

BY THOMAS HARDY.

IT is a Saturday afternoon of blue and yellow autumn-time, and the scene is the high street of a well-known market-town. A large carrier's van stands in the quadrangular fore-court of the White Hart Inn, upon the sides of its spacious tilt being painted, in weather-beaten letters, "Burthen, Carrier to Longpuddle." These vans, so numerous hereabout, are a respectable if somewhat lumbering class of conveyance, much resorted to by decent travellers not overstocked with money, the better among them roughly corresponding to the old French *diligences*.

The present one is timed to leave the town at four o'clock precisely, and it is now half past three by the ancient dial face in the church tower at the top of the street. In a few seconds errand-boys

from the shops begin to arrive with packages, which they deposit in the vehicle, and then they turn away whistling, and care for the packages no more. At twenty minutes to four an elderly woman places her basket upon the shafts, slowly mounts, takes up a seat inside, and folds her hands and her lips. She has secured her place for the journey, though there is as yet no sign of a horse being put in nor of a carrier. At the three-quarters two other women arrive, in whom the first recognizes the postmistress of Upper Longpuddle and the registrar's wife, they recognizing her as the aged groceress of the same village. At five minutes to the hour there approach Mr. Profit, the school-master, in a soft felt hat, and Christopher Twink, the master-thatcher; and

as the hour strikes there rapidly drop in the parish clerk and his wife, the seedsman and his aged father, the registrar, also Mr. Day, the world-ignored local landscape-painter, an elderly man, who resides in his native place, and has never sold a picture outside it, though his pretensions to art have been nobly supported by his fellow-villagers, whose confidence in his genius has been as remarkable as the outer neglect of it, leading them to buy his paintings so extensively (at the price of a few shillings each, it is true) that every dwelling in the parish exhibits three or four of those admired productions on its walls.

Burthen, the carrier, is by this time seen bustling round the vehicle; the horses are put in, the carrier arranges the reins, and springs up into his seat as if he were used to it—which he is.

"Is everybody here?" he asks, preparatorily, over his shoulder to the passengers within.

As those who were not there did not reply in the negative, the muster was assumed to be complete, and, after a few hitches and hinderances, the van, with its human freight, was got under way. It jogged on at an easy pace till it reached the bridge which formed the last outpost of the town. The carrier pulled up suddenly.

"Bless my soul!" he said. "I've forgot the curate!"

All who could do so gazed from the little back window of the vehicle, but the curate was not in sight.

"Now I wonder where that there man is?" continued the carrier.

"Poor man, he ought to have a living at his time of life."

"And he ought to be punctual," said the carrier. "'Four o'clock sharp is my time for starting,' I said. And he said, 'I'll be there.' Now he's not here; and as a reverent old church minister he ought to be as good as his word. Perhaps Mr. Maxton knows, being in the same line of life?" He turned to the parish clerk.

"I was talking an immense deal with him, that's true, half an hour ago," replied that ecclesiastic, as one of whom it was no erroneous supposition that he should be on intimate terms with another of the cloth. "But he didn't say he would be late."

The discussion was cut off by the ap-

pearance round the corner of the van of the curate's spectacles, followed hastily by his face and few white whiskers, and the swinging tails of his long gaunt coat. Nobody reproached him, seeing how he was reproaching himself; and he entered breathlessly, and took his seat.

"Now be we all here?" said the carrier again.

They started a second time, and moved on till they were about three hundred yards out of the town, and had nearly reached the second bridge, behind which, as every native remembers, the road takes a turn, and travellers by this highway disappear finally from the view of gazing burghers.

"Well, as I'm alive!" cried the post-mistress from the interior of the conveyance, peering through the little square back window along the road toward.

"What?" said the carrier.

"He's hailing us."

Another sudden stoppage. "Somebody else?" the carrier asked.

"Ay, sure!" All waited silently, while those who could gaze out did so.

"Now, who can that be?" he continued. "I just put it to ye, neighbors, can any man keep time with such hinderances? Bain't we full a'ready? Who in the world can the man be?"

"He's a sort of gentleman," said the school-master, his position commanding the road more comfortably than that of his comrades.

The stranger, who had been holding up his umbrella to attract their notice, was walking forward leisurely enough, now that he found, by their stopping, that it had been secured. His clothes were decidedly not of a local cut, though it was difficult to point out any particular mark of difference. In his left hand he carried a small leather travelling bag. As soon as he had overtaken the van he glanced at the inscription on its side, as if to assure himself that he had hailed the right conveyance, and asked if they had room.

The carrier replied that though they were pretty well laden they could carry one more, whereupon the stranger mounted, and took the seat cleared for him within. And then the horses made another move, this time for good, and swung along with their burden of fourteen souls all told.

"You bain't one of these parts, sir?"

said the carrier. "I could tell that as far as I could see ye."

"Yes, I am one of these parts," said the stranger.

"Oh!"

The silence which followed seemed to imply a doubt of the truth of the newcomer's assertion. "I was speaking of Upper Longpuddle more particularly," continued the carrier, hardily; "and I think I know most faces of that valley."

"I was born at Longpuddle, and nursed at Longpuddle, and my father and grandfather before me," said the passenger, quietly.

"Why—to be sure," said the aged groceress in the background, "it isn't John Lackland's son—never—it can't be—he who went to foreign parts five-and-thirty year ago with his wife and family? Yet—what do I hear?—that's his father's voice!"

"That's the man," replied the stranger. "John Lackland was my father, and I am John Lackland's son. Five-and-thirty years ago, when I was a boy of eleven, my parents emigrated across the seas, taking me and my sister with them. Kytes's boy Tony was the one who drove us and our belongings to Casterbridge on the morning we left, and his was the last Longpuddle face I saw. We sailed the same week across the ocean, and there we've been ever since, and there I've left those I went with—all three."

"Alive or dead?"

"Dead," he replied, in a low voice. "And I have come back to the old place, having nourished a thought—not a definite intention, but just a thought—that I should like to return here in a year or two, to spend the remainder of my days."

"Married man, Mr. Lackland?"

"No."

"And have the world used ye well, sir—or rather John, knowing ye as a child? In these rich new countries that we hear of so much, you've got rich with the rest?"

"I am not very rich," Mr. Lackland said. "Even in new countries, you know, there are failures. The race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong; and even if it sometimes is, you may be neither swift nor strong. However, that's enough about me. Now, having answered your inquiries, you must answer mine; for, being in London, I

have come down here entirely to discover what Longpuddle is looking like, and who are living there. That was why I preferred a seat in your van to hiring a carriage for driving across."

"Well, as for Longpuddle, we rub on there much as usual. Old figures have dropped out o' their frames, so to speak it, and new ones have been put in their places. You mentioned Tony Kytes as having been the one to drive your family and your goods to Casterbridge in his father's wagon when you left. Tony is, I believe, living still, but not at Longpuddle. He went away and settled at Lewgate, near Mellstock, after his marriage. Ah, Tony was a sort o' man!"

"What was his character? It had hardly come out when I knew him."

"Oh, 'twas well enough, as far as that goes. But I shall never forget his courting—never!"

The returned villager waited expectantly, and the carrier went on:

TONY KYTES, THE ARCH-DECEIVER.

"I shall never forget Tony's face. 'Twas a little, round, firm, tight face, with a seam here and there left by the smallpox, though not enough to hurt his looks in a woman's eye, though he'd had it badish when he was a boy. So very serious-looking and unsmiling 'a was, that young man, that it really seemed as if he couldn't laugh without great pain to his conscience. He looked very hard at a small speck in your eye when talking to 'ee. And there was no more sign of a whisker or beard on Tony Kytes's face than on the palm of my hand. He used to sing with a religious manner, as if it were a hymn:

"I've lost my love, and I care not—
I've lost my love, and I care not!
I shall soon have another
That's better than t'other—
I've lost my love, and I care not!"

He was quite the women's favorite, and in return for their likings he loved 'em in shoals.

"But in course of time Tony got fixed down to one in particular, Milly Richards, a nice, light, small, tender little thing; and it was soon said that they were engaged to be married. One Saturday he had been to market to do business for his father, and was driving home the wagon in the afternoon. When he reached the foot of the very hill we shall be going over in ten minutes, who should he

see waiting for him at the top but Unity Sallet, a handsome girl, one of the young women he'd been very tender toward before he'd got engaged to Milly.

"As soon as Tony came up to her she said,

"My dear Tony, will you give me a lift home?"

"That I will, darling," said Tony. "You don't suppose I could refuse 'ee?"

"She smiled a smile, and up she hopped, and on drove Tony.

"Tony," she says, in a sort of a tender chide, 'why did ye desert me for that other one? In what is she better than I? I should have made 'ee a finer wife, and a more loving one too. 'Tisn't girls that are so easily won at first that are the best. Think how long we've known each other—ever since we were children almost—now haven't we, Tony?"

"Yes, that we have," says Tony, a-struck with the truth o't.

"And you've never seen anything in me to complain of, have ye, Tony? Now tell the truth to me."

"I never have, upon my life," says Tony.

"And—can you say I'm not pretty, Tony? Now look at me!"

"He let his eyes rest upon her a long while. 'I really can't," says he. 'In fact, I never knowed you was so pretty before!"

"Prettier than she?"

"What Tony would have said to that, nobody knows, for before he could speak, what should he see ahead, over the hedge past the turning, but a feather he knew well—the feather in Milly's hat—she to whom he had been thinking of putting the question as to giving out the banns that very week.

"Unity," says he, as mildly as he could, 'here's Milly coming. Now I shall catch it mightily if she sees ye riding here with me; and if you get down, she'll be turning the corner in a moment, and seeing 'ee in the road, she'll know we've been coming on together. Now, dearest Unity, will ye, to avoid all unpleasantness, which I know you can't bear any more than I—will ye lie down in the back part of the wagon, and let me cover you over with the tarpaulin till Milly has passed? It will all be done in a minute. Do!—and I'll think over what we've said, and perhaps I shall put a loving question to you after all, instead of to Milly. 'Tisn't

true that it is all settled between her and me.'

"Well, Unity Sallet agreed, and lay down at the back end of the wagon, and Tony covered her over so that the wagon seemed to be empty but for the loose tarpaulin; and then he drove on to meet Milly.

"My dear Tony!" cries Milly, looking up with a little pout at him as he came near; 'how long you've been coming home! Just as if I didn't live at Upper Longpuddle at all! And I've come to meet you as you asked me to do, and to ride back with you, and talk over our future home—since you asked me, and I promised. But I shouldn't have come else, Mr. Tony!"

"Ay, my dear, I did ask ye—to be sure I did, now I think of it—but I had quite forgot it. To ride back with me, did you say, dear Milly?"

"Well, of course! What can I do else? Surely you don't want me to walk, now I've come all this way?"

"Oh! no, no! I was thinking you might be going on to town to meet your mother. I saw her there—and she looked as if she might be expecting ye."

"Oh no; she's just home. She came across the fields, and so got back before you."

"Oh, I didn't know that," says Tony. And there was no help for it but to take her up beside him.

