but whether or not his wife was there he had not been able to ascertain from his distant view-point in the woods.

Raising the edge of this tent, he found that it was full of slumbering women, but it required a close inspection of their faces in the dark to ascertain who they were—so close that his

face almost touched that of the first woman he looked at. His heart throbbed, for he thought he recognised the features of Laughing-eye. Just then the sleeper drew a long breath and sighed, and Quito knew that it was his lost one. He also guessed that the others were the women of his own tribe, but he knew that it would be impossible for him, single-handed, to save them at that time. To save his wife would be difficult enough, he thought.

Putting his face close to that of Laughing-eye, he heaved a long-drawn sigh, and yawned pretty loudly, imitating a woman's voice as much as possible, and giving his wife a push. She half awoke, and, turning round in a sleepy way, muttered a few unintelligible words.

Quito again drew a long breath, and muttered a sleepy remark.

Laughing-eye was startled. She raised her head to listen. This was the moment of danger. If taken by surprise, she might utter a cry or an exclamation which might awaken her companions, and the rousing of the whole camp would be certain to follow, for Indians' ears are very sharp. Quito felt the difficulty and danger of his position, but there was only one course left open to him.

"Hist ! Laughing-eye," he whispered, close in his wife's ear.

Next instant his left hand was on her mouth, and with his right he pressed her down, as she made an effort to rise. The effort was momentary, almost involuntary. Immediately she lay so still that Quito knew she had recognised him, so he whispered a few more words, and released her.

Nothing more was said. Speech was not necessary, for Indians' wits are sharpened by experience. Quito glided, one might almost say melted, away, and Laughing-eye followed

him so quietly through the same aperture that the blanket which she left behind appeared merely to subside into a flat state. Quito did not stop to speak outside. Gliding through the grass, serpent-like, in the direction of the horses, he was followed by his wife, and after some minutes, for they moved very slowly, they were clear of the group of tents. Not far from them one of the sentinels stood leaning on his rifle, and gazing into the far-off horizon, where a faint glimmer of light showed that the moon was about to rise.

To pass this man was difficult, indeed, it would have been impossible, had he not been a very young man, whose eyes were rather heavy, and whose experience of Indian warfare was slight. They succeeded, however, and Quito ceased to advance when he came up to a splendid horse which stood picketted by a long line to a peg driven into the ground, and with its fore feet "hobbled," or tied together. Without a word he cut the hobbles, and the line by which the animal was fastened, the end of which last he placed in Laughing-eye's hand. She had crept up alongside of her husband, and remained perfectly quiet, while he glided away from her.

She might have remained perhaps two minutes in this state, when, peeping upwards, she saw another horse moving towards her. Instantly her husband was by her side, and she saw that the end of a rope was in his hand.

"Go first," whispered Quito in her ear, "fly towards the rising sun."

The whisper was so soft that the very grasshoppers at their side must have failed to hear it. In a moment both Indians stood up, and Quito lifted his wife lightly on the horse whose larryat she held.

Such a proceeding could not, of course, pass unnoticed in an Indian camp. Instantly a yell was given by a sentry. Just as Quito vaulted on his steed's back a couple of arrows whizzed past his ear, and the young warrior whom they had first seen darted at his horse's head. A blow from the butt of Quito's gun felled him, and in another moment husband and wife were bounding away at full stretch over the plain—the former giving utterance to a shout of defiance, which the savages returned with yells of fury, accompanied by a mixed shower of arrows and bullets.

Just as Quito was bounding over the crest of a mound the chief of the Indians fired a shot at a venture. He took no aim, but the bullet sped with fatal accuracy, and pierced the heart of Quito's horse, which fell heavily to the earth, sending its rider over its head. The Indian fell with such violence that he lay for a moment or two stunned. Seeing this, Laughing-eye at once reined up, and galloping back leaped to the ground. Quito rose, and, staggering towards the horse, made an effort to lift his wife on to its back. He failed, and before another attempt could be made the unfortunate fugitives were surrounded and recaptured.

Hopeless, indeed, was Quito's case now. Death by slow torture was certain to be his end, while Laughing-eye would be doomed to slavery. Yet both husband and wife conducted themselves with quiet dignity, and an assumption of stoical indifference.

But their case was not so hopeless as they supposed. Other eyes besides those of their enemies witnessed what had passed.

Quito's bosom friend, Bunker, on reaching the desolate

village, and learning from the old woman what had occurred, set off in pursuit of his friend without delay, and travelled at his utmost speed. But the man whom he followed was about equal to himself in physical powers and endurance, so that he could not overtake him easily. On the way he fell in with four trappers like himself, who readily consented to join him. These all continued to advance together night and day, with the exception of the brief time devoted to necessary sleep, but they did not overtake Quito until he had reached the camp of his enemies. They gained on him during the time he lay watching the camp, and waiting for the hour of action. Arriving at the spot where he had left his bow and arrows, not half an hour after he had quitted it, they at once guessed that he was reconnoitring the camp, and resolved to await the issue. While the hunters were yet discussing the best method of procedure, the yell of the sentry was heard.

"Down with you, lads," cried Bunker, sinking into the grass, "they'll come this way."

"No," cried one of the others, "they're off to the left—a man an' a squaw."

"That's them—Quito and Laughing-eye," exclaimed Bunker, "an' all the reptiles after them. Now, boys, git hold o' the horses—look alive!"

The sturdy hunter set the example. Big though he was, he bounded over the bushes like a deer, followed by his comrades. While all the men of the camp were in hot pursuit of the fugitives they ran up to the horses, and each secured one, which he mounted, having previously cut the hobbles of all the rest and sent them flying over the plain.

A regular fight then ensued, in which the Indians were

beaten and their captives rescued. The remainder of the horses, too, were secured, and, mounted on these, the whole party returned to their village in the Mustang Valley.

Here the state of things was so desolate and mournful that it was resolved all the Indians who remained should start with Quito and his wife for the Mission Station in the south. This intention was carried out the next day, and they parted with many expressions of good-will from their friends the hunters, who returned to their wild and lonesome occupations of shooting and trapping in the mountains.


After a long journey the Indians reached the Mission Station, where they remained three weeks under the instruction of the missionary. At the end of that time they expressed their desire to join themselves to the followers of Jesus Christ, and were baptized. Then Quito begged that the missionary would unite him to his wife after the manner of the Christians. Of course there could be no objection to this request, so it was complied with—and thus Quito and Laughing-eye were baptized and married on the same day.



LOST AND FOUND.

A STORY OF TWO CHRISTMAS DAYS.

By EDWIN HODDER, Author of "*Memories of New Zealand Life*;" "*Junior Clerk*;" "*Tossed on the Waves*," &c.

F a merry day is associated with painful memories, its charm is lost, it is a day to be avoided, one would wish to let it pass unheeded; any attempt to make it gay only increases the gloom, and if the unpleasant remembrances are indulged, they come back on the day which commemorates them with a living reality, making the mind morbid and unhappy; and cherishing dead regrets is as vain and wrong a thing as retaining the remains of a loved life, which should be buried out of one's sight.

Christmas day is not a sad and gloomy day to me now, but it was once; and then such a party as this you are giving to-night, Mr. Merry, would have been of all things in the world the one that I could not have endured, for it would have recalled so many sad circumstances to my mind, that, with all the fun and gaiety of you youngsters, I could not have thrown off the shroud of regrets which such a scene as this would have cast around me. But those days are past, and now Christmas day is one of the happiest of the year; and how all this came to pass I am going to tell you.

When I was a boy about fifteen or sixteen, I was at Dr.

Spanker's school, in Berkshire, and if anybody ever had a life like a long summer day, without a cloud or a cold nipping wind, that life was mine in those days. The boys were the heartiest, jolliest fellows that ever threw a quoit or kicked a ball; we knew every orchard, every bathing place, every level piece of land for racing or cricket, every hill side for nutting, and hedge-row for blackberrying, within twelve miles of the school: We were all hand-and-glove in every exploit, and many a glorious scrape we got into. Poor Dr. Spanker, how it was he did not go out of his mind we never could make out; but he was such an easy-going, good-natured man, and so thoroughly sympathised with young life, that he winked at many things which other schoolmasters would have made a terrible fuss about, and never punished anybody for their freaks unless those freaks infringed upon some moral law. We loved the old Doctor as cordially as if he had been our father, and in the whole school I don't believe there was one boy who would not rather have had his teeth knocked down his throat than have wilfully said or done anything which would have given the dear old gentleman pain.

The boys were not mere school acquaintances, but real friends; and now, although years have passed away, the best friends I have in the world are those who were my friends when I was a boy at school. Andrew Morris was one of my great chums, and never did two boys "hit it" more thoroughly than did we. In sport, in study, and in more serious things, our thoughts, and desires, and aspirations were as one.

It was in the winter of 18— that my story commences. Christmas was at hand; the school had broken up for the holidays, and Andrew Morris had been invited to spend the

first fortnight with me at my father's house in Marantby. There were coaches in those days ; and, as we sat on the roof wrapped up to the chin with the snow falling around us, we talked about our plans for the holidays, and wondered what sort of a programme they had drawn up at home for our amusement.

It was a cheery sight to see our house as it stood among the trees in the snow, with columns of smoke rising from the chimneys, and lights gleaming in the hall and from the windows. Long before the coach drew up, our loud hallos had brought all the family to the door ; and then there was such a commotion as to who should get the first kiss, and who should carry in the boxes. In the commotion, my sister Nell ran up to Andrew Morris and gave him a good sound kiss, and then uttered a little scream, as if she had mistaken him for me. (O ! Nelly, Nelly, sly little puss, that was not the first time you had seen Andrew, and that was not the last kiss he ever had from you.)

"Now for a surprise, John," said Nelly, when we had taken off our coats and beaten off some of the snow. My mother, and I, and Andrew, and Cousin Mary, all crowded round, as Nelly, with her hand on the dining-room door, said "Open Sesame !" And when the door opened I confess I was surprised ; such a sight burst upon me as I had never seen in my home before. The carpets were up, and the floors were chalked in the old-fashioned way, which has long since gone out ; the furniture was removed, and rout seats were all round the room ; the folding-doors had been taken down, so as to throw two rooms into one ; the walls were decorated with banners and beautiful devices in evergreen ; and, there was no mistake about it, that this year we were going to have a regular Christmas party.

“We have sent invitations to everybody,” said Nelly, “and to-morrow night, that is Christmas Eve, we shall have such a party as Marantby never saw before.”

Andrew Morris and I were enthusiastic in our admiration of the arrangements, and promised to give all the assistance we could to complete any plans that might yet remain for the evening’s entertainment. But, as soon as my father’s back was turned, I whispered to Nell, “However did you manage to get father’s consent to all this? He has always made such terrible objections, even to having a few friends, for fear he should be thought extravagant, that I cannot make out how he should have agreed to this.”

“Oh, mamma will tell you all about it by-and-bye. Come along and have supper, for, after your long ride, you must be half-starved.”

So, after supper, when the others had gone to bed, I got my mother into a cosy chat, and asked her all about it.

“Well, my dear John,” she said, “I’m rather anxious about your father. As you know, he is far from being a poor man, but he has, for the last two or three years, had a strange notion that his money will take to itself wings and fly away, and a terrible dread of poverty, and ultimately the workhouse or starvation, is always haunting him. There is not the slightest foundation for this fancy, which arises from some mental disorder; and, at times, he is perfectly aware that it is but a fancy, and has had the very best medical advice; but, at other times, the impression comes upon him so vividly that his life is perfectly wretched. So we are having this party for two or three reasons; one is to try and enliven him with a change of scene; another, to show him that he will not be ruined by the expense. We

must all do what we can to make him enter into the spirit of the amusement ; for, although he has given his free consent to all the arrangements, his manner has been very strange at intervals to-day, and I can see that something oppresses him. Do your best then, my boy, to cheer him up, and let us pray God to give him better health to enjoy the mercies with which He has surrounded us."

