

"Well done, good and faithful servant," for this evening's work!"

"I think he would," said Hal, but Gil trembled, eying the Preacher with strained anxiety.

"We had to have peace," said Hal wistfully, as the Preacher remained silent.

"When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him," quoted the Preacher. "You wouldn't have fought him, sir?" asked Hal anxiously.

"Far be it from me to blame you, Dawson. Had I been tried as you have been tried, I might have done the same. I don't think I should—but I might have done. To his own master a man stands or falls!"

And Gil watching the little scene was awestruck at the deep humility of the man. And the soul of the boy was knit to the soul of the Preacher.

"You're a saint!" said Hal, as the door closed. "It takes a saint to hold in, thinking as he thinks of this night's job!"

"It 'ud take a deal of hard sweating to be like him!" said Gil.

"If it 'ud do poor old Mattha any good in his soul to give me a thrashing, I'd stand honest and let him do it! Mattha and me was mates!" said Hal sorrowfully.

But such an attitude was beyond Gil. He departed to boast of his father's prowess to the other boys.

Gil prized himself up, and peeped through a chink in the hedge, and started as he saw Miss Polly clinging to her grandfather's arm.

"Scared is she!" thought Gil, and he crept nearer.

The man laughed a hoarse laugh at the Preacher's suggestion.

"What doesn't ta clear out for, I say—and mind thy-own business!"

"I cannot leave this neighbourhood until my work is done. I must gather you into the Kingdom yet Matthew Storey." And the Preacher looked him full in the face.

"Your work!" and he swore lustily.

"Now look here, old man. Thoo'll just take thyself back to where thoo came from, or I'll have to show thee the way! I've made up my mind there shall be an end of this!"

Gil was now quite round the corner. "Matthew Storey, let the Lord have His way with you," said the Preacher.

"Eh, would ta!" shouted Gil, leaping forward, and pushing the Preacher aside. He caught the blow of Mattha's stout stick on his shoulder. He wrenched it out of his hand, and flung it along the road.

"Hal's whelp!" mocked Mattha started.

"Thoo dares!" cried Gil mad with anger, and writhing with pain. "Off thoo gets, or I'll set some one on ta, as 'll stiffen tha up!"

Polly had cried one little short cry,

of the question, my dear," he said more quietly.

"Can't some of the men go with you?"

"Most of them are off in another direction to-night, holding a meeting at the Cross Roads. What are you afraid of, my dear? The Lord is a mightier body, guard than a few wild quarrymen!"

"I know—or I ought to know!" and she half smiled. "Yet—if only you had Hal Dawson—"

"Poor Hal! I don't think that so far he has found his bed any easier! Good-night, child. Do not wait up for me."

"Good-night, Grandfather," and she kissed him.

A quarter of an hour afterward the landlady came in.

"Miss—I can't bear no longer—seems I must say it! That man as came before he left—he spoke rough to your grandfather! Said that he would do for him to-night, if he took any of his preaching to High Fell! Said that God Almighty Himself could not stop him!"

The girl sprang to her feet.

"Oh, Mrs. Simms, how could you! Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

Without any fixed plan, she rushed upstairs, and flung her things on.

She must pass through the village to strike the Fell road.

In the half light of the April night, she found Dawson's cottage.

She knocked and entered.

"Oh, Mr. Dawson!" she gasped.

"Won't you stay here and wait, Miss Polly," he said to the girl, as he heard her panting breath beside him.

"No, oh, no!" cried Polly. "They were out on the open fell, and far in the distance the Preacher was dimly visible."

"I should go faster if—" suggested Gil anxiously.

"I'll sit down here if you like!" said Polly with a mighty self-effacement.

But another moment, and a great figure leaped out from behind a boulder, and seized Gil by the arm.

In the half light, the boy looked up into the terrified face of Mattha. The man was speechless. The grip of his fingers made Gil set his teeth. The Preacher at any rate was nearly over the fell top—every moment he could delay the man was of importance.

"Well!" he said, for the terror in the man's face was communicating itself to him.

"Well!" and he wrenched himself away and stood over by Miss Polly, who had stumbled on to the bank, and was now staring at the two in terrified silence.