"They talked on very pleasantly, and looked at the trees and beasts, and birds and insects, and at the ploughmen at work in the fields, till presently who should they see looking out of the upper window of a house that stood beside the road they were following but Anna Jolliver, another young beauty of the place at that time, and the very first woman that Tony had fallen in love with—before Milly and before Unity, in fact—the one that he had almost arranged to marry instead of Milly. She was a much more dashing girl than Milly Richards, though he'd not thought much of her of late. The house Anna was looking from was her aunt's.

"My dear Milly—my coming wife, as I may call 'ee," says Tony, in his modest way, and not so loud that Unity could overhear, 'I see a young woman looking out of window who I think may accost me. The fact is, Milly, she had a notion that I was wishing to marry her, and since she's discovered I've promised an-

other, and a prettier than she, I'm rather afraid of her temper if she sees us together. Now, Milly, would you do me a favor—my coming wife, as I may say?

"Certainly, dearest Tony," says she.

"Then would ye creep under the tarpaulin just here in the front of the wagon, and bide there out of sight till we've passed the house? She hasn't seen us yet. You see, we ought to live in peace and good-will since 'tis almost Christmas, and 'twill prevent angry passions rising, which we always should do."

"I don't mind, to oblige you, Tony," Milly said; and though she didn't care much about doing it, she crept under, and crouched down just behind the seat, Unity being snug at the other end. So they drove on till they got near the road-side cottage. Anna had soon seen him coming, and waited at the window, looking down upon him. She tossed her head a little disdainful, and smiled off-hand.

"Well, aren't you going to be civil enough to ask me to ride home with you?" she says, seeing that he was for driving past with a nod and a smile.

"Ah, to be sure! What was I thinking of?" said Tony, in a flutter. "But you seem as if you was staying at your aunt's?"

"No, I am not," she said. "Don't you see I have my bonnet and jacket on? I have only called to see her on my way home. How can you be so stupid, Tony?"

"In that case, of course you must come with me," says Tony, feeling a dim sort of sweat rising up inside his clothes. And he reined in the horse, and waited till she'd come down stairs, and then helped her up beside him. He drove on again, his face as long as a face that was a round one by nature well could be.

"Anna looked round sideways into his eyes. 'This is nice, isn't it, Tony?' she says. 'I like riding with you.'

"Tony looked back into her eyes. 'And I with you,' he said, after a while. In short, having considered her, he warmed up, and the more he looked at her the more he liked her, till he couldn't for the life of him think why he had ever said a word about marriage to Milly or Unity while Anna Jolliver was in question. So they sat a little closer and closer, their feet upon the foot-board and their shoulders touching, and Tony thought over and over again how handsome Anna was. He spoke tenderer and tenderer, and called her 'dear Anna' in a whisper at last.

"You've settled it with Milly by this time, I suppose?" said she.

"N—no, not exactly."

"What? How low you talk, Tony."

"Yes—I've a kind of hoarseness. I said, not exactly."

"I suppose you mean to?"

"Well, as to that—" His eyes rested on her face, and hers on his. He wondered how he could have been such a fool as not to follow up Anna. 'My sweet Anna!' he bursts out, taking her hand, not being really able to help it, and forgetting Milly and Unity and all the world besides. 'Settled it? I don't think I have!'

"Hark!" says Anna.

"What?" says Tony, letting go her hand.

"Surely I heard a sort of a little screaming squeak under that tar-cloth? Why, you've been carrying corn, and there's mice in this wagon, I declare!" She began to haul up the tails of her gown.

"Oh no; 'tis the axle," said Tony, peacefully. 'It does go like that sometimes in dry weather.'

"Perhaps it was. . . Well, now, to be quite honest, dear Tony, do you like her better than me? Because—because, although I've held off so independent, I'll own at last that I do like 'ee, Tony, to tell the truth; and I wouldn't say no if you asked me—you know what.'

"Tony was so won over by this pretty offering mood of a girl who had been quite the reverse (Anna had a backward way with her at times, if you can mind) that he just glanced behind, and then whispered, very soft, 'I haven't quite promised her, and I think I can get out of it, and ask you that question.'

"Throw over Milly?—all to marry me! How delightful!" broke out Anna, quite loud, clapping her hands.

"At this there was a real squeak, an angry, spiteful squeak, and afterward a long moan, as if something had broke its heart, and a movement of the wagon cloth.

"Something's there!" said Anna, starting up.

"It's nothing, really," says Tony, in a soothing voice, and praying inwardly for a way out of this. 'I wouldn't tell 'ee at first, because I wouldn't frighten 'ee. But, Anna, I've really a couple of ferrets in a bag under there, for rabbiting, and they quarrel sometimes. I don't wish it knowed, as 'twould be called poaching. Oh, they can't get out, bless ye—you are

quite safe! And—and—what a fine day it is, isn't it, Anna, for this time of year? Be you going to market next Saturday? How is your aunt now? and so on, says Tony, to keep her from talking any more about love in Milly's hearing.

"But he found his work cut out for him, and wondering again how he should get out of this ticklish business, he looked about for a chance. Nearing home, he saw his father in a field not far off, holding up his hand as if he wished to speak to Tony.

"'Would you mind taking the reins a moment, Anna,' he said, much relieved, 'while I go and find out what father wants?'

"She consented, and away he hastened into the field, only too glad to get breathing-time. He found that his father was looking at him with rather a stern eye.

"'Come, come, Tony,' says old Mr. Kytes, as soon as his son was alongside him; 'this won't do, you know.'

"'What?' says Tony.

"'Why, if you mean to marry Milly Richards, do it, and there's an end o't. But don't go driving about the country with Jolliver's daughter, and making a scandal. I won't have such things done.'

"'I only asked her—that is, she asked me—to ride home.'

"'She? Why, now, if it had been Milly, 'twould have been quite proper; but you and Anna Jolliver going about by yourselves—'

"'Milly's there too, father.'

"'Milly? Where?'

"'Under the tarpaulin. Yes, the truth is, father, I've got rather into a nunny-watch, I'm afeard. Unity Sallet is there too—yes, under the other end of the tarpaulin. All three are in that wagon, and what to do with 'em I know no more than the dead. The best plan is, as I'm thinking, to speak out loud and plain to one of 'em before the rest, and that will settle it; not but what 'twill cause 'em to kick up a bit of a miff, for certain. Now which would you marry, father, if you was in my place?'

"'Whichever of 'em did *not* ask to ride with thee?'

"'That was Milly, I'm bound to say, as she only came by my invitation. But Milly—'

"'Then stick to Milly; she's the best. . . . But look at that!' His father pointed toward the wagon. 'She can't hold

that horse in. You shouldn't have left the reins in her hands. Run on and take the horse's head, or there 'll be some accident to them maids!'

"Tony's horse, in fact, in spite of Anna's tugging at the reins, had started on his way at a brisk walking pace, being very anxious to get back to the stable, for he had had a long day out. Without another word, Tony rushed away from his father to overtake the horse.

"Now of all things that could have happened to wean him from Milly, there was nothing so powerful as his father's recommending her. No, it could not be Milly, after all. Anna must be the one, since he could not marry all three. This he thought while running after the wagon. But queer things were happening inside it.

"It was, of course, Milly who had screamed under the tarpaulin, being obliged to let off her bitter rage and shame in that way at what Tony was saying, and never daring to show, for very pride and dread o' being laughed at, that she was in hiding. She became more and more restless, and in twisting herself about, what did she see but another woman's foot and white stocking close to her head. It quite frightened her, not knowing that Unity Sallet was in the wagon likewise. But after the fright was over she determined to get to the bottom of all this, and she crept and crept along the bed of the wagon, under the cloth, like a snake, when lo and behold she came face to face with Unity.

"'Well, if this isn't disgraceful!' says Milly in a raging whisper to Unity.

"'Tis,' says Unity, 'to see you hiding in a young man's wagon like this, and no great character belonging to either of ye!'

"'Mind what you are saying,' replied Milly, getting louder. 'I am engaged to be married to him, and haven't I a right to be here? What right have you, I should like to know? What has he been promising you? A pretty lot of nonsense, I expect! But what Tony says to other women is all mere wind, and no concern to me!'

"'Don't you be too sure,' says Unity. 'He's going to have Anna, and neither you nor me either: I could hear that.'

"Now at these strange voices sounding from under the cloth Anna was thunder-struck a'most into a swoond; and it was just at this time that the horse moved on.

Anna tugged away wildly, not knowing what she was doing; and as the quarrel rose louder and louder Anna got so horrified that she let go the reins altogether. The horse went on at his own pace, and coming to the corner where we turn round to drop down the hill to Lower Longpuddle, he turned too quick, the off wheels went up the bank, the wagon rose sideways till it was quite on edge upon the near axles, and out rolled the three maidens into the road in a heap.

"When Tony came up, frightened and breathless, he was relieved enough to see that neither of his darlings was hurt, beyond a few scratches from the brambles of the hedge. But he was rather alarmed when he heard how they were going on at one another.

"Don't ye quarrel, my dears—don't ye!" says he, taking off his hat out of respect to 'em. And then he would have kissed them all round, as fair and equal as a man could, but they were in too much of a taking to let him. "Now I'll speak out honest, because I ought to; and this is the truth," says he. "I've asked Anna to be mine, and she is willing, and we are going to put up the banns next—"

"Tony had not noticed that Anna's father was coming up behind, nor had he noticed that Anna's face was beginning to bleed from the scratch of a bramble. Anna had seen her father, and had run to him, crying.

"My daughter is *not* willing, sir," says Mr. Jolliver, hot and strong. "Be you willing, Anna? I ask ye to have spirit enough to refuse him."

"That I have, and I do refuse him," says Anna, partly because her father was there, and partly, too, in a tantrum because of the discovery and the scratch on her face. "Little did I think when I was so soft with him just now that I was talking to such a false deceiver!"

"What, you won't have me, Anna?" says Tony, his jaw hanging down like a dead man's.

"Never—I would sooner marry nobody at all!" she gasped out, though with her heart in her throat, for she would not have refused Tony if he had asked her quietly, and her father had not been there, and her face had not been scratched by the bramble. And having said that, away she walked, upon her father's arm, thinking and hoping he would ask her again.

"Tony didn't know what to say next. Milly was sobbing her heart out; but as his father had strongly recommended her he couldn't feel inclined that way. So he turned to Unity.

"Well, will you, Unity dear, be mine?" he says.

"Take her leavings? Not I!" says Unity. "I'd scorn it!" And away walks Unity Sallet likewise, though she looked back when she'd gone some way, to see if he was following her.

"So there at last were left Milly and Tony by themselves, she crying in watery streams, and Tony looking like a tree struck by lightning.

"Well, Milly," he says at last, going up to her, "it do seem as if fate had ordained that it should be you and I, or nobody. And what must be must be, I suppose? Hey, Milly?"

"If you like, Tony. You didn't really mean what you said to them?"

"Not a word of it," declares Tony, bringing down his fist upon his palm.

"And then he kissed her, and put the wagon to rights, and they mounted together; and their banns were put up the very next Sunday. I was not able to go to their wedding, but it was a rare party they had, by all account. Everybody in Longpuddle was there almost; you among the rest, I think, Mr. Maxton?" The speaker turned to the parish clerk.

"I was," said Mr. Maxton. "And that party was the cause of a very curious change in some other people's affairs; I mean in Steve Hardcome's and his cousin James's."

"Ah! the Hardcomes!" said the stranger. "How familiar that name is to me! What of them?"