I shared in my mother's anxiety ; but on the next day my father seemed so much better, and joined so very heartily in all we did, that in the bustle and excitement of expectation I almost forgot the conversation of the preceding evening. At last the carriages began to arrive, and the merry-making commenced. Everybody was in high spirits, for the weather was just the right sort for the season, with the snow thick upon the ground, and the difficulties in the journey to our house had made some fun for the guests, and put them in the cue for more. My father was as merry as any of us, and warmly welcomed each arrival ; and when the music struck up for a set of quadrilles, he accepted the challenge of my mother, and danced with her. I could not help noticing, however, that when he was not engaged in conversation, his countenance fell, and a look of pain came on his pale face ; but he recovered himself almost instantaneously, and was at once himself again. Merrily flew the hours, and never were charades played with greater spirit, or dances whizzed through with more delight. It was nearly supper time, and I went to find my father, who, on a plea of head-ache, had withdrawn for a little while into the study. But he had left the study, and so, fearing that he was really unwell, I went to his bedroom, but found that he was not there. For a moment a horrible undefined dread

came over me ; I trembled in every limb, and cold perspiration dropped down my face. There was no reason for this ; there were twenty places where my father might be ; it was not at all an unusual thing for him to seclude himself when he felt unwell, but for all that I could not divest myself of the strange feeling that came over me that something wrong had happened. I ran hastily through all the bedrooms, and then looked into every room down stairs, but he was not there. Old Williams, the gardener, was in the hall, and I asked him if he had seen my father ? “ Yes, Master John ; he was here about half-an-hour ago. He put on a stout pair of boots, and his top coat, and said he should go into the stable to wish the horses and old Carlo a merry Christmas.” I went at once to the stables and called to him, but no answer came in reply. A lantern was in the loft, and, lighting it, I walked round the place to see if I could trace whether, by his footprints, he had been there. The snow marked his steps distinctly, but they were turned from the stable towards the paddock. Again that horrible dread, which had seized me in the bedroom, returned, for I knew that at the bottom of the paddock ran the river, swollen by the recent snows ! Mechanically I followed the footprints, which led directly to the river. I tried to call out, but a suffocating feeling like night-mare rendered me speechless. I fell down on my knees in the snow, and cried with my whole heart to the merciful Father in heaven to avert the evil I so intensely dreaded. Strength came to me with the necessity ; my voice came back to me, and I made the silent night ring with my father’s name. But no answer came, and now I stood at the edge of the rushing river, and the marks of the footprints had ceased ! There was no time to be lost ; the snow, which be-

fore had been falling gently, now began to descend in a storm, and every moment would serve to obliterate the tracks of his steps, if there were any more that might be found. With a cry to heaven to give me strength for all that remained to be done, I flew back to the house. Nelly was the first to meet me upon my return, and my face betrayed to her my anxiety. "My darling Nell, be calm and strong. I fear something has happened to father. Comfort mother while I and some of the friends are away. Go first to Williams, and tell him to come here with all the lanterns he can get, and then bid him saddle both the horses without delay." A brave little woman was my sister Nell! I can see her pale face, and her white hands clenched together, as she stood beside me that night in her pretty evening dress, and heard my hurried news. In less than ten minutes I had a party of eight trusty men around me, to whom I told my suspicions, and begged their help. Among them was Captain Wray, an old friend of my father's; he saw with a military instinct the position, and at once took the command of the expedition. "Let four follow each other through the paddock to the river," said he, "and then divide, two to the right, and two to the left. John, Andrew Morris, Williams, and I, will go across the bridge, and adopt the same plan on the other side of the river. Now let us be off, and may God grant us success."

A deep and earnest amen followed, and we started off.

I will not give you a history of that terrible time; in vain we searched for footprints, in vain we dragged the river; messengers were sent into every village round about, letters were sent to all the principal posting stations along the high roads, information was given to the London constabulary, rewards

were offered for any clue of the missing one ; and every effort failed.

Had it not been for my good friend Andrew Morris, I do not know how I should have gone through the fatigue and anxiety of those days. He never seemed to tire ; he was determined not to encourage a feeling of despair ; at one moment he was devising some fresh scheme, and the next comforting my mother and Nelly with hope. At last Andrew and I, when we found every endeavour in our neighbourhood fruitless, determined to go up to London and seek for *him* there. We journeyed from street to street, gazing earnestly in the face of every passer by ; we went from workhouse to workhouse, from shipping place to shipping place ; and at last, worn out with fatigue, we returned to Marantby disappointed and distressed.

Time wore away ; Andrew Morris went home to engage in business, and I returned no more to school, for the management of my father's affairs now devolved in a great measure upon me. The spring time came, with its songs of birds and perfume of flowers ; the glad summer sunshine played upon the murmuring waters of Marantby ; the red leaves of autumn fell in gorgeous showers, and the silver tracteries of frost sparkled in the wintry nights, but still our home was desolate ; and so it came to pass that Christmas Day became a day full of painful memories.

Six years passed, and time, the great physician for the wounded heart, had taken the sting of our sorrow away. Our good Father in heaven never allows a sorrow to come into this world unless He sends a joy to counterbalance it ; life would be a stunted and deformed thing, if, when the night enveloped it, the bright sunshine of morning did not as surely follow ; and the law which regulates the outer world has its counterpart

in the inner, that "while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." Well, Christmas Day was coming round again, and we determined that we would spend it in London, with Andrew Morris. It was a cosy little party we made on Christmas Eve—I and my mother, and Captain Wray, Mr. and Mrs. Morris, sen., and Andrew and Nelly, and the baby. Whose baby? Why Nelly's, to be sure, and never was there a prettier and prouder little mother, or a handsomer and happier young husband, than Nelly and Andrew Morris. There was no boisterous fun or merriment, but there was a great deal of quiet enjoyment amongst us as we sat at the table after dinner and played round games, or as Nelly and Andrew sang duets, while baby crowed a chorus. There was an air of homeliness, too, and comfort about the house, and that was increased tenfold from the fact that the night was bitterly cold. The wind roared along the streets, and every now and then the hail came down in a perfect cataract. The evening slipped rapidly away, and, as Martha came in at about ten o'clock to lay the cloth for supper, a pause in the rattle of the conversation within, and a pause in the rattle of hailstones without, enabled us to hear voices somewhere along the street joined in very good harmony, singing a Christmas carol. By-and-bye they came opposite our window, and struck up that fine old carol—

"When Christ was born of Mary free,

In Bethlehem, in that fair citie,

Angels sang then with mirth and glee,

In Excelsis Gloria."

Now I confess I never had a passion for street music, but this was much beyond the average of merit. It was a part of

my education to love and venerate old customs, and it was a part of my creed always at Christmas time to relieve, as far as lay in my power, those who were excluded from the privileges which are enjoyed by those who have been more highly favoured by a kind providence. So, putting on my hat, I went to the door with a jug of foaming ale and a glass, and Andrew followed me with a good many shining pieces of silver in his hand, which he had collected in the room. As soon as I opened the door, an old man, with a lantern in one hand and his hat in the other, stood before us to receive the contribution. Just as Andrew was putting the money into his hat the light flashed up into his face. A spasm of joy and fear shot through me ; I staggered back, and should have fallen, had not Andrew held me. *The old man was my father!* Wrinkled as the face was, white as the hair had grown, bent as was that once graceful figure, I was absolutely certain that I was not mistaken. In a moment my self-possession returned, and in that moment I realized the meaning of the phrase, "quick as thought." For I remembered that I was only a boy when my father went away, and he could not recognise me. I remembered that a sudden shock of joy might deprive me of my mother, the very while it restored to me my father. I understood that Andrew had ascertained the meaning of my sudden emotion, for he had adroitly screened me from the gaze of my father and the minstrels, and was beginning to pour out the ale for them. I thought, too, that a sudden revelation of myself to my father might be injurious to him ; and not knowing the state of his mind, it might be the most fatal thing to surprise him. So at once my plans were made ; and all this happened in a moment ! I whispered to Andrew, "Be spokesman, for

my voice may betray me. Invite them to supper at the 'King's Arms' in an hour, on condition that they will sing some carols. Say they shall be well paid. Follow them till then, and don't let your eyes be off my father for an instant. I will gently prepare them indoors."

"All right," said Andrew, "but come inside with me first, while I get my coat, and tell them I am going. I will not damage your plan."

There was great surprise when Andrew called for his coat, and said to his wife, "Nelly, my dear, I must leave you and our good friends for a little while. I know you will pardon me, but I have just seen an old friend who I knew in my school days, and he seems in distress. I can't ask him in here to-night, but I will see him into the hotel at the end of the street; and, John, come for me in half-an-hour to release me, if I am detained so long."

Without waiting longer than to give Nelly a kiss he was off, and the street door closed upon him. Then began an attack of questions which puzzled my ingenuity to parry. There was something remarkably strange in the event, and their curiosity was strongly excited. There was not much time to lose, and the questions were working me towards the subject. At last Nelly said, "Cannot you guess, John, at all, who this stranger is, or what he wants with Andrew." And then I said, "I did not mean to tell you, or to awaken sad memories, especially to-night, but I think the stranger will be able to tell him something of the fate of father!"

I had said enough and seen enough to know that I might safely carry out my plan. Affected as my mother was by the news, she was perfectly calm. She did not weep, or dream of

fainting, or going into hysterics, but a holy joy lighted up her face, and her very smile was a thanksgiving. Brave little Nell clasped her hands together (it was just the attitude she used on that *other* Christmas Eve), and said, "Thank God." For a minute or two there was a dead silence in the room, only broken by Captain Wray, who took snuff violently.

"John," said my mother, at length, and her voice faltered just a very little, "John, you know more than you have told ; let me hear it all. I am more than strong enough to bear it ; I have waited for years in preparation of this hour. Tell me, when did it happen, and where?"

I sat down between her and Nelly, and said, as calmly as I could, "Now, my dearest mother, be brave and cheery, father is still alive. It would not be well for you to see him for some time, but he is in London, and well."

The tears came at last ; not a dry eye was in the room ; but when I left them to go with Captain Wray to the "King's Arms" (for he could not remain inactive), a voice had said to the storm of feeling, "Peace, be still ;" and there was a great calm.

My story is nearly ended. That night I made myself known to my father, and the shock of feeling at seeing me and learning that my mother and sister were alive and near him, instead of doing him injury, effected a good that probably nothing else could have done. His was a strange wild history, and it was only little by little, and that extending over a long time, as the powers of mind and memory gradually returned, that I learnt it. When he left his home it was under the terrible delusion that nothing but the workhouse was before him, and he could not bear to see the distress that would come upon his family. He took ship to America, and on the voyage

his mind gave way. Arrived in that country, he was placed in proper care by the authorities, but in all the wanderings of his mind he never divulged his name or residence. Several times his reason became temporarily restored, but then the thought of his deserted wife and home was too terrible for him ever to think resolutely of returning thither. Years passed in this way, and during his rational periods he had to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. At last he so far recovered that his determination to return to his native land, and at least ascertain what had become of his family, was carried into effect. Penniless when he arrived, and the season cold and inclement, he had to endure severe hardships. Circumstances brought him into the company of a band of carol singers, to whom he engaged himself as money collector, and he had resolved to work his way to Marantby as soon as he was able.

The best medical advice that could be had in London was obtained for him, and, by the blessing of God, his health of body and mind was restored. I will not attempt to describe the meeting with my mother, for no eye saw it. The effect was not injurious, on the contrary, from that day his old habits and spirits began to return, and for many years his life was one of unmingled peace and happiness.

And so it came to pass that Christmas Day ceased to be a day of painful memories, for we could say, "He was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found." Now his body rests beside that of my mother in the little churchyard at Marantby, and their spirits are in the bright world, where, perhaps, the angels are singing again this night that beautiful song they sang years ago, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill towards men."

CASTLE CONNOR.

By MONA B. BICKERSTAFFE.

Author of "*Begin Well, End Well*;" "*Araki, the Damio*," &c.



CHRISTMAS was always a merry season at Castle Connor, and not less merry than usual was the Christmas time of which I am going to tell you. The house was as full as it could hold, and added to the usual number of guests were three English cousins, who had come over to pay their first visit to their Irish relatives. At the public school from which they came, they were known as Max, Major, and Minor, and so we shall name them here. Max (whose real name was Dick Lindsay) was in his seventeenth year, and only famous at K—— for being the biggest dunce, the biggest bully, and the biggest boaster in the school; for, while careful to avoid every kind of danger, he was prone to forge Falstaffian tales of the dangers he had surmounted, when no one was there to see him. Tom and Harold Cunliffe were his step-brothers; the former was a soft-faced boy, about thirteen years of age, with curly, brown hair, dark brown eyes, and a countenance beaming with good nature and good temper, but evidently a being more capable of enjoying the *dolce far niente* than any state of life in which he might be expected to be an active or energetic member of society. Yes, a quiet, easy-going youth was Tom, very different from the twelve-year-old Harry, a wiry, springy

young fellow, who, while living in great awe of his big brother, was always laying plots for fun at his expense.

Major and Minor were great favourites wherever they went, while no one could endure Max's snobbish conceit and self-importance. To have a speck of mud upon his highly polished boots, or a grain of dust upon his ever-glossy clothes, was to spoil his pleasure for the day, while his young brothers, unfortunately, went off to the opposite extreme, and were only too regardless of their personal appearance.

The family at Castle Connor consisted of the father, mother, two daughters, and three sons. The latter were manly, warm-hearted youths, quick-tempered and quick-witted, first rate horsemen, masters of all field sports, but not very polished in their manners. They had never been to any school, but were brought up at home, under the care of a tutor, whom they managed just as they pleased, and who found himself in too snug a berth at Castle Connor, to venture to make it less agreeable by complaints that his pupils too often preferred sporting to Latin. He (Mr. Moriarty) was at Christmas time always absent, enjoying the holidays at his own home, so the youths were then left entirely to their own devices, which generally led them to play tricks of all kinds upon the rest of the household.

