

horsehair sofa with her legs covered by a shawl.

Daddy Jim strolled down the path a little way just to pass the time. He was disappointed that the little 'un should have selected to take her nap just then, but it was good for her, no doubt. Very like it was—but it was lonesome here in the field without her. He sauntered on, switching at the hedge, and whistling. Presently the sudden turn in the path, described before, brought him in sight of the high road, and the stile leading to it. And who might that be sitting on the stile? A buxom girl in a bright blue dress, with reddish hair much frizzed, and a very fine hat indeed; a hat with as many ribbons, and flowers, and feathers, as could possibly be piled on it. The young woman's whole "get up" was so smart, and the difference between it and her ordinary week-day attire so great, that it was not until he was quite close to her that Jim recognised Annie Davis, the blacksmith's niece, who had recently come to live in the village.

"Good afternoon," observed Jim, pausing with a nod and grin of greeting.

"Nice day, Mr Norris," replied Annie.

Jim looked up at the sky, then at the feathers in Annie's hat, and then, casually, at the face beneath it—a pleasant face enough, snub-nosed, red-cheeked, freckled, with bright rather bold blue eyes. The eyes had pink rims to them to-day, though, and the sandy lashes stuck together; Annie Davis had been crying.

Jim realised the fact by slow degrees, and also observed that the girl, though she had responded to his greeting, did not seem to care to pursue the conversation, continuing to drum on the step of the stile with her foot, and to gaze disconsolately down the road.

A smile crept gradually over his face. He opened his mouth as though to speak, shut it again, and then winked to himself. He was thinking of making a joke, and a joke was no light matter to him, and could not be undertaken without due preparation. He had very nearly got it now, though.

A tear welled up in the corner of Annie's eye, and rolled slowly down her round red cheek.

"Hain't he coom?" asked Jim, ready at last and grinning with glee.

"Who?" queried Annie, pettishly.

"Why, him. Him as yo're lookin' out fur."

Now, as it happened, he hadn't come, and Annie had good cause to fear that he had no intention of coming. Annie had had a quarrel with him on the Sunday before, and she had announced her intention of "giving over keeping company" with him, parting from him, indeed, with the assurance that he needn't ever come asking her to go out again, for she had walked her last with him. Nevertheless, when the end of the week came she had cooled down a good deal, and was, in fact, quite ready to forgive her swain when he came, as she expected, to be once more restored to favour.

She had taken up her position on the stile, which commanded a good view of the road usually taken by Sunday couples, and had there waited for the young man—waited first smilingly, then anxiously, then furiously, then despairingly. Jim's jocular query was the last drop in an already full cup; Annie began to sob in good earnest.

Jim could not leave off smiling all at once, partly because he was so enchanted to find that his surmise was correct, and partly because he thought he had said a very funny thing! But presently he began to feel sorry for the girl. He leaned against the fence and looked at her compassionately.

"If I wur yo' I'd give ower," he remarked. "I would, fur sure. There's a mony lads i' the parish."

The corners of Annie's mouth began to go up, and she gave her head a little toss.

"Well," she said coquettishly, "an' who said there was na?"

Jim was nonplussed for a moment, quickness of repartee not being his strong point. But after pushing back his hat, and scratching his head—processes which always seemed to brighten his intellect—he observed:

"A mon 'ud think to see yo' as there wur but one lad i' th' place, an' he wur a bad 'un."

Annie began to laugh, loud and long, after the manner of young persons of her standing; and Jim, charmed at his own brilliancy, joined her. Their mirth was at its height,

when a couple came sauntering down the road, at sight of whom the girl suddenly changed her note. It was no other than her own particular young man, who now strolled leisurely past, arm-in-arm with her most special enemy. On they came, talking very eagerly, and laughing a great deal. The young man exceedingly affectionate to the new love, as with the corner of his eye, he caught sight of the blue draperies of the old, fluttering behind the hedge; the maiden coy and witty. Jim meanwhile was still cheerfully chuckling.

"Eh, a body 'ud think as he wur a bad 'un!" he repeated, quite unconsciously of the proximity of the person in question.

"An' they think rest," cried Annie, with flashing eyes. He was actually passing without a sign of recognition. "But as yo' were sayin', there's mony a lad i' th' parish."

"There is," agreed Jim, "an' good 'uns too. Eh, a lass same as yo' has no need to tuk up w' wastrels."

The couple were out of hearing now, but one or two more were approaching, and Annie, whose blood was up, determined to prove to all her acquaintances that she was not depressed by her lover's desertion.

"There's vor'sel' to start w', Mester Norris," she said, her rosy cheek dimpling, and her snub-nose cooking itself knowingly as she smiled.

"Well," said Jim. "That is a good 'un!"

"Wunnot yo' set down a bit?" inquired Annie. "There's lots o' room, an' settin's as cheap as standin'."

The step was rather narrow for two, but with a good deal of giggling they managed to balance themselves.