The clerk cleared his throat and began:

THE HISTORY OF THE HARDCOMES.

"Yes, Tony's was the very best wedding randy that ever I was at; and I've been at a good many, as you may suppose"—turning to the newly arrived one—"having, as an ecclesiastical officer, the privilege to attend all christening, wedding, and funeral parties—such being our Wessex custom.

"'Twas on a frosty night in Christmas week, and among the folk invited were the said Hardcomes o' Climmerston—Steve and James—first cousins, both of them small farmers, just entering into business on their own account. With them



"AMONG THOSE WHO DANCED MOST CONTINUALLY WERE THE TWO ENGAGED COUPLES."

came, as a matter of course, their intended wives, two young women of the neighborhood, both very pretty and sprightly maidens, and numbers of friends from Abbot's-Cernel, and Weatherbury, and Mellstock, and I don't know where—a regular houseful.

“The kitchen was cleared of furniture for dancing, and the old folk played at ‘put’ and ‘all-fours’ in the parlor, though at last they gave that up to join in the dance. The top of the figure was by the large front window of the room, and there were so many couples that the lower part of the figure reached through the door at the back, and into the darkness of the out-house; in fact, you couldn't see the end of the row at all, and 'twas never known exactly how long that dance was, the lowest couples being lost among the fagots and brushwood in the out-house.

“When we had danced a few hours, and the crowns of we taller men were swelling into lumps with bumping the beams of the ceiling, the first fiddler laid down his fiddle bow, and said he should play no more, for he wished to dance. And in another hour the second fiddler laid down his, and said he wanted to dance too; so there was only the third fiddler left, and he was an old, aged man, very weak in the wrist. However, he managed to keep up a feeble tweedle-dee; but there being no chair in the room, and his knees being as weak as his wrists, he was obliged to sit upon as much of the little corner table as projected beyond the corner cupboard fixed over it, which was not a very wide seat for a man advanced in years.

“Among those who danced most continually were the two engaged couples, as was natural to their situation. Each pair was very well matched, and very unlike the other. James Hardcome's intended was called Emily Darth, and both she and James were gentle, nice-minded, in-door people, fond of a quiet life. Steve and his chosen, named Olive Pawle, were different; they were of a more bustling nature, fond of racketing about, and seeing what was going on in the world. The two couples had arranged to get married on the same day, and that not long thence; Tony's wedding being a sort of stimulant, as is often the case; I've noticed it professionally many times.

“They danced with such a will as only

young people in that stage of courtship can dance; and it happened that as the evening wore on James had for his partner Stephen's plighted one, Olive, at the same time that Stephen was dancing with James's Emily. It was noticed that, in spite o' the exchange, the young men seemed to enjoy the dance no less than before. By-and-by they were treading another tune in the same changed order as we had noticed earlier, and though at first each one had held the other's mistress strictly at half-arm's length, lest there should be shown any objection to too close quarters by the lady's proper man, as time passed there was a little more closeness between 'em; and presently a little more closeness still.

“The later it got, the more did each of the two cousins dance with the wrong young girl, and the tighter did he hold her to his side as he whirled her round; and, what was very remarkable, neither seemed to mind what the other was doing. The party began to draw toward its end, and I saw no more that night, being one of the first to leave on account of my serious calling. But I learnt the rest of it from those that knew.

“After finishing a particularly warming dance with the changed partners, as I've mentioned, the two young men looked at one another, and in a moment or two went out into the porch together.

“‘James,’ says Steve, ‘what were you thinking of when you were dancing with my Olive?’

“‘Well,’ said James, ‘perhaps what you were thinking of when you were dancing with my Emily.’

“‘I was thinking,’ said Steve, with some hesitation, ‘that I wouldn't mind changing for good and all.’

“‘It was what I was feeling likewise,’ said James.

“‘I willingly agree to it, if you think we could manage it.’

“‘So do I. But what would the girls say?’

“‘Tis my belief,’ said Steve, ‘that they wouldn't particularly object. Your Emily clung as close to me as if she already belonged to me, dear girl.’

“‘And your Olive to me,’ says James. ‘I could feel her heart beating like a clock.’

“Well, they agreed to put it to the girls when they were all four walking home together. And they did so. When they

parted that night the exchange was decided on—all having been done under the hot excitement of that evening's dancing. Thus it happened that on the following Sunday morning, when the people were sitting in church with mouths wide open to hear the names published as they had expected, there was no small amazement to hear them coupled the wrong way, as it seemed. The congregation whispered, and thought the parson had made a mistake; till they discovered that his reading of the names was verily the true way. As they had decided, so they were married, each one to the other's original property.

"Well, the two couples lived on for a year or two ordinarily enough, till the time came when these young people began to grow a little less warm to their respective spouses, as is the rule of married life; and the two cousins wondered more and more in their hearts what had made 'em so mad at the last moment to marry crosswise as they did, when they might have married straight, as was planned by nature, and as they had first fallen in love. 'Twas Tony's party that had done it, plain enough, and they half wished they had never gone there. James, being a quiet, fireside, perusing man, felt at times a wide gap between himself and Olive, his wife, who loved riding and driving and out-door jaunts to a degree; while Steve, who was always knocking about hither and thither, had a very domestic wife, who worked samplers, and made hearth-rugs, scarcely ever wished to cross the threshold, and only drove out with him to please him.

"However, they said very little about this mismating to any of their acquaintances, though sometimes Steve would look at James's wife and sigh, and James would look at Steve's wife and do the same. Indeed at last they were frank enough toward each other not to mind mentioning it quietly between themselves, in a long-faced, sorry-smiling, whimsical sort of way, and would shake their heads together over their foolishness in upsetting a well-considered choice on the strength of an hour's fancy in the whirl and wildness of a dance. Still, they were sensible and honest young fellows enough, and did their best to make shift with their lot as they had arranged it, and not to repine at what could not now be altered or mended.

"So things remained till one fine summer day they went for their yearly little

outing together, as they had made it their custom to do for a long while past. This year they chose Budmouth-Regis, as the place to spend their holiday in; and off they went in their best clothes at nine o'clock in the morning.

"When they had reached Budmouth-Regis they walked two and two along the velvet sands—their new boots going squeakity-squash. I can seem to see 'em now. Then they looked at the ships in the harbor; and then went up to the Lookout; and then had dinner at an inn; and then walked two and two squeakity-squash again upon the velvet sands. As evening drew on they sat on one of the public seats upon the esplanade, and listened to the band; and then they said, 'What shall we do next?'

"'Of all things,' said Olive (Mrs. James Hardcome, that is), 'I should like to row in the bay! We could listen to this music from the water as well as from here, and have the fun of rowing besides.'

"'The very thing; so should I,' says Stephen, his tastes being always like hers."

Here the clerk turned to the curate.

"But you, sir, know more of the strange particulars of that strange day of their lives than anybody else, having had it from their own lips; and perhaps will oblige the gentleman?"

"Certainly, if it is wished," said the curate. And he took up the clerk's tale:

"Stephen's wife hated the sea, except from land, and couldn't bear the thought of going into a boat. James, too, disliked the water, and said that for his part he would much sooner stay on and listen to the band in the seat they occupied, though he did not wish to stand in his wife's way if she desired a row. The end of the discussion was that James and his cousin's wife Emily agreed to remain where they were sitting, and enjoy the music, while they watched the other two hire a boat just beneath, and take their water excursion of half an hour or so, till they should choose to come back and join the sitters on the esplanade; when they would all start homeward together.

"Nothing could have pleased the other two restless ones better than this arrangement; and Emily and James watched them go down to the boatman below, and choose one of the little yellow skiffs, and walk carefully out upon the little plank that

was laid on trestles to enable them to get alongside the craft. They saw Stephen hand Olive in, and take his seat facing her; when they were settled they waved their hands to the couple watching them, and then Stephen took the pair of sculls and pulled off to the tune beat by the band, she steering through the other boats skimming about, for the sea was as smooth as glass that evening, and pleasure-seekers were rowing everywhere.

"How pretty they look moving on, don't they?" said Emily to James (as I've been assured). "They both enjoy it equally. In everything their likings are the same."

"That's true," said James.

"They would have made a handsome pair if they had married," said she.

"Yes," said he. "'Tis a pity we should have parted 'em."

"Don't talk of that, James," said she. "For better or for worse we decided to do as we did, and there's an end of it."

"They sat on after that without speaking, side by side, and the band played as before; the people strolled up and down; and Stephen and Olive shrank smaller and smaller as they shot straight out to sea. The two on shore used to relate how they saw Stephen stop rowing a moment, and take off his coat to get at his work better; but James's wife sat quite still in the stern, holding the tiller ropes by which she steered the boat. When they had got very small indeed she turned her head to shore.

"She is waving her handkerchief to us," said Stephen's wife, who thereupon pulled out her own and waved it as a return signal.

"The boat's course had been a little awry while Mrs. James neglected her steering to wave her handkerchief to her husband and Mrs. Stephen; but now the light skiff went straight onward again, and they could soon see nothing more of the two figures it contained than Olive's light mantle and Stephen's white shirt sleeves behind.

"The two on the shore talked on. 'Twas very curious—our changing partners at Tony Kytes' wedding,' Emily declared. 'Tony was of a fickle nature by all account, and it really seemed as if his character had infected us that night. Which of you two was it that first proposed not to marry as we were engaged?'

"H'm—I can't remember at this mo-

ment,' says James. 'We talked it over, you know; and no sooner said than done.'

"'Twas the dancing,' said she. 'People get quite crazy sometimes in a dance.'

"They do," he owned.

"James—do you think they care for one another still?" asks Mrs. Stephen.

"James Hardcome mused, and admitted that perhaps a little tender feeling might flicker up in their hearts for a moment now and then. 'Still, nothing of any account,' he said.

"I sometimes think that Olive is in Steve's mind a good deal," murmurs Mrs. Stephen; 'particularly when she pleases his fancy by riding past our window at a gallop on one of the draught-horses. . . . I never could do anything of that sort; I could never get over my fear of a horse.'

"And I am no horseman, though I pretend to be on her account," murmured James Hardcome. 'But isn't it almost time for them to turn and sweep round to the shore, as the other boating folk have done? I wonder what Olive means by steering straight away to the horizon like that? She has hardly swerved from a direct line seaward since they started.'

"No doubt they are talking, and don't think of where they are going," suggests Stephen's wife.

"Perhaps so," says James. 'I didn't know Steve could row like that.'

"Oh yes," says she. 'He often comes here on business, and generally has a pull round the bay.'

"I can hardly see the boat or them," says James again; 'and it is getting dark.'

"The heedless pair afloat now formed a mere speck in the films of the coming night, which thickened apace; till it completely swallowed up their distant shapes. They had disappeared while still following the same straight course away from the world of land-livers, as if they were intending to drop over the sea edge into space, and never return to earth again.

"The two on the shore continued to sit on, punctually abiding by their agreement to remain on the same spot till the others returned. The esplanade lamps were lit one by one, the bandsmen folded up their stands and departed, the yachts in the bay hung out their riding lights, and the little boats came back to shore one after another, their hirers walking on to the sands by the plank they had climbed to go afloat; but among these Stephen and Olive did not appear.