Directly they saw Max, they (as Major said) "twigged him at once," and came to the conclusion that he was fair game for fun. He soon adopted a patronizing manner to Dennis Connor, most aggravating to that high-spirited youth, who cast about in his very fertile mind as to how he might, once for all, humble the self-conceit of his lofty cousin; and finding that his father was to be away from home for a day or two, he laid

his plans accordingly: They were standing together in the drawing-room, waiting for dinner, when he turned abruptly to Max, and asked him if he had seen the dungeons of Castle Connor?

"The dungeons! no. I never knew there were any."

Mrs. Connor did not appear to know it either, for she looked up in astonishment, but a look from her son silenced her.

"Don't say anything now," said Dennis, mysteriously; "I'll tell you all about it after dinner."

After dinner, accordingly, Dennis took him aside, and told him that he never mentioned the dungeons before his father or mother, for "fact is, said he, "they are a great source of annoyance and discomfort to them, and all of us. Dark deeds have been done down there, in the times of the fights between the O'Connors and the Condons. Weird sounds come from them in the night time, especially on certain nights, when one Con Condon, the headless, is said to come to look for his head, which centuries ago was taken from him by our ancestor, Modha O'Connor, who married a daughter of Oilioll Olum,* King of Munster. Oilioll had carried off a beautiful lady, Modweena Condon, but somehow she contrived to escape from the place where he had locked her up, and seeing him sleeping, she in revenge bit off his ear while he slept, whereon Oilioll, roused by the pain, seized a spear, and thrust it through her with such force that he flattened the point against a stone in the wall. Drawing forth the spear, regardless of his victim's agonies, he tried to straighten the point with his teeth, but it had been poisoned, and from that moment his teeth became jet

* Oilioll Olum was king of Munster in the second century. He was a ferocious and powerful monarch. The story here told of him is recorded in the ancient annals of Ireland.

black. I only tell you this in case you should notice the dark colour of father's teeth, for the blackness still runs in the family ; but, as I was saying, Modha O'Connor took the Condon prisoner, brought him to his castle here, shut him up in the dungeon, and coolly cut off his head. When the clan heard of it, they assembled in great force, stormed the castle, broke into the dungeons, and found the body of their chief, but nowhere could they find his head. The body was buried with all funeral honours, when the earth fell over it, wild unearthly voices sang the *Dahtan Da mort, Augustha Cadine*; but the spirit of Con can never rest easy until the head is found. The circumstance I have told you occurred in the second century, so, of course, the head must now be a skull, but though we have, generation after generation, sought for it, it has never been found. Well, some time ago an old crone passed this way (she was for all the world like a banshee), and, pointing up at the house, she said she would come again soon after the arrival of a certain youth, of whom it has been predicted that *he alone* can find Con Condon's head. They say she has been seen about the place to-day. Have you seen her, Major?"

"Look !" said Minor. "Isn't there something dark sitting under the great arbutus tree? Yes; surely there is. Look, Max."

Max looked, and while he did so, the moon, breaking through a cloud, lighted up the carriage drive in front of the house ; while its rays, falling upon an arbutus tree, distinctly revealed a dark figure crouched beside it. It seemed to be a very old woman, sitting, Irish fashion, with her chin resting on her knees, while she rocked herself to and fro, and crooned out a wailing Irish keen. Her face (which was very dark coloured) was turned towards the boys, and her large features and long

grey hair gave her a very uncanny appearance. Seeing Dennis, she beckoned to him. "Come with me, Max," said he; "I'm awfully frightened." "I'll go, too," said Harry. "And I." "And I." So they all stepped through the open window, and were soon standing round the old crone.



"Save ye," said Dennis.

"Save *you*, kindly," said she.

"Are you the grana?" asked Dennis.

"Yes, I'm grana, grana, of Carrigogunnel. I'm come from St. Patrick's purgatory, an' there I left Con Condon the headless; an' says he, 'Grana,' says he, 'I've been here this thousandh year and more, an' I'm tired of it entirely; but I

can't git out,' says he, 'till I find my head, which that thafe, Modha O'Connor, tuck from me. Good grana,' says he, 'go to Castle Connor an' find it for me; for it is written,' says he, 'that there is wan there now that is Irish, an' Scotch, an' Sassenach, all in one, an' 'tis he alone that can find me head.' This is the message of Con Condon the headless; an' *you*," shrieked the hag, pointing her bony finger at Max, "you, whose mother was a Connor, yer father a Scotchman, an' yerself a Sassenach, come with me an' find Con Condon's head!"

"Mercy," said Max, aside, to Dennis; "what must I do; where must I go? I daren't go a step with that terrible old woman."

"Terrible old woman!" screamed the hag. "Yes, I'm terrible; I'm grana of Carrigogunnel, sister to the mighty Finn. Don't cross me, young man, or 'twill be worse for ye."

"What must I do?" pleaded Max, in real agony, and trembling in every limb. "Dennis, speak to her."

Dennis spoke to the woman, and then turned to Max: "She insists that you go with her to the dungeons, but says we may go, too, as far as the door; so we shall be near you, and, perhaps, you won't see Con the headless; being a Sassenach may break the spell."

"See him," said Max; "I should think not, *I* don't believe such superstitions as you Irish do."

"Oh, very well," said Dennis; "that being the case we can go on immediately."

"Yes, come on," said the hag, and she slowly rose from her crouching posture, and, to Max's great horror, stood before him, nearly six feet five in height. "Come on," she cried, "come on!" and on she went with long strides, while Max, frightened

out of his seventeen senses, followed her, and the others came close behind. Suddenly the hag stopped : "Dennis O'Connor," said she, "you lade the way until we come to the foot of the steps, thin the Sassenach must go on wid me alone."

Well, on they went, round by the back door, through the kitchens (where, strange to say, not a servant was to be seen), until they came to the top of a flight of steep stone steps, to all appearances cut out of the solid rock.

"Bring a light," said the hag ; "bring two lights."

Indeed even two lights failed to throw much light on the subject, only serving to show the horrors of the darkness before them, for here and there in the wall were narrow passages or crevices, and certain projections which cast deep shadows, and had a very fearful effect. The light emitted from two small tallow candles did not much improve the matter, for, though the shadows became less, the crevices remained as dark and darker than ever.

"Oh, I can't go on," said Max, turning very white, and looking as if he were going to faint.

"Here," said the hag, drawing a flask from her bosom (very like a railway flask, but perhaps they use them in St. Patrick's purgatory), "drink this," said she ; "'tis good an' old, for 'tis it that sperrited Brien Boru when he fought that mighty battle, when meself saw 3,000 Danes lying dead together."

"Drink," said Dennis ; "I'll take a pull at it, too ; 'twill keep your courage up, man."

"Oh, 'tisn't that I'm afraid," said Max, but he drank at the flask, and finding it good, tried it again, and the colour came to his face, and down the stone steps he followed the grana, until they stood at a heavy oaken door.

"The kay," said the grana, and Dennis handed her an ancient clumsy-looking key. She turned it in the lock, and pushed open the door with such force that it went back with a tremendous crash, causing a sudden gust of cold air that put out both the candles. But they were not in the dark! No; for there was a faint and ghastly light, just enough to show them that they were in a huge chamber hewn out of the rock. Max's face became livid. He looked at his companions; their faces were livid too, and as for the grana, her countenance was something unearthly.

Presently there was a sound like the clanking of a heavy chain, and far away, somewhere in the depths of the vault, were alternately heard heavy despairing groans and a wailing cry, like "My head! my head!"

"That's *him*," said the grana. "Out, every mother's son of ye, save the Sassenach an' me. Quick, or the spell will be broken;" and seizing Max tight by the wrist, she pulled him on into the vault.

"Sassenach," said she, "have ye iver read the the Bratheim-hadth, the book of sacred judgment? Ye havn't, more's the pity, for from that book

'The priest, the prince, the bard, the man of art,
An' you, too, in this vault might larn yer part.'

Howsomiver, as yer ignorant of mystheries, ye must mind what I tell ye, an' the first *white* thing ye sees on the ground grab it up quick, afore the evil wan hides it agin. Whisht—"

She might well say "whisht," for nearer and nearer, from the depths of the vault, came the clanking chain, and the hollow voice, crying, "My head, my head! ullagone, ullagone!"

Max, not knowing whether he was on his head or his heels, allowed himself to be dragged on by the grana. The faint blue light was becoming fainter and fainter; the wailing "ullagone" was drawing nearer and nearer, when his foot stumbled against something; he stooped to look at it—it was white; he took it up—it was a skull! Max fainted.

* * * * *

When he returned to consciousness, he found himself in a vault indeed, but neither skulls nor groans, nor ghastly blue lights shed their weird influence round him, but a cheerful glow, as of many candles, lighted up the place; and as he looked round he saw, not headless Con, but more than one hogshead, for the vault was, in fact, a spacious cellar, contrived with much care by Master Dennis Connor's grandfather, for the accommodation of those choice wines from Burgundy and elsewhere, which he had "loved, not wisely, but too well."

Max sat up, rubbed his eyes, and looked about him: "Where am I," said he; "and how did I come here?" Then, as memory returned, he asked, anxiously, "Where is she?"

"She's here!" and before him stood Grana of Carrigogunnel, who, tearing off her long grey horsehair locks and the rest of her costume, appeared in the proper character of his decidedly gaunt, but not at all horrible, cousin Ned.

"Here I am, Max; I'll wash off the walnut juice by-and-bye."

"Serve you right if it won't come off," said his mother. "It was too bad of you all to frighten this poor fellow nearly out of his life. It is well for you your father is not at home."

"'Tis so," said the butler, who all the while had been privy to the joke; "they a'most kilt him intirely with fright. Niver mind 'em in there; 'twas only the skull of the ould white cow

that ye tuck up ! Ha, ha, ha ! he, he, he !” and in spite of all their pity for the victim, Mrs. Connor and the girls could not help laughing at the absurdity of the whole thing.

“You see, mother,” said Dennis (to whom Mrs. Connor was administering a private lecture on practical jokes), “we’d never have done it, only he was such an awfully conceited chap. We told him some stories the other day, and he tossed up his nose and talked about Irish ignorance and superstition. I knew he was a hollow sham all the while ; and you see, directly he heard the hag’s story he was carried away by his fright, and never stopped to reason about anything. He’ll never lord it over Major and Minor again, that’s one comfort ; the former has twice his sense, and Harry’s a plucky little fellow, and will be sure, if he tries it, to give him a reminder about Con Condon the headless, and the white cow’s skull.”



THE "BLACK DRAGON."

By SIDNEY DARYL.

"Thro' the black night that sits immense around,
Lash'd into foam the fierce contending brine,
Seems o'er a thousand raging waves to frown."

Thomson.



OMEWHERE under the cliffs, on the South Coast, lay the little fishing village of Gunnerstone, at least, if some dozen ricketty huts and a tumble-down jetty deserve the appellation. Isolated and cut off from anything like familiar intercourse with the rest of the world, its inhabitants led a wild, precarious existence, and some ugly stories were told of their predilection for plunder and wrecking. Many vessels had been known to go upon the Gunnerstone reef in comparatively calm weather, when all hands might have been saved with little difficulty, but by some unaccountable mishap or other none were ever known to survive, and by the time the Coastguard men arrived they were astonished to find how quickly the ship herself had gone to pieces. Nature had made Gunnerstone almost inaccessible from the sea, save to the natives of the place, to whom alone a certain narrow passage was known through which they could navigate their boats in safety up to the jetty. From the very edge of the beach to some half mile out to sea stretched a long reef of sunken rocks, which the blue jackets on board the revenue cutter were wont to call the real Gunnerstone fishing nets. Many and fatal had been the wrecks in this particular locality, and Homeward and Out-

ward bound always wished themselves well past it. It became obvious that the establishment of a lighthouse here was absolutely necessary, and after the usual amount of official circumlocution, and the preparation of a great many surveys and plans, things at length took a business-like turn, and the building of a lighthouse was commenced on a large rock at the extremity of the reef, which rose abruptly out of the water as if specially intended by nature to assist in the work of humanity. The construction proceeded but slowly, what with the caprices of the weather and the opposition offered by the inhabitants of Gunnerstone, who regarded the innovation much in the same way as a burglar would the establishment of a huge gas-lamp just in front of a house he contemplates robbing. It was many months before the revolving beacon sent its dazzling rays flashing out over the sea to warn passers by of their propinquity to the ill-omened reef. When thoroughly finished, the lighthouse presented an appearance of strength and solidity that did infinite credit to the architect who had planned, and the contractor who had built it. The interior was arranged so as to be as roomy as possible, in order to accommodate the two keepers and the boy who had charge of it; and the lower part was divided into a sitting and sleeping-room. Outside, a couple of substantial outbuildings had been erected, which in the summer-time were used as residences; while all round the upper surface of the rock huge blocks of granite had been raised one on the other, making a wall of tremendous thickness, which shielded the outbuildings, and left a considerable space protected, which, with marvellous ingenuity, had been turned into a garden, though I fear its productive powers were not of a very high order. Down one side of the rock was cut a rough staircase,

by means of which the keepers were enabled to get into their boat, whenever they had occasion to take a trip to the shore. Their life was a very uneventful, and yet withal, a very stirring one; for, in winter time, when the storm was at work, the waves came dashing up against their house in wild confusion and noise as of thunder, racing one with the other as if to see which would send its flecks of foam nearest the lighthouse lantern.