"And why didn't ta strike him?" Mattha's face was ghostly with an awful fear.

"Speak, thoo great coward!" said Gil, recovering himself. "Why didn't ta strike?"

"There are Two of them," said the man, pointing up the fell with a trembling finger.

Gil and Miss Polly looked also, but saw only the Preacher outlined against the dying sun-glow.



"HELP! HELP!"

The inevitable result of employing a lady life-saver.

The immediate result of the thrashing was that Mattha left Hal alone, and outward peace was restored.

But added to the fierce resentment in Mattha's mind for the humiliation he had received before the whole village, was a sense of indefinable disappointment. Through his dull brain a glimmer of new possibilities had arisen, as day after day his mate resisted him. But now Hal had, as it were, descended to his level. Hal had become as other men.

Moreover now having a wholesome awe of his mate, he must needs seek a new channel for the stream of his irritation, and he found it in the Preacher.

Gil was hurrying home, in keen expectation of a savoury supper, when hearing voices beyond the bend in the road, he stopped short to listen as Mattha's strong voice could be heard clearly, as he cursed the Preacher.

"What need was there for thee to come down amongst us?" he shouted. "Turning all the villagers into canting whining fools with thy religion! Look at Hal Dawson—what is thy religion when they get it, eh? Fights his own mate, as has been mates since we took our first rabbit! What, he hasn't spirit enough to take out a dog of a Sunday, let alone let him slip! But he can fight his own mate! The—hypocrite!"

"It would be as well, Matthew Storey," said the Preacher quietly, "if you were to take service under the Master yourself, to show us how best we may follow Him!"

and stood still clinging to her grandfather.

"Gilbert Dawson, bring me that stick," said the Preacher.

Gil did so.

"Here, Matthew Storey," he said quietly. "Take it. It is yours."

Gil uttered an exclamation, but the Preacher knew his mind.

"Come, Polly, my dear. Come, Gilbert Dawson." And the three walked on towards the village, leaving Mattha staring at them.

"Does it hurt dreadfully," asked Miss Polly, looking shyly at Gil.

"It's nowt!" said Gil coolly, "nowt at all!"

But the Preacher turned and took the boy's hand in his firm grasp.

"It was grandly done," he said with enthusiasm, "grandly done, Gilbert Dawson. The Lord reward thee!"

At which Gil was too overpoweringly abashed to reply.

"Who was that!" asked Miss Polly, as her grandfather returned to his evening meal after a short absence from the table.

"A soul in the devil's service, my dear! Pray that I may have a word in season at the High Fell Meeting to-night."

"I hate you to go off on those lonely ways!" said Polly, anxiety dimming her bright eyes. "Do let me go with you—just for once!"

"No, no!" he said hastily. "Four miles over the fell! It is quite out

Hal was seated with his leg up on a chair.

"Oh!" she cried, and stopped short. "Anything the matter?"

"My ankle—given it a twist, miss—why—"

"Oh!" she cried, "and Grandfather has set off up the fell, and I wanted you, so! Matthew Storey—he has threatened—"

Oh, is there no one who can come and stop him?"

Gil sprang up. "What? What, Miss Polly? Someone going to touch the Preacher?"

"He said— Oh, he said that God Almighty himself could not stop him!" cried Polly.

Hal was horror struck.

"Gil, lad!" he cried. "Off with her! Off with her for thy life— Oh, lad, lad, I've doubting the Preacher is catching it instead of me! Tell him, tell Mattha, to come along and thrash me, if he wants someone to thrash. Tell him he's got me fast now! Tell him to let the Preacher a-be!"

But Polly could hardly wait to hear the finish of the message, and in a few minutes she and Gil were racing onwards over the fell.

That anything should happen to the Preacher because of Mattha's antagonism to his father was appalling to Gil. Though young, he felt himself strong—equal to anything just now. His presence with the Preacher might be some protection.

When some celebrated pictures of Adam and Eve were seen on exhibition, Mr. McNab was taken to see them. "I think no great things of the painter," said the gardener; "why, man! tempting Adam w' a pippin of a variety that wasna known until about twenty years ago!"

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