"What a time they are!" said Emily. "I am getting quite chilly. I did not expect to have to sit so long in the evening air."

"Thereupon James Hardcome said that he did not require his overcoat, and insisted on lending it to her.

"He wrapped it round Emily's shoulders.

"Thank you, James," she said. "How cold Olive must be in that thin jacket!"

"Yes—I was thinking so," he answered. "Well, they are sure to be quite close at hand by this time, though we can't see 'em. The boats are not all in yet. Some of the rowers are fond of paddling along the shore to finish out their hour of hiring."

"Shall we walk by the edge of the water," said she, "to see if we can discover them?"

"He assented, reminding her that they must not lose sight of the seat, lest the belated pair should return and miss them, and be vexed that they had not kept the appointment.

"They walked a sentry beat up and down the sands immediately opposite the seat; and still the others did not come. James Hardcome at last went to the boat-man, thinking that after all his wife and cousin might have come in under shadow of the dusk without being perceived, and might have forgotten the appointment at the bench.

"All in?" asked James.

"All but one boat," said the lessor. "I can't think where that couple is keeping to. They might run foul of something or other in the dark."

"Again Stephen's wife and Olive's husband waited, with more and more anxiety. But no little yellow boat returned. Was it possible they could have landed further down the esplanade?"

"It hev been done, to escape paying," said the boat owner. "But they didn't look like people who would do that."

"James Hardcome knew that he could find no hope on such a reason as that. But now, remembering what had been casually discussed between Steve and himself about their wives from time to time, he admitted for the first time the possibility that their old tenderness had been revived by their face-to-face position more strongly than either had anticipated at starting—the excursion having been so obviously undertaken for the pleasure of

the performance only—and that they had landed at some steps he knew of further down toward the pier, to be longer alone together.

"Still, he disliked to harbor the thought, and would not mention its existence to his companion. He merely said to her, 'Let us walk further on.'

"They did so; and lingered between the boat stage and the pier till Stephen Hardcome's wife was uneasy, and was obliged to accept James's offered arm. Thus the night advanced. Emily was presently so worn out by fatigue that James felt it necessary to conduct her home; there was, too, a remote chance that the truants had landed in the harbor on the other side of the town, or elsewhere, and hastened home in some unexpected way, in the belief that their friends would not have waited so long.

"However, he left a direction in the town that a lookout should be kept, though this was arranged privately, the bare possibility of an elopement being enough to make him reticent; and full of misgivings the two remaining ones hastened to catch the last train out of Budmouth-Regis; and when they got to Casterbridge drove back to Upper Longpuddle."

"Along this very road as we do now," remarked the parish clerk.

"To be sure—along this very road," said the curate. "However, Stephen and Olive were not at their homes; neither had entered the village since leaving it in the morning. Emily and James Hardcome went to their respective dwellings to snatch a hasty night's rest, and at daylight the next morning they drove again to Casterbridge and entered the Budmouth train.

"Nothing had been heard of the couple there during this brief absence. In the course of a few hours some young men testified to having seen such a man and woman rowing in a frail outrigger, the head of the boat kept straight to sea; they had sat looking in each other's faces as if they were in a dream, with no consciousness of what they were doing, or whither they were steering. It was not till late that day that more tidings reached James's ears. The boat had been found drifting bottom upward, a long way from land. In the evening the sea rose somewhat, and a cry spread through the town that two bodies were cast ashore in Lullstead Bay, several miles to the eastward.

They were brought to Budmouth, and inspection revealed them to be the missing pair. It was said that they had been found tightly locked in each other's arms; and their features were still wrapt in the same calm and dream-like repose which had been observed in their demeanor as they had glided along.

"Neither James nor Emily questioned the motives of the unfortunate man and woman in putting to sea. They were both above suspicion as to conduct, whatever their mutual feelings; underhand behavior was foreign to the nature of either. Conjecture pictured that they might have fallen into tender reverie while gazing each into a pair of eyes that had formerly flashed for him and her alone, and, unwilling to avow what their mutual sentiments were, they had continued thus, oblivious of time and space, till darkness suddenly overtook them far from land. But nothing was truly known. It had been their destiny to die thus. The two halves intended by nature to make the perfect whole had failed in that result during their lives, though in their death they were not divided. Their bodies were brought home, and buried on one day. I remember that on looking round the church-yard while reading the service I observed nearly all the parish at their funeral."

"It was so, sir," said the clerk.

"The remaining two," continued the curate (whose voice had grown husky

while relating the lovers' sad fate), "were a more thoughtful and far-seeing, though less romantic couple than the first. They were now mutually bereft of a companion; and found themselves by this accident in a position to fulfil their destiny according to nature's plan, and their own original and calmly formed intention. James Hardcome took Emily to wife in the course of a year and half; and the marriage proved in every respect a happy one. I solemnized the service, Hardcome having told me, when he came to give notice of the proposed wedding, the story of his first wife's loss, almost word for word as I have told it to you."

"And are they living in Longpuddle still?" asked the home-comer.

"Oh no, sir," interposed the clerk. "James has been dead these dozen years, and his mis'sess about six or seven. They had no children. William Privett used to be their odd man till he died."

"William dead too—dear me?" said the other. "All dead."

"Yes, sir. William was much older than I. He'd ha' been over eighty if he had lived till now."

"Ah! there was something very strange about William's death—very strange indeed," sighed a melancholy man in the back of the van. It was the seedsman's father, who had hitherto kept silence.

"And what might that have been?" asked Mr. Lackland.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

AMERICAN LEADS AT WHIST, AND THEIR HISTORY.

BY N. B. TRIST.

THE ever-growing interest manifested in everything pertaining to the scientific game of whist will, no doubt, make the history of American Leads acceptable to the whist players of this country. As those leads are based on certain well-recognized principles of the game, it will be expedient to trace them as evolved through years of experience and practice. In doing so I will not confine myself to the examination of those principles bearing more directly on American Leads, but propose to note also, in a cursory manner, and chiefly from a chronological point of view, the other main developments of the game which preceded and have fol-

lowed the introduction of American Leads. The great majority of players have rather confused ideas as to the time when some of its most important features were incorporated into the game. They are generally under the impression that all there is good in whist has been introduced in comparatively modern times. They will therefore be surprised to learn that a good many of the rules as laid down by Hoyle, nearly a century and a half ago, are now followed by them in their daily practice. I have, more than once, heard advanced players say to a beginner: "With king, queen, knave, and two or more small cards, the *modern* rule

WESSEX FOLK.*

BY THOMAS HARDY.

THE SUPERSTITIOUS MAN'S STORY.

“WILLIAM, as you may know, was a curious silent man; you could feel when he came near ye; and if he was in the house or anywhere behind your back without your seeing him, there seemed to be something clammy in the air, as if a cellar door was opened close by your elbow. Well, one Sunday, at a time that William was in very good health to all appearance, the bell that was ringing for church went very heavy all of a sudden; the sexton, who told me o't, said he'd not known the bell go so heavy in his hand for years—it was just as if the rests wanted oiling. That was on the Sunday, as I say. During the week after, it chanced that William's wife was staying up late one night to finish her ironing, she doing the washing for Mr. and Mrs. Hardcome. Her husband had finished his supper and gone to bed as usual some hour or two before. While she ironed she heard him coming down stairs; he stopped to put on his boots at the stair foot, where he always left them, and then came on into the living-room where she was ironing, passing through it towards the door, this being the only way from the staircase to the outside of the house. No word was said on either side, William not being a man given to much speaking, and his wife being occupied with her work. He went out and closed the door behind him. As her husband had now and then gone out in this way at night before when unwell, or unable to sleep for want of a pipe, she took no particular notice, and continued at her ironing. This she finished shortly after, and as he had not come in she waited awhile for him, putting away the irons and things, and preparing the table for his breakfast in the morning. Still he did not return, but supposing him not far off, and wanting to get to bed herself, tired as she was, she left the door unbarred and went to the stairs, after writing on the back of the door with chalk: *Mind and do the door* (because he was a forgetful man).

“To her great surprise, and I might say alarm, on reaching the foot of the stairs his boots were standing there as they al-

ways stood when he had gone to rest; going up to their chamber she found him in bed sleeping as sound as a rock. How he could have got back again without her seeing or hearing him was beyond her comprehension. It could only have been by passing behind her very quietly while she was bumping with the iron. But this notion did not satisfy her: it was surely impossible that she should not have seen him come in through a room so small. She could not unravel the mystery, and felt very queer and uncomfortable about it. However, she would not disturb him to question him then, and went to bed herself.

“He rose and left for his work very early the next morning, before she was awake, and she waited his return to breakfast wi' much anxiety for an explanation, for thinking over the matter by daylight made it seem only the more startling. When he came in to the meal he said, before she could put her question, 'What's the meaning of they words chalked on the door?'

“She told him, and asked him about his going out the night before. William declared that he had never left the bedroom after entering it, having in fact undressed, lain down, and fallen asleep directly, never once waking till the clock struck five, and he rose up to go to his labor.

“Betty Privett was as certain in her own mind that he did go out as she was of her own existence, and was little less certain that he did not return. She felt too disturbed to argue with him, and let the subject drop as though she must have been mistaken. When she was walking down Longpuddle street later in the day she met Jim Weedle's daughter Nancy, and said, 'Well, Nancy, you do look sleepy to-day!'

““Yes, Mrs. Privett,' says Nancy. 'Now don't tell anybody, but I don't mind letting you know what the reason o't is. Last night, being Old Midsummer Eve, some of us went to church porch, and didn't get home till near one.'

““Did ye?' says Mrs. Privett. 'Old Midsummer yesterday was it? Faith I didn't think whe'r 'twas Midsummer or Michaelmas; I'd too much work to do.'

* Begun in March number, 1891.

"Yes. And we were frightened enough, I can tell 'ee, by what we saw."

"What did ye see?"

"(You may not remember, sir, having gone off to foreign parts so young, that on Midsummer Night it is believed here—about that the faint shapes of all the folk in the parish who are going to be at death's door within the year can be seen entering the church. Those who get over their illness come out again after a while; those that are doomed to die do not return.)"

"What did ye see?" asked William's wife.

"Well," says Nancy, backwardly—"we needn't tell what we saw, or who we saw."

"You saw my husband," says Betty Privett, in a quiet way.

"Well, since you put it so," says Nancy, hanging fire, "we—thought we did see him; but it was darkish, and we was frightened, and of course it might not have been he."

"Nancy, you needn't mind letting it out, though 'tis kept back in kindness. And he didn't come out of church again: I know it as well as you."

"Nancy did not answer yes or no to that, and no more was said. But three days after, William Privett was mowing with John Chiles in Mr. Hardcome's meadow, and in the heat of the day they sat down to eat their bit o' lunch under a tree, and empty their flagon. Afterwards both of 'em fell asleep as they sat. John Chiles was the first to wake, and as he looked towards his fellow-mower he saw one of those great white miller's-souls as we call 'em—that is to say, a miller-moth—come from William's open mouth while he slept, and fly straight away. John thought it odd enough, as William had worked in a mill for several years when he was a boy. He then looked at the sun, and found by the place o't that they had slept a long while, and as William did not wake, John called to him and said it was high time to begin work again. He took no notice, and then John went up and shook him, and found he was dead."