On the 24th of December, 18—, about five o'clock in the afternoon, three people were standing in the little yard at Gunnerstone Lighthouse, looking out towards the sea. Above them the bright glare shot forth into the darkness from the lantern, and disclosed the white crests on the waves as they came rolling in grandly from mid ocean.

"It will blow hard afore morning, Bill," said old Seth Lawrence, wiping from his cheek a great drop of salt spray as cold as an icicle, "the wind's been a chopping and shifting about the last eight and forty hours, but he seems to have come to anchor in the right quarter at last, and he's going to give us a taste of his quality, or I'm a lubber. It aint very cheerful for Christmas folks, specially them's as at sea. Hallo, that's a damper," he added, as one wave more daring than its fellows ran up the side of the rock and sent a deluge of salt water hissing over the granite wall into the yard.

"I tell you what it is, Uncle Seth," interrupted the younger member of the two he had addressed, who had come in for his share of wetting, "I'm not going to stand out here to get soaked to the skin. I have a regard for my constitution, if you haven't, so allow me to wish you a very good evening." The speaker at once suited the action to the word, and disappeared through the

door into the lighthouse, and his example was speedily followed by his two companions. The exchange from the cold and wet outside to the warmth and comfort within was in every way agreeable, and in a little while tea was ready, and the party sat down fully prepared to enjoy it. While they are so engaged just a word or two about them.

Seth Lawrence was a fine, muscular man, who had seen plenty of rough service in his time, but appeared none the worse for the buffeting. He was the very "*beau ideal*" of an Englishman, cool, resolute, and indomitable, and in every way suited for the post in which we find him. Neither chick nor child had Seth, but his nephew Charlie was to him as a son, and the lad in his turn looked upon him in the light of a father. Gunnerstone Reef was scarcely the spot on which to spend Christmas Day as a matter of preference, but with these two, who had no ties of kindred or relationship on shore, it was just as good as any other. Not so was it with Bill Marston, he was anything but satisfied with the arrangements that compelled him to eat his plum pudding in the lighthouse, and had been making himself miserable for some time past about the hardness of his lot. But all the sulking in the world could not alter the state of affairs, and so he himself began to think, as he sat down to tea on the evening when we first make his acquaintance. He was short and somewhat squat in figure, and by the side of Seth presented very much the same appearance as does a steam-tug in the company of a screw frigate. But though Bill Marston was short in stature, he was an awkward customer to get to close quarters with, as a certain cheeky jack tar, who came with the revenue cutter to the lighthouse on one occasion, had good cause to remember. He was a singularly good hand with a

rifle, and when the sea was calm, and no craft were in the way, would amuse himself practising. He had lately been giving Charlie lessons in shooting, and his pupil progressed with a rapidity that excited his hearty admiration. Just a word or two of that young gentleman, and then "*revenons à nos moutons.*" Charlie Fairfield was an orphan; his mother, Seth's sister, had died when he was quite a baby, never having quite recovered from the shock her husband's being lost at sea in a storm had occasioned her. With her last breath she bequeathed her blue-eyed baby boy to Seth, and he, with tears coursing down his brown cheeks, swore "that he'd stick to the kid through foul and fair weather, and as long as he'd a shilling in the locker the "young un" should have half." And, as I have said before, no oath was ever more religiously kept. Charlie was put out to school and received a good sound commercial education, for which Seth found the money, and, at length, when he thought that he had had enough of his books he made a strong representation to his employers, and persuaded them to give Charlie a berth at the lighthouse, where we now find him. Story tellers have a dreadful habit of always making their favourite character very handsome, in fact, an admirable Crichton of the most approved type; and I am afraid that if I attempt to sketch a portrait of mine I shall lay the paint on too thick and spoil the effect. Therefore I leave the task to the imagination of my hearers, merely adding that Charlie was brave and true as steel, and loved Seth with his whole heart.

Tea was over and cleared away, and Seth had been upstairs to see that the lights were all right, and was now taking it easy in a comfortable arm-chair.

"Look here, Bill," he said, performing that process which is

known as washing the hands with imaginary soap, "as it's Christmas Eve, we'll treat ourselves to a drop of grog, and make ourselves cosy."

"All right, mate," answered Bill, evidently quite ready to enjoy himself after the prescription suggested; "here's the bacca jar, and presently, if Charlie don't mind, we'll get him to spell out a bit of reading."

"So we will, so we will, mate," echoed Seth. "Fetch out the groceries, lad, and then I'm blowed if we shan't be as square and ship-shape this here festive season as any of your land lubbers."

Charlie bustled about, got out the rum and all the other necessary etceteras, and then made himself excessively comfortable on one of the lockers with the book, from which he was to hold forth for the delectation of the company. It was the ever-green "*Pickwick Papers*," and soon the roar of the wind and storm outside was almost lost in the shouts of laughter that Sam Weller's eccentricities and witticisms excited.

Charlie had been reading uninterruptedly for about half-an-hour, when Seth suddenly jumped up from his chair, exclaiming, "I could swear I heard some one moving in the yard outside."

"Lor, mate, you must be a dreaming," answered Bill; "we're not likely to be troubled with visitors, let alone on such a night as this; but, as I'm nearest the door, I'll just take a look out."

Bill Marston rose from his seat and did as he said. The wind came driving into the room, rude, bitter, and searching, threatening to put out their lamp.

"Bless your heart," continued he, shutting the door quickly,

"there arn't nobody, it was only fancy;" and with that the two resumed their seats and the reading continued.

But presently Bill Marston in his turn cried to Charlie to stop, and, putting his finger on his lips, crept once again to the door, whispering as he did so:—

"Seth, you're right, mate, there's some mischief up, and we've got company on the rock that we don't know about yet."

Seth Lawrence was up in a moment like a lion.

"Hold, Bill, a moment," he cried, "don't open the door till we've put the light out, and we'd best take a six-shooter a-piece, for we don't quite know how many friends we may have to receive."

"Ten to one it's some of those thieving scoundrels from Gunnerstone, come to see if they can catch us asleep in order to play tricks with the lights, but they'll find we're up to their little games."

Seth and Bill hastily pulled on their rough pea-jackets, invested their heads in their sou-westers, and, having looked at their revolvers to see that they were properly loaded, put out the lamp and opened the door. As they did so a dark object slid away from before it and was lost in the gloom.

"That cove's been listening through the key-hole," whispered Bill to his companion.

"Well, he didn't hear much good of himself," replied Seth; and then he added in a louder tone, "Now then, you skulks, come out and let's see what you're made of. I've got a nice taste of cold lead for each of you."

"Two can play at that game, Seth Lawrence," answered a deep voice from out of the darkness, "look to yourself."

There was a flash, a report, and Bill Marston was standing by himself.

"You murdering dogs," he cried, firing in the direction whence the voice had come, "good luck send this through one of your ugly heads."

This wish seemed to have been fulfilled, for there was a yell of some one in pain. Meanwhile Charlie had run out at the first sound of fire-arms, and found his uncle lying on the ground. Seth whispered hoarsely to Bill when he fell :—

"Get back into the lighthouse, lad, their game is to douse the lights, and get some ship ashore in this storm ; leave me here, they can't do worse with me. Get thee back, get thee back, or there will be more lives lost before the morning."

But Bill was not to be thus defeated, he would not go and leave his mate alone, but remained resolutely by him, prepared to fall by his side if necessary.

"Charlie, lad, go you inside," he said hurriedly to the boy, "take you care of the lights, stick to them to the last, and die rather than give in."

To hear was to obey ; Charlie ran inside the lighthouse, closed the door, and turned the key. Not a minute too soon, for a moment after a strange hand was laid upon the latch, and a rough voice called for admission. He was startled for a moment, and his heart thumped against his side ; but then he thought of his Uncle Seth, and how he would have behaved under like circumstances, while Bill Marston's words rang in his ears : "Stick to them to the last, and die rather than give in." In an instant fear was forgotten, and he was prepared to fight to the last, come what might. This he knew, that he had to contend with enemies who would show him no mercy. They

were bent on extinguishing the lights, and they would not stop at murder if it were necessary to secure the successful prosecution of their nefarious enterprise.

It was for Charlie to defend them as long as life and strength were his ! His eyes turned to the clock ; it was only eight. What an age till daybreak !

To thoroughly barricade and fasten the door was his first consideration. It was well and strongly built of oak, strengthened here and there with iron ribs, and secured by three bolts and a huge bar that passed immediately across the centre. All these were duly pushed into their places by Charlie, regardless of the hammering and knocking that was going on outside. This done, he hurried up-stairs to see that the lights were burning all right ; wick, oil, and reflectors, were all in perfect order, and might in the emergency be left to themselves. They would do their duty till morning if only the wreckers' fingers could be kept at a respectful distance. Satisfied as to these particulars, Charlie hurried downstairs again to defend the door. How thankful did he now feel to Bill for the lessons he had given him in shooting ! There was another revolver lying at the bottom of the locker, he took it up, loaded it carefully, and then prepared himself for the siege.

The wind still howled and whistled, while the thunder of the waves upon the rock was almost deafening, still Charlie was just able to catch the sound of voices outside during the intervals of cessation from knocking on the part of his besiegers. "Blow up," and "pistol," he distinctly heard, and then a hoarse cry from some one, evidently intended for him.

"If you don't open the door we'll blow it up."

"Blow away, my hearties," shouted he in reply, "and take care how you play with gunpowder, for it's dangerous."

A sound very much like a laugh followed this : and then the same voice that had addressed him before screamed out :—

"If you'll give in, young 'un, we won't hurt you. It's no use your fighting against odds ; we've cobbled your mates, and we shall have to do the same for you if you keep us out here much longer."

To this Charlie vouchsafed no answer, and the battering at the door was resumed. The threat to blow him up was evidently an empty one, as nothing of the sort was attempted, but presently there was a loud report, and a bullet came crashing through the woodwork, passing disagreeably near to the lad's head. Through the opening that had thus been made, five other bullets followed one another in close succession, evidently fired not so much with an intention of hitting as of alarming him. Charlie crept on his hands and knees up to the door, and, when the discharge had ended, quietly raised himself up, and, placing the muzzle of his revolver in the aperture, pulled the trigger. There was a groan, a smothered curse, and a heavy fall, and immediately after the hammering was resumed more savagely than ever. Charlie reloaded the empty chamber of his revolver, and drew himself a little on one side. Just then his eye noticed that the top bolt was giving way. At the same moment the sound as of blows dealt by an axe upon the door made itself audible, and warned him that, with an instrument such as that, his assailants would soon be able to cut their way through to him.

How slowly the hours, or, more properly speaking, minutes, dragged on. The hands of the clock seemed glued upon its face. The atmosphere of the room was stifling. "God help

me," murmured Charlie to himself; "the door wont stand much longer, and then there's no help for it. They'd soon do for me. Oh! if I only had Uncle Seth or Bill Marston with me." Alas! Charlie, you might as well have wanted the whole battalion of guards at your back; they whom you called were lying out in the storm and rain, sore stricken, and motionless!

By this time the wreckers were evidently infuriated at the resistance they had met with, and redoubled their efforts upon the door, which slowly but surely was giving way. The axe was doing its work only too well, and already a huge piece of the wooden framework had fallen in.

The barrier was now nearly broken down that protected him, and in a moment more the enemy would be upon him. In those few seconds that ensued the boy's lips moved rapidly. With the shadow of death almost upon him, he had yet time to remember Him whose omnipotent arm could snatch him from out the jaws of death. Like the Puritan soldier of old, Charlie paused in the conflict to whisper a prayer. Then, resolute and undaunted, he prepared to meet the fate that he felt must inevitably fall upon him.

He had not to wait long; there was a crash, and then a rush of dark forms through the doorway; he had but time to aim his revolver and pull the trigger, then some heavy body fell against him and brought him to the ground. The darkness had saved him, for the wreckers did not wait to look for him, but hurried upward to the light room to extinguish the lights.

Charlie did not remain long where he was, but aroused himself, and found that there was a human body lying on the top of him. It was with difficulty he managed to push it off, and then he crept stealthily out into the yard. Upstairs, the

wreckers were evidently at their work of spoliation, the sound of crashing glass, mingled with shouts, might be heard amid the rushings of the wind. As he found himself outside, a deep "*boom, boom,*" from the direction of the sea, startled him. It was clear that there was some vessel in difficulties.

Little hope for her now. The Gunnerstone lights were dead, and in vain might those on board of her look eagerly through the mist and scud for the guiding beacon. Charlie groped his way across the yard, and as he did so stumbled over a prostrate form; he bent down by it, and passed his hand over the face. He knew then that it was his Uncle Seth. He knelt by his side and whispered—

"Are you better, Uncle?"