It was very pleasant there; sunny and warm, with the scent of the clover strong in their nostrils, and the breeze rustling through the tall green wheat. Jim sat placidly beside Annie, listening to her rollicking talk and laughter, and putting in an occasional monosyllable. The neighbours, passing by, stared and nudged each other, and made smiling half-audible comments.

"So that's it, is it?" "Well, he is but a young chap." "Jim's in luck," and so forth.

Jim fidgetted with his stick, and looked over their heads, and now and then drew a long stalk of grass from the rank growth beneath the hedge, and chewed it.

But by-and-bye, the sound of a well-known voice coming from the opposite direction made him start. What should come rolling round the hedge but the portly figure of Daddy Jack!

"Hallo," said Jim, tumbling off the stile, and looking rather foolish.

Jack paused, took a long frowning survey of Annie, and advanced more rapidly.

"Art thou commin' to thy tay?" he enquired as soon as he was near enough.

"Is it ready?"

"Is it ready? I should think it wur ready, an' it gone five. What han yo' agate here?"

"Eh, nought to speak on."

"Well, then, coom on w' thee. Th' missus could na think whatev'er'd

coom to thee. Who may you wench be?"

"Annie Davis, I b'lieve."

"Thou cannot say fur sure, I a'pose. Well, hoo's no beauty as how t'is." "Hoo's reet enough," retorted Jim, the spirit of opposition roused within him by his father-in-law's tone.

"Good afternoon, Annie," he called, nodding over his shoulder.

"Good day to yo', Mester Norris, an' thank yo' fur your company."

Daddy Jack and Daddy Jim marched off, each for the first time in their

stiles along w' wenches fur, if thou has na a mind to keep company?"

"There wur'n' nobbut one wench," replied Jim stolidly.

"Nobbut one! An' that's enough, sure. Thou does na reckon to coort moor nor one at a time?"

"Well, an' what if I wur settin' o' a stile w' a wench?"

"Well, that's what I say; thou's coompany-keepin'."

"I wunnot say whether I am or not," cried Jim angrily, "but I'll say as I wunnot be barged at."



Watching to see which way the Federation Wind blows.

The Premier says "He is not allowing this Federation movement to proceed without its being very carefully considered."

simple lives on bad terms with the other. Jack, indignant at what he took to be a slight to Maggie's memory. Jim, furious at his injustice, but determined not to be put upon. They walked on in silence at first, but the elder man presently paused, prodding the soft earth with his stick.

Jim went on, without turning his head.

"Hoy!" shouted Daddy Jack. "Coom back 'ere, I want 'ee." His son-in-law retraced his steps.

"Thou's started company-keepin', I see," said Jack.

"Who says that?" growled Jim, borrowing a leaf from Annie's book.

"I say't. What art thou settin' o'

"My word, Jim, I'll barge if I've a mind to. I tell thee I'm not the moan to start countin' my words at this tim' o' th' day. Nay, I see how it is w' thee. Thou cares nought for our Maggie, nor our Maggie's folks. Thou's takken up w' yon ill-favoured impudent lass o' Davis', an' thou thinks to set her i' our Maggie's place. But I tell 'ee, my lad, thou needs na think i' fetchin' her up t' our house. Hoo's no place there, an' thou's ha' no place there if thou goes courtin' other wenches. Thou can pack up, bag and baggage, an' tak' thysel' soomwher else. We dunnot want Annie Davis' chap up yonder—we'n nobbut kep' thee fur bein' our Maggie's husband."

"Well, an' if yo' have kep' me yo' hannot kep' me for nought," put in Jim, all his pride in arms. "I've worked 'ard, and added my mate if iver a mon did. But I'll not be behowden to no one. I can soon find some little nook as 'll do fur Curly an' me."

"Curly!" cried the grandfather. "Eh, did iver a body 'sich a thing! Thou's thinkin' to tak' Curly off us! Nay, nay, we're noan sich fools as to let her go. Thou can go if thou cannot do w' out thy coortin's an' company-keepin's—but we's keep th' little wench."

Jim rolled his head from side to side and snorted.

"We'll see that. Hoo's my wench. Coom! Dost thou reckon hoo is or no?"

"Aye, hoo is thy wench reet enough, but hoo's Maggie's wench too, when all's said an' done, and Maggie wur mine, th' only child I iver had. Eh, my word it seems as if 'twere nobbut t' other day as our Maggie were trootin' about just same as th' little an' yonder. Ah," he added in a softened tone, "I like as if I could see her now—in a little yaller dress hoo had, an' her white piny all full of flowers. Hoo was allus fishy and about flowers."

Jim began to walk on, slowly, with his head a little bent. Jack followed, talking loud to himself.

"An' hoo'd coom runnin' to meet me just the same as Curly might do now,



The Premier suggests that a carefully selected Committee consisting of Messrs Lawry, Pirani, Taylor and G Hutcheson to deal with the liquor question might lead to excellent results, and would probably keep these gentlemen quiet for the rest of the session.