"Now on that very day old Philip Hookhorn was down at Longpuddle Spring dipping up a pitcher of water; and as he turned away, who should he see coming down to the spring on the other side—but William, looking very pale and odd. This surprised Philip Hookhorn

very much, for years before that time William's little son—his only child—had been drowned in that spring while at play there, and this had so preyed upon William's mind that he'd never been seen near the spring afterwards, and had been known to go half a mile out of his way to avoid the place. On inquiry, it was found that William in body could not have stood by the spring, being in the mead two miles off; and it also came out that the time at which he was seen at the spring was the very time when he died."

"A rather melancholy story," observed the emigrant, after a minute's silence.

"Yes, yes. Well, we must take ups and downs together," said the seedsman's father.

"You don't know, Mr. Lackland, I suppose, what a rum start that was between Andrey Satchel and Jane Vallens and the parson and clerk o' Scrimpton?" said the master-thatcher, a man with a spark of subdued liveliness in his eye, who had hitherto kept his attention mainly upon small objects a long way ahead, as he sat in front of the van with his feet outside. "Theirs was a queerer experience of a pa'son and clerk than some folks get, and may cheer 'ee up a little after this dampness that's been flung over yer soul."

The returned one replied that he knew nothing of the history, and should be happy to hear it, quite recollecting the personality of the man Satchel.

"Ah no; this Andrey Satchel is the son of the Satchel that you knew; this one has not been married more than two or three years, and 'twas at the time o' the wedding that the accident happened that I could tell 'ee of, or anybody else here, for that matter."

"No, no; you must tell it, neighbor, if anybody," said several; a request in which Mr. Lackland joined, adding that the Satchel family was one he had known well before leaving home.

"I'll just mention, as you be a stranger," whispered the carrier to Lackland, "that Christopher's stories will bear pruning."

The emigrant nodded.

"Well, I can soon tell it," said the master-thatcher, schooling himself to a tone of actuality. "Though as it has more to do with the pa'son and clerk than with Andrey himself, it ought to be told by a better churchman than I."

ANDREY SACHEL AND THE PARSON AND CLERK.

"It all arose, you must know, from Andrey being fond of a drop of drink at that time—though he's a sober enough man now by all account, so much the better for him. Jane, his bride, you see, was somewhat older than Andrey; how much older I don't pretend to say; she was not one of our parish, and the register alone may be able to tell that. But, at any rate, her being a little ahead of her young man in mortal years, coupled with other circumstances, made her very anxious to get the thing done before he changed his mind; and 'twas with a joyful countenance (they say) that she, with Andrey and his brother and sister-in-law, marched off to church one November morning as soon as 'twas day a'most, to be made one with Andrey for the rest of her life. He had left our place long before it was light, and the folks that were up all waved their lanterns at him, and flung up their hats as he went.

"The church of her parish was a mile and more from the houses, and, as it was a wonderfully fine day for the time of year, the plan was that as soon as they were married they would make out a holiday by driving straight off to Port Bredy, to see the ships and the sea and the soldiers, instead of coming back to a meal at the house of the distant relation she lived wi', and moping about there all the afternoon.

"Well, some folks noticed that Andrey walked with rather uncertain steps to church that morning; the truth o't was that his nearest neighbor's child had been christened the day before, and Andrey being godfather had staid all night keeping up the christening, for he had said to himself, 'Not if I live to be a thousand shall I again be made a godfather one day and a husband the next, and therefore I'll make the most of the blessing.' So that when he started from home in the morning he had not been in bed at all. The result was, as I say, that when he and his intended bride walked up the church to be married, the parson (who was a very worthy, strict man inside the church, whatever he was outside) looked hard at Andrey, and said, very sharply:

"'How's this, my man? You are in liquor. And so early, too. I'm ashamed of you!'

"'Well, that's true, sir,' says Andrey. 'But I can walk straight enough for practical purposes. I can walk a chalk line,' he says (meaning no offense), 'as well as some other folk: and I reckon that if you, Pa'son Billy Toogood, had kept up a christening all night so thoroughly as I have done, you wouldn't be able to stand at all; d— me if you would!'

"This answer made Pa'son Billy—as they used to call him—rather spitch, not to say hot, for he was a warm-tempered man if provoked, and he said, very decidedly: 'Well, I cannot marry you in this state; and I will not. Go home and get sober!' And he slapped the book together like a rat-trap.

"Then the bride burst out crying as if her heart would break, for very fear that she would lose Andrey after all her hard work to get him, and begged and implored the pa'son to go on with the ceremony—which, poor soul, she had very good reason to hasten. But no.

"'I won't be a party to your solemnizing matrimony with a tipsy man,' says Mr. Toogood. 'It is not right and decent. I am sorry for you, my young woman, but you'd better go home again. I wonder how you could think of bringing him here drunk like this.'

"'But if—if he don't come drunk he won't come at all, sir!' she says, through her sobs.

"'I can't help that,' says the pa'son; and plead as she might, it did not move him. Then she tried him another way.

"'Well, then, if you'll go home, sir, and leave us here, and come back to the church in an hour or two, I'll undertake to say that he shall be as sober as a judge,' she cries. 'We'll stay here, with your permission; for if he once goes out of this church unmarried, all Van Amburgh's horses won't drag him back again!'

"'Very well,' says the parson. 'I'll give you two hours, and then I'll return.'

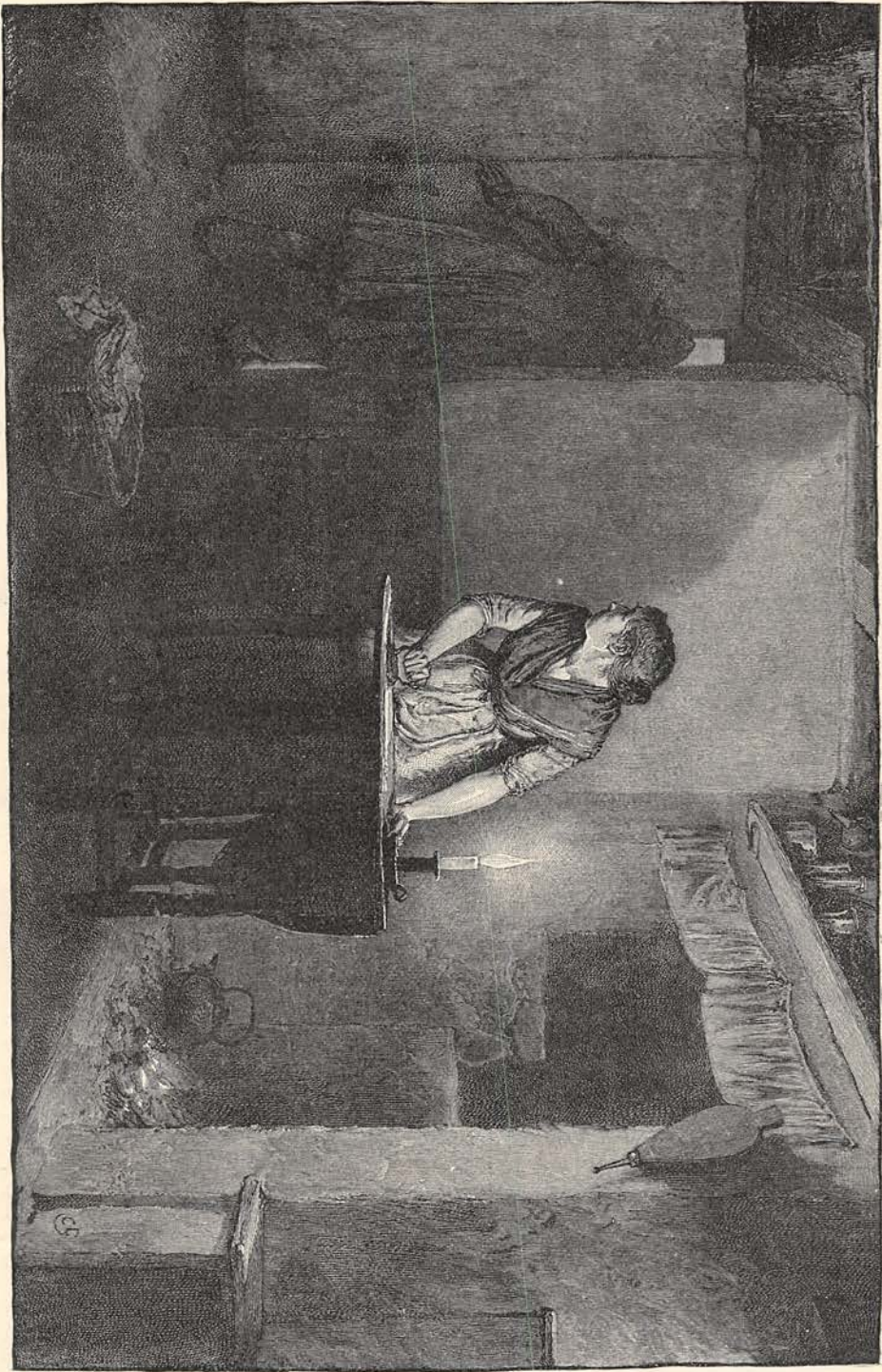
"'And please, sir, lock the door, so that we can't escape!' says she.

"'Yes,' says the parson.

"'And let nobody know that we are here.'

"The parson then took off his holy white surplice, and went away; and the others consulted upon the best means for keeping the matter a secret, which it was not a very hard thing to do, the place being so lonely, and the hour so early.

"HE WENT OUT AND CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND HIM."—[See page 698.]



The witnesses, Andrey's brother and brother's wife, neither of whom cared about Andrey's marrying Jane, and had come rather against their will, said they couldn't wait two hours, wishing to get home to Longpuddle before dinner-time. They were altogether so crusty that the clerk said there was no difficulty in their doing as they wished. They could go home as if their brother's wedding had actually taken place and the married couple had gone onward for their day's pleasure trip to Port Bredy as intended. He, the clerk, and any casual passer-by would act as witnesses when the parson came back.

"This was agreed to, and away Andrey's relations went, nothing loath, and the clerk shut the church door and prepared to lock in the couple. The bride went up and whispered to him, with her eyes a-streaming still.

"My dear good clerk," she says, 'if we bide here in the church, folk may see us through the winders, and find out what has happened; and 'twould cause such a talk and scandal that I never should get over it: and perhaps, too, dear Andrey might try to get out and leave me! Will ye lock us up in the tower, my dear good clerk?' she says. 'I'll tole him in there if you will.'

"The clerk had no objection to do this to oblige the poor young woman, and they toled Andrey into the tower, and the clerk locked 'em both up straightway, and then went home, to return at the end of the two hours.

"Parson Toogood had not been long in his house after leaving the church when he saw a gentleman in pink and top-boots ride past his windows, and with a sudden flash of excitement he called to mind that the hounds met that day just on the edge of his parish. The parson was one who dearly loved sport, and much he longed to be there.

"Now the clerk was the parson's groom and gardener and general manager, and had just got back to his work in the garden when he, too, saw the hunting man pass, and presently saw lots more of 'em, noblemen and gentry, and then he saw the hounds, the huntsman, Jim Tread-hedge, the whipper-in, and I don't know who besides. The clerk loved going to cover as frantical as the parson, so much so that whenever he saw or heard the pack he could no more rule his feelings than if they were the winds of heaven.