A feeble voice murmured in reply—

"Good lad, good lad!" and then it ceased, as if from exhaustion.

Still "*boom, boom,*" went the guns, each report sounding nearer and nearer than the last. Charlie knew, as certainly as if he had seen it with his eyes, that the labouring ship was driving straight on for the reef.

By this time the wreckers had accomplished their work of destruction, and now they came hurrying out of the lighthouse and made for the landing stairs, which were situated on the more sheltered side of the rock. Charlie crouched into a corner of one of the outhouses, was gnashing his teeth at being unable to communicate its danger to the ill-fated ship.

Suddenly he was startled by a ruddy glare from the direction of the shore, shooting up towards the skies, and in a few seconds a bright flame burnt there steadily. Some one had improvised a beacon on the cliffs above Gunnerstone. Charlie was gazing

intently on this welcome apparition, when he heard a loud exclamation of rage. The wreckers found that their boat was gone, and that they were caught in a trap. No lock, or bolt, or bar, could hold them in closer imprisonment than did the green waves, rolling ceaselessly round the rock. Retribution had come at last, and not a bit too soon!

It was dangerous work for Charlie to be thus shut up in the midst of his enemies, but I am bound to say that, instead of being in the least put out, he rubbed his hands together with pleasure to think that villainy had thus met its reward. And they, like cravens and cowards as they were, seemed utterly defeated by the blow.

It was a strange beginning for a Christmas Day, thought Charlie, as, cowering under the rocks, worn out and exhausted with the events of the night, he saw the daylight rising out of the sea, and thanked God for his preservation. Likely enough, could the wreckers have seen him, they would have disposed of him, in order to preclude any possibility of his turning up hereafter at some disagreeable moment. But he was hidden from their view, and most of them believed that he was "knocked on the head," as one of their number elegantly expressed it.

But now the dawn had come, and these midnight marauders and murderers looked one another in the face—some pale, others haggard, but all seemed impressed with the danger of their position. And thus the morning of this Christmas Day broke upon the rock whereon stood Gunnerstone Lighthouse. The storm had gone to rest now, and the glorious sun already made a golden pathway over the waters, slumbering peacefully after their riot and revelry. Its brightness fell on the granite

sides of the lighthouse, and glanced back on to a pale face lying still and motionless, as stony in look as the walls themselves, while it lit up a white sail that was disappearing on the horizon. Brave, honest, noble Seth Lawrence knew not that the day was up and that the world was already stirring to celebrate its great festival, its feast of feasts. A messenger had come to him, whose summons none could disobey, and he fled away with him on the wings of the wind, to stand in the presence of the Master who had sent for him.

And the good ship the "Black Dragoon," with its living freight, bound for the west, passed on its way; but there were many, indeed most of those on board of her, offering up a thanksgiving for their preservation, when the world awoke from its slumbers. On, on, brave vessel, into the open sea, towards the new country; the sacrifice that has gained thee thy safety would not have been grudged by the victim; for, like a true English heart, unselfish to the end, he would have gladly bartered his life to save a fellow-man.

I must now venture to assert my privilege as chronicler, and dispose of certain important events in a somewhat summary manner. The wreckers were captured immediately, upon the scene of their crime, by the revenue cutter, which had come round on the information given by Bill Marston, who had launched the lighthouse boat, and with great difficulty made his way in it to the shore, when he was supposed to be lying safe and quiet with a bullet through his head. He had first taken the precaution to cut the painter with which the wreckers had secured the big galley that had brought them, and thus shut off from them the only means of escape. His first care on landing had been to make his way to a farmhouse on the

cliffs, where he obtained the assistance that enabled him to light the beacon that warned the "Black Dragoon" of her danger just in time. It was all due to his indomitable pluck and energy that the machinations of these banditti of the sea had been defeated, and the emigrant ship saved from destruction.

It was some time before Charlie recovered from the very severe struggle to which he had been subjected, but youth and a strong constitution gained the victory, and he was well enough to appear at the assizes, where the "Great Wrecking Case at Gunnerstone" excited an immense amount of attention. He gave his evidence with much modesty, and in a way that called forth the hearty commendation of the learned judge who presided. The two ringleaders of the wreckers perished on the scaffold, and the rest were sent to expiate their crime by various terms of penal servitude, and thus Seth Lawrence's death was avenged.

The owners of the "Black Dragoon" presented Bill Marston with a gold watch and £100, while Charlie was rewarded with a silver one and £30, whereat the two recipients were highly delighted.

A turn of the pen, and behold another Christmas Eve has come round. Bill and Charlie are sitting in the room in the lighthouse, but a stranger is in their company, a jovial, genial fellow, but not Seth Lawrence. There was a big salt tear rolling down Bill Marston's cheek, forced out by the tide of recollection that was flooding on him.


"Aye, lad," he murmured, in a strangely choky tone, "he was made of the right stuff, he was. Let's hope to do our duty as he did."

And the lad's sobbing voice said, "*Amen.*"

OUR CHRISTMAS DINNER AT DR. LICKEMWELL'S.

BY ROBERT HOPE MONCRIEFF,

Author of "Oudendale," "Horace Hazelwood," "The Lycée Boys," &c., &c.

HEN I was a boy—dear me, what a long time ago it seems!—I was a boarder at Upton House, Dr. Lickemwell's school. It was a good school, and Dr. Lickemwell was a very good sort of man, and we were on the whole very happy there. I didn't think so then, but I think so now, and I dare say you boys will think as kindly of your old schools and masters when you come to be men. You don't believe what your parents tell you, that your school days will be the happiest time of your life, but it is true all the same, as you will find out some day.

We were a very decent set of fellows at Dr. Lickemwell's. None of your prim young gentlemen, who always have clean collars on, and go out walking two by two, like the picture of the beasts going into Noah's ark. And none of your young swells that I see now-a-days swaggering to school with canes and kid gloves. No; we were nearly all real, honest school-boys, fond of play, and not very fond of lessons, but obliged to do them all the same; occasionally given to idleness and mischief, but not at all above taking our canings, as a matter of course, when we were found out.

Though we were happy enough at school, you may be sure we were not at all sorry when the holidays came round. Like most boys, we used to think weeks before of the joyful journey home, and the bright blaze of our own firesides, and our father's cheery welcome, and our sisters' kisses, and our mother's smiles—and jam cupboards. The Doctor kept us to our work in a way which made us relish thoroughly the pleasures of idleness for a few weeks, and the comforts and luxuries of home seemed doubly pleasant after the dusty, noisy school-rooms, and the bread and scrape, and Mrs. Lickemwell's puddings, in which (though she was an excellent woman in other respects) a strict regard for truth compels me to say that there was a great deal of suet and very few plums. But let me not seem ungrateful. The puddings might not be adapted to our taste, but, while we could get nothing better, we adapted our taste to the puddings, and enjoyed them thoroughly at the time, with only an occasional looking back to the flesh pots of the home kitchen, and a regretful remembrance of the glories of mamma's Christmas plum pudding.

To such a plum pudding, among other delights, was I looking forward one cold, snowy December. The holidays were drawing near, lessons were growing doubly stupid and tedious, the days were passing slowly by. But we lived on hope, and exercised our arithmetical talents in counting the days that had yet to pass by before *the* day, a course of study which we liked better than compound proportion, but which did not please our master at all, seeing that it obliged him to do more caning in the last fortnight of the half than in a month at any other time.

But on this occasion my calculations were put an end to by

a terrible and unexpected misfortune—the most terrible misfortune which had ever happened to me, as I thought then. Just a week before the beginning of the holidays, I received a letter from my father.

“There’s some money in it,” thought I, as I eagerly broke the seal. “Perhaps I am to come home at once. Oh, how jolly!” But, alas! these were the contents:—

“December 13th.

“MY DEAR BOY,

“I am as sorry, as you will be, to tell you that we cannot allow you to come home for the Christmas holidays this year. Your little brother Ned has taken scarlet fever, and though we hope he is in no danger, we think it right that you should not come to the house, for fear of infection. I have therefore written to Dr. Lickemwell, asking him to keep you for the holidays. If Ned gets better soon, your mamma and I may, perhaps, come and see you.

“I know that this will be a great disappointment to you, but disappointments are things none of us can help meeting in this world, and we must just try to bear them cheerfully, and make the best of them.

“I am sure Dr. and Mrs. Lickemwell will do all they can to make you enjoy your holidays, and I hope that your not being able to come home may turn out to be not such a great misfortune after all. I enclose you five shillings as a Christmas present.

“I have no time to write more. Mamma cannot write at all, she is so anxious about Ned, but she sends her love to you. And, hoping you are quite well, I am, your affectionate

“PATER.”

Just fancy my feelings when I had read this letter! It was so sudden and unexpected, that at first I could scarcely believe it to be true. But there was the well-known handwriting, and

the words were plain enough. When I had read it over twice, I put the letter into my pocket, and, seeking out a solitary corner of the playground, had a good cry. Need I be ashamed of it? I was only twelve years old, and you may judge for yourselves how great the disappointment was.

For two or three days I was very dull and miserable. The pleasure with which I had looked forward to the holidays was all gone, and the glee of the other boys made me feel quite angry. But it takes a great deal to depress a boy's spirits for any length of time, and I soon began to get over my disappointment, and to console myself with the first maxim of philosophy, "What must be, must be." Perhaps the five shillings contributed more than the philosophy to reconcile me to my lot.

But when the breaking-up day came, I felt my misfortune very keenly. The Doctor had been in the habit of making us a farewell speech on these occasions, which had always appeared to me very appropriate, but now I thought his jesting tone singularly out of place. "I have to bid you good-bye for a few weeks," he said, "and, in doing so, I need not say how sorry I am to part with you. Of course teaching you, and caning you, and scolding you, is the greatest pleasure I have in the world. Of course I don't like holidays. Of course you give me very little trouble, and I am very angry with your parents for taking that trouble off my shoulders for a few weeks. But that we may not forget each other during the holidays, I suppose I must give out some work for you to do while you are away."

Dr. Lickemwell always said this at the beginning of the holidays, but the boys, who understood very well the merry

twinkle in his eye, always met the proposal by a laughing shout of "No, no; oh, no, Sir! No holiday task." "What!" cried the Doctor, pretending to be very much astonished. "No holiday task! Well, I think that I understand your feelings. You haven't the heart to do any work away from me and my cane. It is very gratifying to me to find that we are such favourites. So let it be, then. And now all I have to do is to hope that you will get home safely, and spend a merry Christmas."

At this the boys leaped up and gave three tremendous cheers for the Doctor, and then most of them rushed off to make their final preparations for departure. I could not bear to see the coaches full of happy faces roll off, so I betook myself to my retreat in the playground, and remained there alone till the dinner bell rang, when I returned to the house and joined my companions in misery.

There were five of us who, from various reasons, were to pass the holidays at school. First, Jack and Willy Somers. These two brothers generally spent their holidays at the house of an aunt, but she was ill, and could not receive them this time. Jack was certainly the very worst boy to be near a sick bed, always chattering, and shouting, and racketing about. Unless his aunt was a very different person from most single ladies I have known, I can't understand how she ever managed to put up with him; indeed, I believe they had frequent squabbles, in consequence of a propensity of Jack's for climbing on the outside of the staircase, and a habit he had of tying a tin kettle to the tail of her favourite cat, and other amusements, which the good lady did not at all approve of. Willy was a small boy, about nine years old, and all I can remember of

him is that he had curly hair, great red cheeks, and a funny little lump in the place where other people have noses. Then there was Arthur Howard, a quiet, gentle boy, who had neither father nor mother, nor aunt to go to, and spent all his holidays at the school, poor fellow. And the last was Edwin Saunders, whose parents were in India, where he gave us to understand that he was soon to follow them, and reside in a palace surrounded with palm-trees, with about a dozen white elephants, and rather more than a hundred native servants at his disposal. This picture of oriental luxury rather dazzled us, and we looked to Saunders as a person of consequence, but I have since had reason to believe that he was exaggerating his expectations, inasmuch as I afterwards found him residing in a small house in a country town with his father, who had retired from the army on half pay.

Being left alone, then, in the great school-house, which seemed so strangely silent and empty, we five resolved to make the best of it. And we got on pretty well after all. We had no lessons to learn, and almost nobody to look after us, and could roam about all day where we liked. So we chattered, and played, and read story books out of the school library, and enjoyed our freedom. If it had only come on hard frost, we wouldn't have minded staying at school a bit, for there was a splendid pond for skating just at the back of Upton House.

On the third day we were all sitting round the fire in the school-room, after dinner, when Willy Somers, who had been meditating deeply, uttered the following remarkable piece of information :—

“To-morrow's Christmas Day.”

"Well, we all know that," said his brother. "Can't you think of something new and original to tell us, Willy?"

"I was thinking—I was wondering if Lickemwell would give us a plum pudding."

"Catch him," said Saunders, who was of a cynical disposition, and had no great faith in human nature. "He'll have one himself, but we'll get nothing better than that everlasting stick jaw. If I was in India, what a splendid pudding I should have!"

"If ifs and ands were pots and pans," quoted Jack, and then stopped, leaving us to meditate over this unfinished sentiment.

We were all silent for a few minutes, thinking of the same subject, the glories of the Christmas dinner which the other boys would enjoy. And the more we thought of it, the less we liked the cheerless prospect which was before us. I am afraid we were a set of greedy little fellows.

Suddenly, as I turned over my five shillings, or what was left of them, in my trousers' pocket, a bright idea came into my mind.

"Why shouldn't we get up a Christmas dinner for ourselves? I mean, buy a lot of things, and cook them at the school-room fire, and have a regular spread."

"Oh, that would be jolly!" cried little Willy. "I have three shillings and sixpence. That would buy—let me see—forty-two apple tarts. No; I think I would rather buy eighty-four sponge biscuits."

"Buy your grandmother!" said Jack, contemptuously. "If we go in for the thing at all, we must do it in regular style—get a goose or a turkey, or something of that sort. It's not a bad idea. What do you say, Saunders?"

"I say it's a splendid idea," said Saunders, who hadn't any money, and therefore felt free to pronounce a very decided opinion on the matter.

"But the Doctor won't allow us to be cooking things in the school-room," objected Howard.

"Then we'll allow ourselves," said Jack. "No fear of the Doctor shoving his nose into the business. He'll be too busy guzzling in the parlour with Mrs. L. and the young Licks."

"Oh, we can easily manage it," said I. "I have about half-a-crown."

"At all events, if we are to do it, we must look sharp about it," said Jack. "We must buy the things this afternoon. All the shops will be shut to-morrow."

Without further discussion Jack and I settled that the thing should be. Saunders and Howard held back, being rather afraid of the Doctor; but, as they were not to furnish the funds, their opinion was not regarded.

Our first step was to form ourselves into a committee of ways and means, of which Jack, who was one of those fellows that always take the lead in everything, elected himself president, secretary, and treasurer. Our joint funds were found to amount to about ten shillings, but as we didn't care to spend all our money, Jack, Willy, and I, agreed to give two shillings a-piece, which we thought would be enough to furnish a sumptuous feast. Saunders contributed half of a cake, which somebody had sent him. Greedy fellow! he had already eaten up the other half, without saying a word to any of us. Howard gave nothing, but nobody grudged him his share in the matter, for we all knew that he would have been generous enough, if he had had anything to give.

Of course the great question was what to buy with our money. Willy was very anxious to have a turkey, but that was out of the question, so it was settled that a duck should be got instead, which Jack assured us could be bought for half-a-crown, and could be easily roasted at the school-room fire. Then sixpence was to be spent on potatoes, tenpence on apple tarts, two for each of us, the same sum on sweet biscuits, and the rest, it was unanimously voted, should be applied to the purchase of chocolate drops, by way of dessert. As soon as this bill of fare was decided upon, we sallied forth in a body to make our purchases, and succeeded in bringing back the articles, duck and all, without being observed, and locking them up in an empty desk in the school-room.

Next day, you may be sure, we were in a state of great excitement. I am sure no family in England could have been looking forward to their Christmas dinner with more pleasing anticipations than we five. As soon as church was done we hastened home, and sat down with no great relish to our ordinary school dinner. It seemed lucky for us that we had something better in view, for all that was on the table was a dish of potatoes and some scraps of cold mutton. Neither the Doctor nor Mrs. Lickenwell made their appearance ; only one of the maids was in attendance, and to her Jack began to grumble, more for the sake of grumbling than because he cared particularly what he had for dinner on that day.

"I say, Sally," said he, "this is a low shame. Is this all the grub we're to get?"

I may here remark that, by time-honoured custom, all the maids at Upton House were called Sally by the boys, who further distinguished them, with a lofty disregard for the rules

of gender, as Sally Primus, Sally Secundus, and so forth. They didn't use to like it at first, but they soon got accustomed to it, I dare say.

"That's all you are to get just now," said Sally. "There's a great deal of cooking going on to-day."

"Mother L. might have given us a plum pudding, at least. We'll all be starved," said Jack, winking at us.

Sally vouchsafed no further answer, but disappeared with the dish cover, leaving us to the enjoyment of the cold mutton, which disappeared very fast. We were too full of the thoughts of our own banquet to waste more time on the discussion of Mrs. Lickemwell's stinginess, as we thought it.

Before Sally came back we had hidden away as many plates and knives as we thought she would not miss, and, when she had cleared away and left the room, we at once commenced operations, trusting to good luck that we would not be interrupted.

Jack and I undertook the important business of roasting the duck. We first carefully plucked it and buried the feathers, and then tied a string to one of its legs, and took turns at spinning it round before the fire, with such satisfactory results that in about an hour and a half it was pronounced ready for eating, one side being by that time burnt quite black. To Willy and Howard was entrusted the task of roasting the potatoes, which they accomplished much to their own satisfaction, though a critical observer might have objected that they burned to cinders a good many more than they cooked. Saunders, for his part, engaged to manufacture a wonderful cake of bread crumbs, slices of raw potato, and salt butter, which compound, I may here remark, was unanimously pronounced to be an utter failure.

Everything being thus ready, it was agreed to take the viands up to one of the bedrooms, and spend the rest of the afternoon there, in the enjoyment of them. This was done, and we were preparing to abandon ourselves to festivity, when a heavy tread was heard in the passage, and Jack exclaimed in a loud whisper—"Look out! Here's the Doctor, or Porbury." In a moment a counterpane was flung over the tempting array of tarts and so forth, spread out on one of the beds. Saunders hastily sat down on the dish containing the potatoes, thereby mashing them for us very well, as Jack afterwards remarked. The roast duck was not so easily disposed of, but Jack's presence of mind did not forsake him. He hastily squeezed it into the pocket of his greatcoat, which he had just put on, as there was no fire in the bedroom. Scarcely was all this done, than the door opened, and in walked Mr. Porbury, the only one of the assistant masters who had remained for the Christmas holidays.

How lucky it wasn't the Doctor! we thought. Porbury was a heavy, slow fellow, with spectacles, whom we boys rather looked down upon, I am sorry to say, because it was so easy to "humbug him."

"What are you doing here?" asked Mr. Porbury.

"Nothing, sir," said Saunders, who was in agony lest he should have to rise and reveal the potatoes.

This seemed to satisfy Mr. Porbury, and he was going out again, when he suddenly stopped, and began to snuff about him suspiciously.

"H'm. Dear me! Isn't there a very curious smell in this room, boys?"

"Smell, sir?" said Jack, innocently, though all the while guiltily conscious of the roast duck in his pocket.

"Yes ; a smell of burning, I think. Surely there is something on fire. Dear me, I hope not."

"Perhaps it is in some of the other rooms, sir," suggested Jack, hoping that he would go to look, and thus give us an opportunity of getting rid of the unlucky duck.

"Perhaps it is," said Mr. Porbury. "Will you come round with me to the other rooms, and we will see."

There was nothing for it but to obey, and with a comical look at us Jack followed him out of the room. His presence of mind quite forsook him here. He should have taken off his great coat, and left it behind. But he did not think of that, and so, as Mr. Porbury was making his tour of inspection, he, curiously enough, noticed the same smell in every room they entered.

You may be sure we waited in great anxiety for Jack's return. In a few minutes he rushed back into the room, choking with laughter, and, flinging himself on his bed, began to relieve his feelings by kicking up his heels, and writhing about convulsively. "Oh, dear ! oh, dear ! What a joke ! I never saw anything like it. Oh ! I say, you fellows, hold me together, or I'll split with laughing. Oh, dear !"

"What's the matter ? Did he twig the duck ?" we inquired, anxiously.

"Not a bit of him," shouted Jack, drawing it forth from his pocket in triumph. "Every room we went into he snuffed about, and said, 'very curious ; there's the same smell here.' At length he thought it must be coming from the kitchen—oh, dear ! I shall never get over it ;" and Jack rolled about, and screamed, till the tears ran down his cheeks, and he could laugh no longer. Only, for the next half hour or so, he was always threatening to burst out into another explosion, and

exclaiming, "Well, I can't help it. To think how neatly Porbury was taken in. What a splendid joke!"

Not having such a keen sense of the ludicrous as Jack, our mirth was not so boisterous, but we were greatly relieved to find that our duck was safe. It was thought prudent, however, to put off the feast for a little, in case we should again be interrupted. But at the end of half-an-hour our impatience overcame our prudence.

"The Doctor has a dinner-party to-day, so he's safe not to come near us," said Jack. "And Porbury's sure to be at it. He wasn't at our dinner, you know."

So we set to work at once upon the duck, which Jack divided by tearing off the legs and wings, and giving one to each of us. The body he kept to himself, and I think he had the best of the bargain. But Jack, as I said before, was one of those fellows who manage to get the best of everything for themselves. I remember we thought him very generous when he cut off a piece of the breast with his pocket knife, and gave it to Howard, to whose lot had fallen the wing that had been burned in the process of cooking.

The duck was pronounced excellent; the only fault was that there seemed to be so little on it after all; and when it and the potatoes were finished, and the bones licked clean, we turned our attention to the less substantial portion of the entertainment. Didn't we make short work of the apple tarts and Saunders' cake, washing them down with lemonade, made out of two lemons and some sugar, which we had coaxed out of the housekeeper! All the while we were talking and laughing, as well as eating as fast as we could, and agreeing that it was the jolliest Christmas dinner we had ever had.

The fun, indeed, began to grow fast and furious. At a very early stage of the proceedings Jack had volunteered a song, and now, inspired by the potent liquor I have just mentioned, he had mounted on a chair, and was bellowing, at the pitch of his voice, a song which some youthful genius had composed, as a sort of national anthem for the school. I only remember the first verse, which was—

“ In Upton House's wintry clime,
We now must work at our books for a time,
Or, if we don't, we'll catch toko,
Which is what Mr. Patrick did upon the musical instrument bestow,
So early in the morning,
So early in the morning,
So early in the morning,
Before the break of day.”

The remarkable feature of this melody was, that every verse was sung to a different air, and with a different chorus, in which we all joined lustily, and made such a din, that this time we never heard footsteps creaking along the passage, as we might have done if we had been less noisy.

But in the middle of the song the door of the room was flung open, and in stalked—the Doctor.

He cast one sharp glance at the bed, on which was spread out our feast, and another at us. We looked at one another, and then, though we were in a great fright, couldn't help smiling, the whole thing was so ludicrous. Jack, standing on a chair, with his back turned to the door, flourishing the backbone of the duck in one hand, and a half-eaten tart in the other, had just begun a new verse—

“ Old Lickemwell, he is a—”

But here, suddenly perceiving from our silence that some-

thing had gone wrong, Jack turned round, and, when he saw the Doctor, stopped short, and got down from the chair, looking foolish enough. We were all looking foolish, I dare say, but we couldn't help laughing, and the Doctor looked as if he, too, was inclined to smile, though he was trying to look stern.

"Well," he said at length, and then there was a portentous silence. When Dr. Lickemwell said "well," in a peculiarly dry, meaning way which he had, we generally understood that matters were going to turn out anything but *well* for us. "This is how Mr. Porbury felt a smell of burning. Ah!"

Then the Doctor looked at us again, and we felt particularly uncomfortable.

"I suppose you are the ringleader in this, Somers?"

"Yes, sir," said Jack, modestly.

"Come with me," said the Doctor, motioning to Jack to follow him out of the room.

Jack obeyed, trying to wink at us as he went, to show that he didn't care for what was going to happen. But it was rather an unhappy wink.

The rest of us waited in great suspense for about ten minutes, wondering what would be done to Jack, and if we ourselves would escape punishment. A sudden damper had been cast on our mirth. We all knew the Doctor's cane too well to feel happy while we were expecting to have an interview with it.

At length the Doctor came back, and made us a speech:—

"I am very sorry to find, boys, that you have been resorting to deception of this kind. If you had known something which I wished to be a surprise for you, I don't think you would have cared to take all this trouble on the sly. Come here with me, all of you."

We followed him, looking at each other in surprise, and quite unable to make out what he meant. Was he angry with us? Was he going to punish us? Was he taking us to his study, which was to Upton House what the torture-chamber was to the Tower of London? No; he led the way past the study door, and over the hall, and into his private dining-room, at the door of which we all hung back, like a brood of chickens, reluctant to follow into the pond the duck that has hatched them.

"Come along," said the Doctor, encouraging us; and, taking courage to venture inside, we saw the table spread out for dinner, and the sideboard loaded with apples, oranges, and nuts.

"We are just going to dine," said the Doctor, in the same grave voice, but with a merry twinkle in his eye. "Mrs. Lickemwell and I had intended to ask you to take your Christmas dinner with us—it is a pity we did not issue our invitation sooner. However, if you think you could eat a little bit, although you have dined, perhaps you will sit down and join us. You see Somers has kindly consented to favour us with his company."