He might be bedding, or he might be sowing—all was forgot. So he throws down his spade and rushes in to the parson, who was by this time as frantical to go as he.

"That there mare of yours, sir, do want exercise bad, very bad, this morning," the clerk says, all of a tremble. 'Don't ye think I'd better trot her round the downs for an hour, sir?'

"To be sure, she does want exercise badly. I'll trot her round myself," says the parson.

"And there's the cob, sir. Really that cob is getting unmanageable through bidding in stable so long. If you wouldn't mind my putting on the saddle—'

"Very well. Take him out, certainly," says the parson, never caring what the clerk did so long as he himself could get off immediately. So, scrambling into his riding boots and breeches as quick as he could, he rode off towards the meet, intending to be back in an hour. No sooner was he gone than the clerk mounted the cob, and was off after him. When the parson got to the meet, he saw a lot of friends, and was as jolly as he could be: the hounds found almost as soon as they threw off, and there was great excitement. So, forgetting that he had intended to go back at once, away rides the parson with the rest o' the hunt, all across the fallow ground that lies between Lippet Wood and Green's Copse; and as he galloped he looked behind for a moment, and there was the clerk close to his heels.

"Ha, ha, clerk—you here?" he says.

"Yes, sir, here be I," says t'other.

"Fine exercise for the horses!"

"Ay, sir—hee, hee!" says the clerk.

"So they went on and on, into Green's Copse, then across to Higher Jirton; then on across this very turnpike-road to Climmerston Ridge, then away towards Yalbury Wood: up hill and down dale, like the very wind, the clerk close to the parson, and the parson not far from the hounds. Never was there a finer run known with that pack than they had that day; and neither parson nor clerk thought one word about the unmarried couple locked up in the church tower waiting to get jined.

"These horses of yours, sir, will be much improved by this," says the clerk as he rode along, just a neck behind the parson. 'Twas a happy thought of your reverent mind to bring 'em out to-day. Why, it may be frosty in a day or two,



"THE CLERK SAW THE HUNTING MAN PASS."

and then the poor things mid not be able to leave the stable for weeks.'

"They may not, they may not, it is true. A merciful man is merciful to his beast,' says the parson.

"Hee, hee!' says the clerk, glancing sly into the parson's eye.

"Ha, ha!' says the parson, a-glancing back into the clerk's. 'Halloo!' he shouts, as he sees the fox break cover at that moment.

"Halloo!' cries the clerk. 'There he goes!' Why, dammy, there's two foxes—'

"Hush, clerk, hush! Don't let me hear that again! Remember our calling.'

"True, sir, true. But really, good sport do carry away a man so, that he's apt to forget his high persuasion.' And the next minute the corner of the clerk's eye shot again into the corner of the parson's, and the parson's back again to the clerk's. 'Hee, hee!' said the clerk.

"Ha, ha!' said Parson Toogood.

"Ah, sir,' says the clerk again, 'this is better than crying Amen to your Ever-and-ever on a winter's morning!'

"Yes, indeed, clerk. To everything there's a season,' says Parson Toogood, quite pat, for he was a learned and devout Christian man when he liked, and had chapter and verse at his tongue's end, as a parson should.

"At last, late in the day, the hunting came to an end by the fox running into an old woman's cottage, under her table, and up the clock-case. The parson and clerk were among the first in at the death, their faces a-staring in at the old woman's winder, and the clock striking as he'd never been heard to strike before. Then came the question of finding their way home.

"Neither the parson nor the clerk knew how they were going to do this, for their beasts were wellnigh tired down to the ground. But they started back along as well as they could, though they were so done up that they could only drag along at an amble, and not much of that at a time.

"We shall never, never get there!' groaned Mr. Toogood, quite bowed down.

"'Never!' groans the clerk. "'Tis a judgment upon us for our iniquities!"

"'I fear it is,' murmurs the parson.

"'Well, 'twas quite dark before they entered the rectory gate, having crept into the parish as quietly as if they'd stole a hammer, little wishing their congregation to know what they'd been up to all day long. And as they were so dog-tired, and so anxious about the horses, never once did they think of the unmarried couple. As soon as ever the horses had been stabled and fed, and the parson and clerk had had a bit and a sup themselves, they went to bed.

"'Next morning when Parson Toogood was at breakfast, thinking of the glorious sport he'd had the day before, the clerk came in a hurry to the door and asked to see him.

"'It has just come into my mind, sir, that we've forgot all about the couple that we was to have married yesterday!"

"'The half-chewed victuals dropped from the parson's mouth as if he'd been shot. 'Bless my soul,' says he, 'so we have! How very awkward! Have you been to the church to see what happened to them, or inquired in the village?"

"'Not I, sir. It only came into my head a moment ago, and I always like to be second to you in church matters. You could have knocked me down with a feather when I thought o't, sir; I assure 'ee you could!"

"'Well, the parson jumped up from his breakfast, and together they went off to the church.

"'It is not at all likely that they are there now,' says Mr. Toogood, as they went; 'and indeed I hope they are not. They are pretty sure to have escaped and gone home.'

"'However, they entered the church-yard gate, and looking up at the tower, there they saw a little small white face at the belfry window, and a little hand waving. 'Twas the bride.

"'Pon my life, clerk,' says Mr. Toogood, 'I don't know how to face 'em!' And he sank down upon a tombstone. 'How I wish I hadn't been so particular!"

"'Yes—'twas a pity we didn't finish it when we'd begun,' the clerk said. 'Still, since the feelings of your holy priestcraft wouldn't let ye, the couple must put up with it,' he says.

"'True, clerk, true.... Dear me, how

the small of my back do ache from that ride yesterday!.... But to business.'

"'They went on into the church, and unlocked the tower stairs, and immediately poor Jane and Andrey burst out like starved mice from a cupboard, Andrey limp and sober enough now, and his bride pale and cold.

"'What,' says the parson, 'you haven't been here ever since?"

"'Yes, we have, sir,' says the bride, sinking down upon a seat in her weakness. 'Not a morsel, wet or dry, have we had since! It was impossible to get out without help, and here we've staid.'

"'But why didn't you shout, good souls?' said the parson.

"'She wouldn't let me,' says Andrey.

"'Because we were so ashamed at what had led to it,' says Jane. 'We felt that if it were noised abroad it would cling to us all our lives! Once or twice Andrey had a good mind to toll the bell, but then he said: "No; I'll starve first. I won't bring disgrace on my name and yours, my dear." And so we waited and waited, and walked round and round; but never did you come till now.'

"'To my regret,' says the parson. 'Now, then, we will soon get it over.'

"'I—I should like some victuals,' said Andrey; 'if it is only a crust o' bread and a onion; for I am that leery that I can feel my stomach rubbing against my backbone.'

"'I think we had better get it done,' said the bride, getting a bit anxious in manner; 'since we are all here convenient, too!"

"'Andrey gave way about the victuals, and the clerk called in a second witness who wouldn't be likely to gossip about it, and soon the knot was tied, and the bride looked smiling and calm forthwith, and Andrey limper than ever.

"'Now,' said Parson Toogood, 'you two must come to my house, and have a good lining put to your insides before you go a step further.'

They were very glad of the offer, and went out of the church-yard by one path while the parson and clerk went out by the other, and so did not attract notice, it being still early. They entered the rectory as if they'd just come back from their trip to Port Bredy; and then they knocked in the victuals and drink till they could hold no more.

"'It was a long while before the story of

what they had gone through was known, but it was talked of in time, and they themselves laugh over it now; though what Jane got for her pains was no great bargain after all. 'Tis true she saved her name."

"Was that the same Andrey who went to the squire's house as one of the Christmas fiddlers?" asked the seedsman.

"No, no," replied Mr. Profit, the schoolmaster. "It was his father did that. Ay, it was all owing to his being such a man for eating and drinking." Finding that he had the ear of the audience, the schoolmaster continued, without delay:

ANDREW SATCHEL'S EXPERIENCE AS A
MUSICIAN.

"I was one of the choir boys at that time, and we and the players were to appear at the manor-house as usual that Christmas week, to play and sing in the hall to the squire's people and visitors; afterwards going, as we always did, to have a good supper in the servants' hall. Andrew knew this was the custom, and meeting us when we were starting to go, he said to us: 'Lord, how I should like to join in that meal of beef, and turkey, and plum-pudding, and ale, that you happy ones be going to just now! One more or less will make no difference to the squire. I am too old to pass as a singing boy, and too bearded to pass as a singing girl; can ye lend me a fiddle, neighbors, that I may come with ye as a bandsman?'

"Well, we didn't like to be hard upon him, and lent him an old one, though Andrew knew no more of music than the Cerne Giant; and armed with the instrument he walked up to the squire's house with the others of us at the time appointed, and went in boldly, his fiddle under his arm. He made himself as natural as he could in opening the music books and moving the candles to the best points for throwing light upon the notes; and all went well till we had played and sung 'While shepherds watch,' and 'Star, arise,' and 'Hark the glad sound.' Then the squire's mother, a tall gruff old lady, who was much interested in church music, said quite unexpectedly to Andrew: 'My man, I see you don't play your instrument with the rest. How is that?'

"Every one of the choir was ready to sink into the earth with concern at the fix Andrew was in. We could see that

he had fallen into a cold sweat, and how he would get out of it we did not know.

"'I've had a misfortune, mem,' he says, bowing as meek as a child. 'Coming along the road I fell down and broke my bow.'

"'Oh, I am sorry to hear that,' says she. 'Can't it be mended?'

"'Oh no, mem,' says Andrew. 'Twas broke all to splinters.'

"'I'll see what I can do for you,' says she.

"And then it seemed all over, and we played 'Rejoice, ye drowsy mortals all,' in D and two sharps. But no sooner had we got through it than she says to Andrew,

"'I've sent up into the attic, where we have some old musical instruments, and found a bow for you.' And she hands the bow to poor wretched Andrew, who didn't even know which end to take hold of. 'Now we shall have the full accompaniment,' says she.

"Andrew's face looked as if it were made of rotten apple as he stood in the circle in front of his book; for if there was one person in the parish that everybody was afraid of, 'twas this hook-nosed old lady. However, by keeping a little behind the next man he managed to make pretence of beginning, sawing away with his bow without letting it touch the strings, so that it looked as if he were driving into the tune with heart and soul. 'Tis a question if he wouldn't have got through all right if some of the squire's visitors hadn't noticed that he held the fiddle upside down, the nut under his chin, and the tail-piece in his hand, and they began to crowd round him, thinking 'twas some new way of performing.

This revealed everything; the squire's mother had Andrew turned out of the house as an impostor, and there was great interruption to the harmony of the proceedings, the squire declaring that he should have notice to leave his cottage that day fortnight. However, when we got to the servants' hall there sat Andrew, who had been let in at the back door by the orders of the squire's wife, after being turned out at the front by the orders of the squire, and nothing more was heard about his leaving his cottage. But Andrew never performed in public as a musician after that night; and now he's dead and gone, poor man, as we all shall be."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

WESSEX FOLK.*

BY THOMAS HARDY.

ABSENT-MINDEDNESS IN A PARISH CHOIR.

"I HAD quite forgotten the old choir, with their fiddles and bass-viols," said the home-comer, musingly. "Are they still going on the same as of old?"

"Bless the man!" said Christopher Twink, the master-thatcher; "why, they've been done away with these twenty year. A young teetotaler plays the organ in church now, and plays it very well; though 'tis not quite such good music as in old times, because the organ is one of them that go with a winch, and the young teetotaler says he can't always throw the proper feeling into the tune without well-nigh working his arms off."

"Why did they make the change, then?"

"Well, partly because of fashion, partly because the old musicians got into a sort of scrape. A terrible scrape 'twas too—wasn't it, John? I shall never forget it—never! They lost their character as officers of the church as complete as if they'd never had any character at all."

"That was very bad for them."

"Yes." The master-thatcher cleared his throat at the bottom, and then at the top, and went on:

"It happened on Sunday after Christmas—the last Sunday ever they played in Longpuddle church gallery, as it turned out, though they didn't know it then. As you may know, sir, the players formed a very good band—almost as good as the Mellstock parish players that were led by the Dewys; and that's saying a great deal. There was Nicholas Puddingcome, the leader, with the first fiddle; there was Timothy Thomas, the bass-viol man; John Biles, the tenor fiddler; Dan'l Hornhead, with the serpent; Robert Dowdle, with the clarinet; and Mr. Nicks, with the oboe—all sound and powerful musicians, and strong-winded men—they that blowed. For that reason they were very much in demand Christmas week for little reels and dancing parties; for they could turn a jig or a hornpipe out of hand as well as ever they could turn out a psalm, and perhaps better, not to speak irreverent. In short, one half-hour they

could be playing a Christmas carol in the squire's hall to the ladies and gentlemen, and drinking tay and coffee with 'em as modest as saints; and the next, at The Tinker's Arms, blazing away like wild horses with the 'Dashing White Sergeant' to nine couple of dancers and more, and swallowing rum and cider hot as flame.

"Well, this Christmas they'd been out to one rattling randy after another every night, and had got next to no sleep at all. Then came the Sunday after Christmas, their fatal day. 'Twas so mortal cold that year that they could hardly sit in the gallery; for though the congregation down in the body of the church had a stove to keep off the frost, the players in the gallery had nothing at all. So Nicholas said at morning service, when 'twas freezing an inch an hour, 'Please the Lord I won't stand this numbing weather no longer: this afternoon we'll have something in our insides to make us warm, if it cost a king's ransom.'

"So he brought a gallon of hot brandy and beer, ready mixed, to church with him in the afternoon, and by keeping the jar well wrapped up in Timothy Thomas's bass-viol bag it kept drinkably warm till they wanted it, which was just a thimbleful in the absolution, and another in the creed, and the remainder at the beginning of the sermon. When they'd had the last pull they felt quite comfortable and warm, and as the sermon went on—most unfortunately for 'em it was a long one that afternoon—they fell asleep, every man jack of 'em; and there they slept on as sound as rocks.

"'Twas a very dark afternoon, and by the end of the sermon all you could see of the inside of the church were the parson's two candles alongside of him in the pulpit, and his face behind 'em. The sermon being ended at last, the parson gave out the Evening Hymn. But no choir set about sounding up the tune, and the people began to turn their heads to learn the reason why, and then Levi Limpet, a boy who sat in the gallery, nudged Timothy and Nicholas, and said, 'Begin! begin!'

"'Hey? what?' says Nicholas, starting up; and the church being so dark and his head so muddled he thought he was at

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“THEN LEVI LIMPET NUDGED TIMOTHY AND NICHOLAS.”

the party they had played at all the night before, and away he went, bow and fiddle, at 'The Devil among the Tailors,' the favorite jig of our neighborhood at that time. The rest of the band, being in the same state of mind and nothing doubting, followed their leader with all their strength, according to custom. They poured out that there tune till the lower bass notes of 'The Devil among the Tailors' made the cobwebs in the roof shiver like ghosts; then Nicholas, seeing nobody move, shouted out as he scraped (in his usual commanding way at dances when the folk didn't know the figures), 'Top couples cross hands, and when I make the fiddle squeak at the end, every man kiss his pardner under the mistletoe.'

"The boy Levi was so frightened that he bolted down the gallery stairs and out homeward like lightning. The parson's hair fairly stood on end when he heard the evil tune raging through the church, and thinking the choir had gone crazy, he held up his hand and said: 'Stop, stop, stop! Stop, stop! What's this?' But they didn't hear 'n for the noise of their own playing, and the more he called the louder they played.

"Then the folks came out of their pews, wondering down to the ground, and saying: 'What do they mean by such wickedness? We shall be consumed like Sodom and Gomorrah!'

"Then the squire came out of his pew lined wi' green baize, where lots of lords and ladies visiting at the house were worshipping along with him, and went and stood in front of the gallery, and shook his fist in the musicians' faces, saying, 'What! In this reverent edifice! What!'

"And at last they heard 'n through their playing, and stopped.

"'Never such an insulting, disgraceful thing—never!' says the squire, who couldn't rule his passion.

"'Never!' says the parson, who had come down and stood beside him.

"'Not if the angels of heaven,' says the squire (he was a wickedish man, the squire was, though now for once he happened to be on the Lord's side)—'not if the angels of heaven come down,' he says, 'shall one of you villanous players ever sound a note in this church again, for the insult to me, and my family, and my visitors, and God Almighty, that you've a-perpetrated this afternoon!'

"Then the unfortunate church band

came to their senses, and remembered where they were; and 'twas a sight to see Nicholas Puddingcome and Timothy Thomas and John Biles creep down the gallery stairs with their fiddles under their arms, and poor Dan'l Hornhead with his serpent, and Robert Dowdle with his clarionet, all looking as little as ninepins; and out they went. The parson might have forgi'ed 'em when he learnt the truth o't, but the squire would not. That very week he sent for a barrel-organ that would play two-and-twenty new psalm tunes, so exact and particular that, however badly inclined you was, you could play nothing but psalm tunes whatsomever. He had a really respectable man to turn the winch, as I said, and the old players played no more."

"And of course my old acquaintance, the gaunt annuitant, Mrs. Winter, who seemed to have something on her mind, is dead and gone?" said the home-comer, after a long silence.

Nobody in the van seemed to recollect the name.

"Oh yes, she must be dead long since: she was seventy when I as a child knew her."

"I can recollect Mrs. Winter very well, if nobody else can," said the aged groceress. "Yes, she's been dead these five-and-twenty year at least. You knew what it was upon her mind, sir, that gave her that hollow-eyed look, I suppose?"

"It had something to do with a son of hers, I think I once was told. But I was too young to know particulars."

The groceress sighed as she conjured up a vision of days long past. "Yes," she murmured, "it had all to do with a son." Finding that the van was still in a listening mood, she spoke on:

THE WINTERS AND THE PALMLEYS.

"To go back to the beginning—if one must—there were two women in the parish when I was a child who were to a certain extent rivals in good looks. Never mind particulars, but in consequence of this they were at daggers-drawn, and they did not love each other any better when one of them tempted the other's lover away from her and married him. He was a young man of the name of Winter, and in due time they had a son.

"The other woman did not marry for many years; but when she was about

thirty a quiet man named Palmley asked her to be his wife, and she accepted him. You don't mind when the Palmleys were Longpuddle folk, but I do well. She had a son also, who was, of course, nine or ten years younger than the son of the first. The child proved to be of rather weak intellect, though his mother loved him as the apple of her eye.

"This woman's husband died when the child was eight years old, and left his widow and boy in poverty. Her former rival, also a widow now, but fairly well provided for, offered for pity's sake to take the child as errand-boy, small as he was, her own son, Jack, being hard upon seventeen. Her poor neighbor could do no better than let the child go there. And to the richer woman's house little Palmley straightway went.

"Well, in some way or other—how, it was never exactly known—the thriving woman, Mrs. Winter, sent the little boy with a message to the next village one winter day much against his will. It was getting dark, and the child prayed to be allowed not to go, because he would be afraid coming home. But the other insisted, more out of thoughtlessness than cruelty, and the child went. On his way back he had to pass through Yalbury Wood, and something came out from behind a tree and frightened him into fits. The child was quite ruined by it; he became quite a drivelling idiot, and soon afterward died.

"Then the other woman had nothing left to live for, and vowed vengeance against that rival who had first won away her lover, and now had been the cause of her bereavement. This last affliction was certainly not intended by her thriving acquaintance, though it must be owned that when it was done she seemed but little concerned. Whatever vengeance poor Mrs. Palmley felt, she had no opportunity of carrying it out, and time might have softened her feelings into forgetfulness of her supposed wrongs as she dragged on her lonely life. So matters stood when, a year after the death of the child, Mrs. Palmley's niece, who had been born and bred in the city of Exbury, came to live with her.

"This young woman — Miss Harriet Palmley — was a proud and handsome girl, very well brought up, and more stylish and genteel than the people of our village, as was natural, considering where

she came from. She regarded herself as much above Mrs. Winter and her son in position as Mrs. Winter and her son considered themselves above poor Mrs. Palmley. But love is an unceremonious thing, and what in the world should happen but that young Jack Winter must fall wofully and wildly in love with Harriet Palmley almost as soon as he saw her.

"She, being better educated than he, and caring nothing for the village notion of his mother's superiority to her aunt, did not give him much encouragement. But Longpuddle being no very large world, the two could not help seeing a good deal of each other while she was staying there, and, disdainful young woman as she was, she did seem to take a little pleasure in his attentions and advances.

"One day when they were picking apples together, he asked her to marry him. She had not expected anything so practical as that at so early a time, and was led by her surprise into a half-promise; at any rate she did not absolutely refuse him, and accepted some little presents that he made her.

"But he saw that her view of him was rather as a simple village lad than as a young man to look up to, and he felt that he must do something bold to secure her. So he said one day, 'I am going away, to try to get into a better position than I can get here.' In two or three weeks he wished her good-by, and went away to Monksbury, to superintend a farm, with a view to start as a farmer himself; and from there he wrote regularly to her, as if their marriage were an understood thing.

"Now Harriet liked the young man's presents and the admiration of his eyes; but on paper he was less attractive to her. Her mother had been a school-mistress, and Harriet had besides a natural aptitude for pen-and-ink work, in days when to be a ready writer was not such a common thing as it is now, and when actual handwriting was valued as an accomplishment in itself. Jack Winter's performances in the shape of love-letters quite jarred her city nerves and her finer taste, and when she answered one of them, in the lovely running hand that she took such pride in, she very strictly and loftily bade him to practise with a pen and spelling-book if he wished to please her. Whether he listened to her request or not nobody knows, but his letters did not

improve. He ventured to tell her in his clumsy way that if her heart were more warm towards him she would not be so nice about his handwriting and spelling; which indeed was true enough.

"Well, in Jack's absence the weak flame that had been set alight in Har-

riet alone was sufficient justification for any woman to put an end to an understanding with him. Her husband must be a better scholar.

"He bore her rejection of him in silence, but his suffering was sharp—all the sharper in being untold. She communi-



"GIVE ME THOSE LETTERS," HE SAID."

riet's heart soon sank low, and at last went out altogether. He wrote and wrote, and begged and prayed her to give a reason for her coldness; and then she told him plainly that she was town born, and he was not sufficiently well educated to please her.