We looked at the Doctor, and at the table, and at each other, in perfect amazement. Was the Doctor speaking seriously? We felt quite uncomfortable. But there was that cool fish, Jack Somers, sitting at the head of the table, beside Mrs. Lickemwell, making himself agreeable, and grinning at us like a porpoise. Seeing our perplexity, the Doctor burst into a laugh, and cried out—

"Poor fellows! Did you really think we weren't going to give you a Christmas dinner? We meant it to be a surprise,

but perhaps I should have told you, and then we shouldn't have had you wasting your money on bad pastry, and bothering Mr. Porbury with your culinary operations. Well, we'll say no more about it, but sit down and see if you can't find room for another dinner."

Then the Doctor laughed louder than before, and Mrs. Lickemwell laughed, and Jack laughed, and we all laughed, and finally we sat down, and Sally Primus, and Sally Secundus, appeared with a splendid turkey, and a roast joint of beef, at the sight of which we discovered that the duck and the apple tarts had been mere trifles that had only whetted our appetites.

In short, we had a splendid dinner, and glorious fun afterwards. The young Lickemwells were all there in their best bibs and tuckers, and some other boys and girls came in to tea, and we had a snap-dragon, and a Christmas tree, and charades, and no end of games. And, when we had said good night, and gone back to the school-room to gather up the remnants of our own despised feast, which were now preserved for another time, we agreed that the Doctor was a much jollier fellow than we had ever before thought him, and that we were great fools for having wasted our money. And that is the story of our Christmas dinner, the only one, I am glad to say, I ever ate at school, for Ned got all right again very soon, and, as he came to school himself next half, took good care not to catch any more scarlet fevers about Christmas time.

A WILD YULE E'EN.

By CYNTHA.



HERE are mad northern breezes howling over the heather, and there are savage blinding showers of snow, which fall in stinging bits and cover up the little dells, leaving only those same wind-waked heath-tops uncovered. There are loud-voiced tempestuous waves and anger-tossed foam, which lift themselves wildly up, as if in their insolent pride they would mingle with the low-lying clouds. There are grey gaunt cliffs frowning over the black water, and there are bare dreary-looking hills, with here and there a solitary cottage, standing unsheltered by tree or wall. It is not a pleasant scene, although, for some folks, it may have a weird beauty of its own. This snow is not like the gentle feathery flakes which robe your naked Christmas boughs in a robe of heavenly white. These gales are not the soft-toned breezes which bear to your expectant ears the sound of Christmas bells. These champing surges are not the light-footed friends who come to greet you with a smile and a word of seasonable cheer. Ah, no ! but surely those fierce combating elements are fit attendants on the Yule of our sea-king sires.

“Mother, this is Yule e’en,” said little Tronda Henderson, looking wistfully up in her mother’s face.

“Well, what if it is, bairn? we can have no Yule fun, you know,” and Doya cast a glance at her husband, who was sitting by the uncurtained window. It was a look which said much: it was a look of reproach, of enquiry, of fear, of love; and the children, who sat beside Doya, crept nearer to her chair and kept silence when they saw that look. But Bartle did not notice either the woman or children. He was a sullen, discontented man, who evaded, as lazy ne’er-do-wells will always do, the poor man’s honest lot—a life of labour. He was the scion of a good old house, which had fallen into poverty and decay. Being too idle and too proud to work for a living, Bartle had left Shetland in his early manhood and had betaken himself to the wild unfettered life of an Australian digger. Years went past, and he came back in his prime and married an orphan cousin, to whom he had been engaged since his youth. He came back a reserved and selfish man, with a shadow on his brow and a strange mystery about even his everyday life. Bartle took up his abode in the half-ruined home of his boyhood, and became a subject of curiosity and conjecture to the whole island. His wife was a lady born, yet it was known that she did all the work of the house, keeping no servant; and the public also discovered that she “knitted and ’broidered and sewed” for a livelihood, just as any poor man’s spouse might do. They did not mingle with their neighbours, but rather shunned the society of high and low. Bartle had no live stock or banked money; he did no work, either mental or physical, and although he always wore the dress of a sailor, he never soiled his fingers with a fishing-line or other marine implements. He always had plenty of silver, nay, even gold, in hand for his own personal wants, yet Doya’s deft

fingers provided for herself and the three children. Once Bartle had offered half-a-crown to his wife, when he chanced to overhear the little ones cry for breakfast, but she gave it back with such a gesture of horror and disgust as deterred him from ever repeating the act. And so they jogged on for many years, living in the same house utterly independent of one another, each going their own way—the mother keeping Rassmie, Hermann, and Tronda by her, and the father shrouded in the same mystery which had hitherto encompassed him.

On this same dark Yule even, Bartle looked out of window, moodily unconcerned for those within. He looked on a dismal scene. Between the cottage and the sea there stretched a piece of rough stony ground, which hardly allowed a weed to find refuge on it. This meagre morsel of mother earth terminated in a reef of dangerous crags, which were quite covered at high water, but, when the tide was out, extended high and dry between the island and a large grass-crowned skerry, which lay a short distance from the mainland. You could not picture to yourself a more barbarous coast.

The grey of night had come down, and only the outlines of the landscape, with here and there a foam-wreath curling about the rocks, could be descried by the looker out. Evidently such an imperfect view was not to Bartle's liking, for very soon he got up, donned his seaman's hat of waterproof, and without a word left the house. It was not pleasant out in that shivering cold, and the sullen man was not a good companion, but he had scarcely quitted the cottage ere he was followed by his sons. They were fine manly boys of twelve and fourteen, on whose honest faces lurked no resemblance to the hard features of their father. It seemed that they followed Bartle with

reluctance, but certainly with a purpose, and he was not long in observing them. Turning round, he addressed the boys savagely, with a "What do you want? where are you bound for, you young rascals?"

They hesitated some time, and then Rassmie, as the oldest, replied, "Mother told us to go after you in case you might want help or a messenger, for she guessed you were going to look after the ship we saw locking the land this afternoon."

These were simple enough words, but they roused Bartle's passion in an instant, and, catching Rassmie by the collar, he would have flung the poor boy to the ground, had not Hermann thrown himself on his father's arm, and so prevented the blow from falling on his beloved brother. "You young scoundrels," shouted Bartle, shaking them from him; "what do you mean by dogging me like this, as if I were a madman who required a keeper, or—"

"A sinner who needs a Saviour," said the meek voice of Doya, who had come to the spot. "Don't be angry with me, Bartle; don't hurt the poor boys, they are too young and innocent to dream of what *I* know is true, or to suspect the real motive of your going from home at this late and stormy hour. Oh, Bartle! it is years since I spoke to you thus—listen to me. Let me lead you home again, or let us rouse the neighbours, that your already red hand may be held from further crime."

I may not repeat to you all the profane abuse with which Bartle Henderson replied to the timid entreaties of his wife, while the boys stood by, too terrified to move or speak. When he had exhausted his powers of swearing (and they were not by any means limited), and had ordered his wife and children to

return to the house, Bartle took his way along the rough beach with a rapid stride and a lowering look on his face that it was not good to see. Doya gazed after the figure of her husband until it was lost in the obscurity of nightfall. Her face was very pale, and sad, and spiritless. She scarcely knew what instinct had told her to follow Bartle and speak words which she had never ventured to address to him since the early days of their married life, when first she came to know the dark mystery of his means of livelihood.

The courage which had prompted her appeal had died out before his fierce outburst of anger, and after telling the boys not to go near their father again, the poor woman returned to her lonely dwelling. Ah ! not *all* lonely, for little deformed Tronda was waiting there for her mother's return. The tiny lassie had raked the fire together and swept the hearth, as well as her feeble hands could, and the bright face which she lifted to Doya's shed light, warm as sunshine, on the leaden heart of her parent. "Mother, mother, how came you to be so forgetful as to leave me here alone on Yule e'en, and after day set?" A sweet ringing laugh followed Tronda's words, and Doya caught its infection and smiled upon the bonnie-featured, crooked-backed child, whose infirmities had not prevented her from being (as the "one ewe lamb" always is) the most useful and most beloved member of the family.

"Ah, bairn ! I was indeed forgetful, but I have been so short a time away, that I cannot think the fairies have had leisure left them in which to do mischief to you."

"Don't be too sure, mother ; I did hear a noise of something hopping about by the churn, and may be you won't get any butter to-morrow ; and are you *quite* sure I am just the same as

when you left me? You know this," touching her own twisted side, "came of my being left on Yule e'en by myself." Tronda spoke jestingly, of course, but her light words carried a sad pang to the mother's heart.

Folding her arms about the little thin figure, Doya said, whisperingly, "If the fairies took my child that night, or if they brought this life-trouble to her, I dare not repine, for who could be to us what loving, patient, unselfish, sickly Tronda is?"

Tronda knew that there were serious thoughts expressed in those words of pleasantry, so she let the Yule joke pass by, and nestling closer to the loving bosom above her, the child asked: "Tell me how it really happened, dear mother; I want so much to know, for although it's all nonsense about the fairies or trows hurting me, still—I should—like to—know."

"How old is my little girl?" Doya answered. "Let me see, thirteen past in September, and not so large as most bairns are at ten; but more than thirteen, aye, more than twenty, in mind and feeling. I have never spoken of my sorrows to any one, but I think my daughter can be my sympathizing friend, so she shall hear it all. It was just ten years ago, on that awful stormy Yule even, of which you have heard folks talk. I was happy then, for your father was kind, my little ones were healthy and beautiful, and I had never looked upon sin in its darker aspects. My little Tronda shall know *all* the story. On that wild Yule even I had put you and Rassmie to bed, and was hushing Hermann on my knee, when I was startled by hearing a succession of shrieks, which seemed borne to my ear on the wings of an exultant storm fiend. With the baby in my arms, I ran to the door and looked out into the mirkness—just such a night as this," and Doya shivered, even by the glowing

fire ; "a tempest of wind, bright gleaming moonlight, and flying clouds. Again and again that dreadful cry arose, and, forgetful of everything, I flew down the slope and stood upon the beach. It was covered with bits of wreck—tables, chairs, trunks, hammocks. Near these, up to his waist in the roaring sea, I found your father. Above us, on the height, gleamed a gigantic fire of peat, and among the surf, close beside me, floated unresistingly the blood-stained form of a sailor—"

"Oh ! mother, don't tell me more of that. I know, I know ; it is all plain now !"

"Yes," Doya said, in a dreamy apathetic tone ; "it's all plain ; *you* know now what *I* knew then. Hours afterwards I returned to the house, with Hermann still innocently sleeping on my bosom, and I discovered that in my absence you had waked up, and finding yourself alone, had tried to get out of bed, and in so doing had fallen against something on the floor, where I found you lying helpless and almost unconscious. It was not trows—no, Tronda ; on that Yule e'en it was not trows that came to injure you—it was a fiend—your own flesh and blood !"

The poor feeble girl shrank away in meek terror from the sudden fierceness of Doya's words and gesture. She had never seen her gentle, patient mother in that mood before, but it passed away, and a long painful silence fell upon them both.

Loudly and hoarsely roared the winter gales around the cottage. Sometimes their stormy voices rose defiantly above the boom of the breaking wave. Sometimes they clamoured fiercely against the chafing surge, whose anger they had awakened. Oftentimes they moaned and mourned among the heather, or hurled the "drifting veil" of snow before their impatient pinions deep into some dimpled valley ; and you might well have

deemed that evil spirits were wandering unfettered over the world, for the sweet Christmas heralds could not have bent their bright brows to earth in such a fearful hour. But still, musing and silent, sat Doya Henderson and her deformed child; and the minutes passed into hours, and both were so engrossed with dismal thoughts and forebodings that they never seemed to miss the presence of Rassmie and Hermann. But the same dark demon to whom power had been given over land and sea and human heart—that same “foul fiend” was reigning to-night as then; and again was brought to Doya’s ear the wail of bitterest mortal agony. You might almost have thought that she expected it, for when that awful cry rang out on the night air, Doya did not start or look surprised, her face just paled, and she dropped on her knees beside Tronda, whose trembling figure had sought that attitude which instinct teaches us to adopt when we turn to God in our hours of helplessness and woe.

“Pray, mother; pray!” cried the girl. “Pray for father; oh! let it be for him more than all.”

Earnest, though broken, were the supplications which rose from those grieving hearts; but their “woman’s heavenly part” was interrupted by the hasty entrance of Rassmie and Hermann, who rushed to their mother, with white and horror-stricken faces.

“We saw it all; oh, mother, we saw it!” they panted forth. “The peat stack had been lighted, and the ship had come on the rocks, lured by the false signals. She went down at once, and then—then we saw father among the crags. Some one floated on shore; and oh, how could he? he—father! struck at the swimming man with his knife, and there was a great cry,

and blood among the white surf. Mother, mother ! what shall we do ? Father saw us beside him there ; *his* face was awful, and oh, there may come others, for he was waiting, when we fled to you !”