"Jack Winter's want of pen-and-ink training did not make him less thin-skinned than others; in fact, he was woefully tender and touchy about anything. This reason that she gave for finally throwing him over grieved him, shamed him, and mortified him more than can be told in these times, the pride of that day in being able to write with beautiful flourishes, and the sorrow at not being able to do so, raging so high. Jack replied to her with an angry note, and then she hit back with smart little stings, telling him how many words he had misspelt in his last letter, and declaring again that this

cated with Jack no more; and as his reason for going out into the world had been only to provide a home worthy of her, he had no further object in planning such a home now that she was lost to him. He therefore gave up the farming occupation by which he had hoped to make himself a master-farmer, and left the spot to return to his mother.

"As soon as he got back to Longpuddle he found that Harriet had already looked wi' favor upon another lover. He was a young road contractor, and Jack could not but admit that his rival was both in manners and scholarship much ahead of him. Indeed, a more sensible match for the beauty who had been dropped into the village by fate could hardly have been found than this man, who could offer her so much better a chance than Jack could have done, with his uncertain future and limited abilities for grappling with the

world. The fact was so clear to him that he could hardly blame her.

"One day by accident Jack saw on a scrap of paper the handwriting of Harriet's new beloved. It was flowing like a stream, well spelt, the work of a man accustomed to the ink bottle and the dictionary, of a man already called in the parish a good scholar. And then it struck all of a sudden into Jack's mind what a contrast the letters of this young man must make to his own miserable old letters, and how ridiculous they must make his lines appear. He groaned and wished he had never written to her, and wondered if she had ever kept his poor performances. Possibly she had kept them, for women are in the habit of doing that, he thought, and whilst they were in her hands there was always a chance of his honest, stupid love assurances to her being joked over by Harriet with her present lover, or by anybody who should accidentally uncover them.

"The nervous, moody young man could not bear the thought of it, and at length decided to ask her to return them, as was proper when engagements were broken off. He was some hours in framing, copying, and recopying the short note in which he made his request, and having finished it, he sent it to her house. His messenger came back with the answer, by word of mouth, that Miss Palmley bade him say she should not part with what was hers, and wondered at his boldness in troubling her.

"Jack was much affronted at this, and determined to go for his letters himself. He chose a time when he knew she was at home, and knocked and went in without much ceremony; for though Harriet was so high and mighty, Jack had small respect for her aunt, Mrs. Palmley, whose little child had been his boot cleaner in earlier days. Harriet was in the room, this being the first time they had met since she had jilted him. He asked for his letters with a stern and bitter look at her.

"At first she said he might have them for all that she cared, and took them out of the bureau where she kept them. Then she glanced over the outside one of the packet, and suddenly altering her mind, she told him shortly that his request was a silly one, and slipped the letters into her aunt's work-box, which stood open on the table, locking it, and saying with a bantering laugh that of course she thought it

best to keep 'em, since they might be useful to produce as evidence that she had good cause for declining to marry him.

"He blazed up hot. 'Give me those letters!' he said. 'They are mine!'

"'No, they are not,' she replied; 'they are mine.'

"'Whos'ever they are I want them back,' says he. 'I don't want to be made sport of for my penmanship: you've another young man now! He has your confidence, and you pour all your tales into his ear. You'll be showing them to him!'

"'Perhaps,' said my lady Harriet, with calm coolness, like the heartless woman that she was.

"Her manner so maddened him that he made a step towards the work-box, but she snatched it up, locked it in the bureau, and turned upon him triumphant. For a moment he seemed to be going to wrench the key of the bureau out of her hand; but he stopped himself, and swung round upon his heel and went away.

"When he was out-of-doors alone, and it got night, he walked about restless, and stinging with the sense of being beaten at all points by her. He could not help fancying her telling her new lover or her acquaintances of this scene with himself, and laughing with them over those poor blotted, crooked lines of his that he had been so anxious to obtain. As the evening passed on he worked himself into a dogged resolution to have them back at any price, come what might.

"At the dead of night he came out of his mother's house by the back door, and creeping through the garden hedge went along the field adjoining till he reached the back of her aunt's dwelling. The moon struck bright and flat upon the walls, 'twas said, and every shiny leaf of the creepers was like a little looking-glass in the rays. From long acquaintance Jack knew the arrangement and position of everything in Mrs. Palmley's house as well as in his own mother's. The back window close to him was a casement with little leaded squares, as it is to this day, and was, as now, one of two lighting the sitting-room. The other, being in front, was closed up with shutters, but this back one had not even a blind, and the moonlight as it streamed in showed every article of the furniture to him outside. To the right of the room is the fireplace, as you may remember; to the left was the bureau at that time; inside the

bureau was Harriet's work-box, as he supposed (though it was really her aunt's), and inside the work-box were his letters. Well, he took out his pocket knife, and without noise lifted the leading of one of the panes, so that he could take out the glass, and putting his hand through the hole, he unfastened the casement, and climbed in through the opening. All the household—that is to say, Mrs. Palmley, Harriet, and the little maid-servant—were asleep. Jack went straight to the bureau, so he said, hoping it might have been unfastened again—it not being kept locked in ordinary—but Harriet had never unfastened it since she secured her letters there the day before. Jack told afterward how he thought of her asleep upstairs, caring nothing for him, and of the way she had made sport of him and of his letters; and having advanced so far, he was not to be hindered now. Jack, by forcing the large blade of his knife under the flap of the bureau, burst the weak lock; within was the rosewood work-box just as she had placed it in her hurry to keep it from him. There being no time to spare for getting the letters out of it then, he took it under his arm, shut the bureau, and made the best of his way out of the house, latching the casement behind him, and refixing the pane of glass in its place.

“Winter found his way back to his mother's as he had come, and being dog-tired crept up stairs to bed, hiding the box till he could destroy its contents. The next morning early he set about doing this, and carried it to the lincay at the back of his mother's dwelling. Here by the hearth he opened the box, and began burning one by one the letters that had cost him so much labor to write and shame to think of, meaning to return the box to Harriet, after repairing the slight damage he had caused it by opening it without a key, with a note—the last she would ever receive from him—telling her triumphantly that in refusing to return what he had asked for she had calculated too surely upon his submission to her whims.

“But on removing the last letter from the box he received a shock; for underneath it, at the very bottom, lay money—several golden guineas—‘Doubtless Harriet's pocket-money,’ he said to himself; though it was not, but Mrs. Palmley's. Before he had got over his qualms at

this discovery he heard footsteps coming through the house passage to where he was. In haste he pushed the box and what was in it under some brushwood which lay in the lincay; but Jack had been already seen. Two constables entered the out-house, and seized him as he knelt before the fireplace, securing the work-box and all it contained at the same moment. They had come to apprehend him on a charge of breaking into the dwelling-house of Mrs. Palmley on the night preceding; and almost before the lad knew what had happened to him they were leading him along the lane that connects that end of the village with this turnpike-road, and along they marched him between 'em all the way to Casterbridge jail.

“Jack's act amounted to night burglary—though he had never thought of it—and burglary was felony, and a capital offence in those days. His figure had been seen by some one against the bright wall as he came away from Mrs. Palmley's back window, and the box and money were found in his possession, while the evidence of the broken bureau lock and tinkered window-pane was more than enough for circumstantial detail. Whether his protestation that he went only for his letters, which he believed to be wrongfully kept from him, would have availed him anything if supported by other evidence I do not know; but the one person who could have borne it out was Harriet, and she acted entirely under the sway of her aunt. That aunt was deadly towards Jack Winter. Mrs. Palmley's time had come. Here was her revenge upon the household which had ruined and deprived her of her one heart's treasure—her little son. When the assize week drew on, and Jack had to stand his trial, Harriet did not appear in the case at all, which was allowed to take its course, Mrs. Palmley testifying to the general facts of the burglary. Whether Harriet would have come forward if Jack had appealed to her is not known; possibly she would have done it for pity's sake; but Jack was too proud to ask a single favor of a girl who had jilted him; and he let her alone. The trial was a short one, and the death sentence was passed.

“The day o' young Jack's execution was a cold dusty Saturday in March. He was so boyish and slim that they were obliged in mercy to hang him in the heaviest fet-

ters kept in the jail, lest his heft should not break his neck, and they weighed so upon him that he could hardly drag himself up to the drop. At that time the government was not strict about burying the body of an executed person within the precincts of the prison, and at the earnest prayer of his poor mother his body was allowed to be brought home. All the parish waited at their cottage doors in the evening for its arrival: I remember how, as a very little girl, I stood by my mother's side. About eight o'clock, as we hearkened on our door-stones in the cold bright starlight, we could hear the faint crackle of a wagon from the direction of the turnpike-road. The noise was lost as the wagon dropped into a hollow, then it was plain again as it lumbered down the next longincline, and presently it entered Longpuddle. The coffin was laid in the belfry for the night, and the next day, Sunday, between the services, we buried him. A funeral sermon was preached the same afternoon, the text chosen being, 'He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.' . . . Yes, they were cruel times.

"As for Harriet, she and her lover were married in due time; but by all account her life was no jocund one. She and her good-man found that they could not live comfortably at Longpuddle, by

reason of her connection with Jack's misfortunes, and they settled in a distant town, and were no more heard of by us; Mrs. Palmley, too, found it advisable to join 'em shortly after. The dark-eyed, gaunt old Mrs. Winter, remembered by the emigrant gentleman here, was, as you will have foreseen, the Mrs. Winter of this story; and I can well call to mind how lonely she was, how afraid the children were of her, and how she kept herself as a stranger among us, though she lived so long."

"Longpuddle has had her sad experiences as well as her sunny ones," said Mr. Lackland.

"Yes, yes. But I am thankful to say not many like that, though good and bad have lived among us."

"There was Georgy Crookhill—he was one of the shady sort, as I have reason to know," observed the registrar, with the manner of a man who would like to have his say also.

"I used to hear what he was as a boy at school."

"Well, as he began so he went on. It never got so far as a hanging matter with him, to be sure; but he had some narrow escapes of penal servitude; and once it was a case of the biter bit."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE SALVATION ARMY.

BY THE VEN. ARCHDEACON F. W. FARRAR, D.D.

WHETHER we admire or despise it, whether we detest or sympathize with it, the Salvation Army represents one of the most remarkable religious movements of this generation. I do not write this paper with a view either of denouncing or of defending it. I wish merely to place on record a brief account of its development, and to point out some of those secrets of its success which are worthy of the serious study of other religious bodies.

There is much in the modes of action of the Salvation Army, much in its doctrines, much in its organization, which is open to serious criticism. In the year 1882, when it first leapt into notoriety, I thought it my duty, in a sermon preached in Westminster Abbey, to comment in a tone of warning on some of its proceed-

ings and teaching. I see no reason to retract anything which I then said; but that light of God which shines on so steadily during our fleeting years, and "shows all things in the slow history of their ripening," has brought out more distinctly how much of good is mingled with what we might regard as dubious or full of peril. Experience has also taught us to make greater allowances for difficulties, and to feel more tolerant of ways and words which to us seem crude and irreverent, but which must be judged with reference to the issues which they effect, and the motives from which they spring.

Let us roughly sketch the origin and history of the movement.

William Booth—to whom it is a churlish pander to refuse the title of "Gen-