Tronda had stood up when her brothers came, and as soon as their hurried tale was told, she spoke calmly and with resolution : “ We must all go to father. It is not for us to give him to the hand of justice, but we dare not stand still and see murder committed. Come, mother ; come, boys ; father must be guided by us now,” and the small decrepit figure and pinched puny face looked noble and beautiful when the spirit spoke so boldly and undauntedly.

In obedience to a mind stronger than their own, the others followed Tronda from the house—from the house, down the slope, over the stony beach, under the moonlight, against the gale, to the scene of the shipwreck. There they found no living thing. There were broken spars and floating *débris* of various kinds, and there was a helpless human corpse, but that was all. In vain did Rassmie and Hermann search among the crags, in the hope of finding their father concealed there. In vain did Doya call upon his name ; and at last they were obliged to believe that fear had compelled Bartle to fly. He had felt that he was safe from discovery while only Doya knew of his crimes, but he could not be so certain of the boys, whose eyes had actually been on him while he committed murder.

They all lingered on the beach for some time, but no one came from either land or sea, and at last the storm compelled them to seek the shelter of their home. You may believe it was a sad, sad night in that lone dwelling, and although the gale calmed down, and the snow lay still and fair when

the daylight gleamed upon it, there was no hushing the inward storm. A very dark picture of sin had been presented to young pure spirits, and it was little wonder that their innocent hearts quivered and bled before the remembrance of that dreadful scene.

Morning—Yule morning—with its merry breakfast by candle-light, frothing bowl of “whipcull,” and sweetest of short-cakes for the rich ; its “burstin” and rarely-tasted bacon, with jolly drams of whiskey, for the cottagers ; and its fun and mystic spells, and football and evening dance, and olden tale and Norland song for both high and low. Morning—Yule morning—brought the discovery to all in the neighbourhood of the disastrous shipwreck on the island. Doya and her children sat in the house and saw the gathering crowd hurry to and fro upon the beach. They saw when the poor sailor’s body was found wounded, as the simple islanders supposed, by their own cruel crags ; and all the day long the wife and family of the wrecker watched and waited, but no one came to them. The corpse was conveyed to an uninhabited dwelling close by, and decently buried next day ; and Doya fell mechanically into all her accustomed duties. Curious people wondered what had become of Bartle, and somehow a story got about that he had deserted his wife, because she had taunted him with having taken her from a life of ease to one of hard and humble work. Those who believed such a tale had surely observed little of Doya’s meek contented acceptance of her lowlier lot ; but she was quite willing that the inquisitive neighbours should accept that solution of Bartle’s conduct. That he had fled from his home and family she knew was true, but the reason, ah ! how different from what was supposed.

The events of that most eventful Yule e’en had worked a

great change in Rassmie and Hermann. They were sharp enough lads, and had made a pretty shrewd guess that their father gained his livelihood by rescuing from the deep its unlawful prey, but that he employed such criminal means for that end they never dreamed of. The appropriation of wreck was viewed, with smuggling, as a very light offence by the Shetlanders, who, at the same time, would have shrunk with horror from such crimes as those which Bartle had committed, and however little the boys might have thought of the sin against human codes of morality, they saw in all its deepest blackness the enormity of their parent's offence against Divine laws. Therefore, as I told you, these things went a great way to work a change in the characters of the lads, adding to their hatred of sin, and taking away much that was evil in their disposition.

But time, that never flies from the happy, nor lingers with the sad, although we often think he is cruel enough to do so; time, whose monotonous footsteps echo along the years at the same even pace, no matter how we smile or suffer; time went on, and marked another season on the tablets of eternity, and, as he traced the first lines of the coming year, he also brought back the brave old Yule. Yule came this time with glittering frost and smiling sky, quiet waves, and scarce a breath of wind, and Rassmie launched his fishing boat for a day's excursion among the cliffs. Their home was, as usual, unbrightened by festivity, so the good lads persuaded their mother and Tronda to accompany them on the water, and the four made a pleasant, if sober, party. Tronda had seldom been upon the sea, and had seen very little of the sublime scenery so near her home, therefore she easily prevailed on her brothers to row close to the shore, that she might the better admire the varied beauty

of the crags and caves. One of the latter particularly attracted Tronda's girlish fancy, and at her desire the boat entered the rock-hewn hall, whose tinted walls gave back a thousand silvery echoes of the splashing oars. It was a vast cavern into which the boat had entered, and the further she went the wider and



more extensive seemed the boundaries of that ocean home. Even Doya's broken spirit seemed to share in the enthusiasm of the young people, whose exclamations of rapture mingled with the shrill cry of the brooding sea fowl, and the whispering of the billows. But suddenly Tronda's voice changed to a scream of terror, and she pointed to a ledge of rock in one of the

deepest recesses of the cave. There lay what at first appeared to be merely a heap of ragged clothing, but which contained too surely a human skeleton. Rassmie's first instinct was to turn his boat and fly from the horrible sight, but his mother was quite above the vulgar fears of the ignorant, and, after she had by her quiet mien and pious words reassured her children, their skiff was gently impelled nearer to the object of their alarm. There was nothing loathsome about those poor mortal remains; only a few whitened bones, huddled within the folds of a seaman's dress, and a fleshless hand spread out upon the chilly stone. He had escaped from drowning by the help of a little boat, whose broken bits, cast up beyond the reach of the sea, by some unusually high tide and storm, spoke to so much of the sad tale. On that hard bed of shelving rock the unfortunate man had met a more dreadful death than that of the engulfing wave. Unheard, unsuccoured, he had died of starvation. "What had we better do, mother?" said one of the boys, after a long silence, which had been employed by the young people in gazing upon the miserable spectacle of man's helpless humanity, and in gathering up the courage which had so suddenly deserted them. Doya did not reply, and the pallor and anguish which had fallen so suddenly upon her features gave much alarm to her children. "Are you ill, dear mother? What is it?" they queried. When at last she spoke, her voice trembled, and her figure shook with the force of some inward trouble, which she evidently tried to conceal and overcome. Having summoned all her strength of mind, she said, hurriedly—"No one must come here, no one must know of this but you and I. Children, children, the guardian spirit, who never forsakes its charge, has guided us here." By the mother's

direction, Rassmie and Hermann landed on the little strip of sand which carpeted the further end of the cave. There they gathered together some bits of wood belonging to the broken boat, and, clambering up the rude walls, they deposited the spars on a ledge close to that on which the sailor lay. Then Doya got out of the boat, telling her children to return to the mouth of the cavern, and linger there out of sight until she called them. They were reluctant to leave her alone in such a place, and with such a task as they rightly guessed she had set herself to do, but obedience was the first lesson these young people had learned, and reverence for their mother and her wishes was the consequence of her wise training. The oars were dipped into the quiet water, and in a few moments Doya was alone with *it*. Ah! who but a wife would have knelt so tenderly by that ghastly object, and wrapped it in the folds of her cloak? who else would have laid her living lips on the bleached and bony palm, and have recognized in those unsepulchred bones something she had once loved? Who but a wife, whose young affections had been altogether *his*, would have forgotten the sin and sorrow, the neglect and unkindness of years, and have thus cared for the poor remains of a wicked man?

Doya knelt long and prayed by her husband's corpse, then with reverent hands she wrapped it closer in the shroud she had taken from her own person for that purpose, and while doing so she found among the skeleton fingers a small pocket-book. With an eager hope she opened this message from the departed. The sleeve of the dead man's oil-skin coat had protected the paper from destruction, and the words which Bartle's dying hand had pencilled on the leaves were easily deciphered. This is what he had written :—

“My wife and children, forgive me. God has done so. I am dying here, within a short distance of you all and home. I do not know how many days I have been here. It seems like ages. No help can come to me, and I am beyond the reach of being heard. I fled from your accusing eyes, and the boat carried me here. She was tossed like a weed on the rocks, and I have crawled up hither to die a harder death than any I ever dealt. It is the meet reward for all my crimes—that I know ; but I am not alone, and I am forgiven. Try to think kindly of me. I have been very wicked, but now I am at peace, and dying. Something whispers you will know my fate, my children, my wife.”

Could anything have been of such infinite value to Doya as those parting words? They washed away every trace of bitter or offended feeling, and when she placed the precious relic in her bosom, she blotted out from its generous heart every remembrance of Bartle, save their early love and his Christian death.

Very slowly, very tenderly, Doya encased the withered form in the broken bits of wood, lashing them around it by means of some fishing lines which they had chanced to have in the boat. Very carefully she attached some pieces of rock to the rope, and then, after one long lingering look, and a silent, earnest prayer, she let it slide gently down into the calm limpid ocean. The waves gave one low gurgling sigh as they opened to receive that strangely buried thing, and Doya, kneeling on the cold stone, strained her sight to see the very last of her husband. The clear water hid nothing from her, and she saw him sink to rest down below the sea. And then the tide bore a floating mass of weed, glittering brown and crimson, to the spot, and laid it over poor Bartle, who slumbers peacefully there in that wild cavern, cradled by the surf, and lulled by the wind. And surf and wind say, better than sculptured stone, that mercy

endureth for ever, and He, our Father, and our Judge, is long-suffering, and doeth all things well.

It was some time ere Doya could venture to break the awe and quiet of that scene by summoning her children. It seemed as if she had parted from every earthly trouble, as she knelt there alone, and pressed to her heart the token of her husband's repentance; as she knelt there, alone with nature's sublimest voices speaking to her soul; but slowly her thoughts came back to life and earth, and at her call the boat glided into the cave again. Then, as the boys rowed slowly homewards, Doya told them the end of the story. They had guessed it already, but they were not prepared for the surprise which she had in store—the reading of their father's parting words. That took away almost all the sorrow. Under the moon-lit sky of Yule, with Yule stars looking down like eyes of forgiving love, and Yule zephyrs winnowing by like the rustle of angel-wings, when they hurry to earth with Christmas messages of peace and good will, of mercy and pardon; with Yule frost glittering upon the heath, Doya and her children returned to their home; and when Rassmie clung to her neck, and Hermann's head nestled on her bosom, while Tronda's sweet voice whispered, "You have *us*, mother," Doya's sorely tried heart was comforted.

Just as Cousin Cynthia concluded her story, the clock struck, and then a strange stare of astonishment stole over every face. What the hour was it is not necessary to state, but a general stirring among the company told the fact that all of them were of opinion it was high time to be thinking of returning to their

homes. But while glasses were being handed round, Old Merry took the opportunity of arresting attention ; and, amid cries of "Hurrah, bravo ! A speech ! Old Merry, a speech !" got upon his legs, and after polishing his bald pate and adjusting his specs, according to time-honoured usage, he thus delivered himself:—

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MY DEAR YOUNG PEOPLE,

"Before we separate we must all pledge ourselves in lemonade, et cetera, and wish one another 'A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year !' Perhaps in all the year the few merry hours of Christmas Eve are the brightest and happiest to the whole world. This night, while we have been here enjoying ourselves together, thousands of homes have been full of gladness and merriment. Boys and girls from school have been telling the adventures of the 'last half ;' apprentices, home for the Christmas-tide, have been giving their parents and friends an account of their trials and joys ; family circles, broken throughout the year by circumstances, have been united round the old fireside in thousands of homes ; sailors on the sea have struggled between cheerfulness and sorrow as they have told their shore stories and drunk to absent friends ; settlers in the colonies, despite the differences of time and climate, have been linking themselves again with the associations of the old country ; heaven and earth have been vocal with new songs of praise ; and the blessed Redeemer Himself, whose birth in this world is the source of all our joy and gladness, has looked down on the delights which He has created, and seeing the results of the travail of His soul 'has been satisfied.' Well, my young friends, I am not going to preach you a sermon,

but I do ask you to try and realize the pleasure of sharing the joy of the whole world. But do not forget amid the festivities that Christmas is the anniversary of the birthday of our Lord. He came to bless us and He lives to bless us. He gave to us all we have, and we should seek to give back to Him all we are. The cheerful heart, the smiling face, the happy thought, the kindly act, the friendly speech, are more acceptable to Him than the long drawn face and the sigh and the groan. His service is not simply that of the Sabbath-day or the appointed Church, but at the fireside, the play-ground, the office; in our hours of rest and toil and recreation, at home and at school, all through the life He requires, and is pleased with, our acknowledgment of Him. So now for all the happy hours of this happy season let us devoutly thank Him, and let us each determine that as He came this day to bless all the world, we will try to follow His example as far as we can.

“Let each of you determine that some other life shall be happier to-morrow through your means. Join your labours to those of the ministering angels, and see if you cannot lighten some burden, and give joy to some sad heart on Christmas Day. The lad who sweeps the crossing, encourage him with a copper; your sister who has quarrelled with you, kiss her and make it up; that poor old woman in the garret, beg some plum pudding for her and send it with a twig of holly in it. Only be willing to do what you can, and depend upon it the opportunities will not be wanting. And now we must separate; I wish you all happy meetings and greetings on the morrow, pleasant hours for merry thoughts and serious thoughts—good digestions—and everything that can make to its full degree, A Merry, Happy, Christmas!”





