

AT TWILIGHT.

I stood at twilight by the shimmering lake, And watched the shadowy, autumn-tinted leaves, Inverted, swaying in the evening breeze, And the red tower and the pretty boat-house make A picture that no future years can take From out my memory; shadows such as these! The beautiful unreal—make cases In every earnest life; we dream and wake To nobler duties from such times of rest Earth seems a paradise reflecting heaven; Love floods the soul with colors richer far Than even nature in the glowing west. The hopes of youth come back; new strength is given, As through the twilight breaks the evening star.

—[Sarah K. Bolton, in Cleavland Leader.]

EPHRAIM'S PINCH.

By REV. S. BARING-GOULD.

A little to one side of the track that leads to Widdecombe in the Moor and that branches from the main artery of travel which runs from Tavistock to Moreton Hampstead, and thence to Exeter, is an ancient tenement in the midst of the waste, called Runnage.

Runnage lies in a very lonesome spot; the hills that fold about it to the back and west afford sufficient shelter for sycamores to have grown to a considerable size—sycamore, the one tree which will hold its own anywhere.

The tenants of these holdings enjoy great right by custom. The heir of each and every one, on the death of each and every tenant, has by custom the privilege of inclosing eight acres of the forest or waste ground, paying therefore one shilling annually to the Crown and this inclosure is called a new-take. No wonder that the Duchy of Cornwall does all in its power to rid itself of these encroaching neighbors. The new-take walls have wrought the destruction of the rude stone monuments; avenues of upright stones, circles, cromlechs, kists, have been ruthlessly pillaged, used as quarries which have been handily. In great many cases the largest upright ones have been seized upon as gateposts, or thrown across! ears and divers as bridges, or have been utilized to prop up linchays, and the lesser stones that perhaps commemorate some insignificant tradesman, have been left, while the great menhir set up in honor of his chief has disappeared. Sometimes the builders of the new-take walls throw down a great manolith with the intention of breaking it up, and then abandoned it because they found smaller stones more handy; sometimes they transported such big stones part way to the new wall, and cast it down, it being too heavy for their arms to convey any further. The marvel is that so much still remains after over a thousand years of wanton ravage.

Runnage tenement house is new. The ancient farm dwelling has been rebuilt in recent times, but at the time of our story the old dwelling was standing. It was a typical moor-house. A gateway in a high wall of rude granite blocks built up without mortar gave access to a courtyard paved, very small, into which all the windows of the house looked. Here also, were the outhouses, stables, pigstyes, the well house, the peat store, the saddle and farm implement houses. All opened inward, all could be reached with very little exposure. The main door of the dwelling did not open into the kitchen, but into a sort of barn in which every sort of lumber was kept, with the fowls roosting on the lumber. This served as a workshop for the men on rainy or foggy days; here they could repair damaged tools, hammer out nails and rivets, store potatoes, nurse the sheep in "yeaning time," prepare the rushes for thatching. Here at the end were heaped up high to the roof vast masses of dry bracken to serve as bedding, and in this, in bad weather, the children played hide and seek, and constructed themselves nests. At Runnage at one time lived the substantial tenant, Quintin Creeber, paying to the Crown a slight acknowledgment, and thriving on the produce of his sheep and kine and horses. He tilled little grain, grew no roots. There was always grass or hay for his beasts. If the snow lay on the ground deep, then only had he recourse to the hayrick. What little grain he grew was rye, and that was for the household bread.

Quintin Creeber had a daughter, Cecily, or, as she was always called, Sysy, a pretty girl with warm complexion, like a ripe girl, very full soft brown eyes and the richest auburn hair. She was lithe, strong, energetic; she was Quintin's only child; his three sons were dead. One had been killed in a mine, one had died of scarlet fever, and the third had fallen into the river in time of flood, and had acquired a chill which carried him off.

Sysy would be the heir to Quintin—inherit Runnage, his savings and the right, on her father's death, of inclosing another eight acres of moor. On the loss of his sons, Quintin had taken into his service one Ephraim Weekes, a young man, broad-shouldered, strongly built, noted as a constructor of new-take walls. Ephraim had a marvelous skill in moving masses of granite which could not be stirred by three ordinary men. It was all knack, he said, all done by pinching, that is to say, by leverage. But he used more than a lever—he employed rollers as well. Without other than a ready wit, and a keen estimation of weights and forces drawn from experience, Ephraim was able to move and get into place blocks which two and even three other men would avoid touching. He was not a tall man, but was admirably set and proportioned. He had fair hair and blue-gray eyes, a grave, undemonstrative manner, and a resolute mouth.

Instead of wearing hair about his face, it was Ephraim's custom to shave lip and cheek and chin; the hair of his head he wore somewhat long, except only on two occasions when he had his hair mown by the blacksmith at Widdecombe; one of these was Christmas, the other mid-summer. Then for a while he was short-cropped; but his hair grew rapidly again.

He was a quiet man who did not speak much, reserved with the farmer, and not seeking companionship at the nearest hamlet of Post Bridge, where was the tavern, the social heart of the region.

Ephraim was the youngest son of a small farmer at Walna, a house with a bit of land that had been parted off from Runnage tenement at some time in the tenth century. Walna could not maintain four men, beside the farmer and his wife, consequently the youngest, Ephraim, was obliged to seek work away from the parental house; and he had been employed repairing fallen walls and constructing new ones, till Quintin Creeber had engaged him as a laborer on his farm. Not for one moment had it occurred to the owner of Runnage that this might lead to results other than those of business between master and man—that it was possible Ephraim might aspire to Sysy, and his daughter stoop to love the laboring man.

It was quite true that in the matter of blood the Creebers and the Weekeses were equal, but a moor-man is too practical a man to consider blood: he looks to position, to money. The husband he had in his eye for his daughter was a man who had capital wherewith to develop the resources of the farm, to enlarge the new-takes, to break up fresh soil, to buy well bred horses, and double the number of oxen, and quadruple that of sheep kept on the farm and the moor over which he had free right of common. Quintin would have hesitated to take into his employ Killeas, that is to say, Archelaus Weekes, the eldest son of his neighbor at Walna, a handsome fellow, with a song or a joke always in his mouth, who loved to romp with the girls, who liked his glass at the tavern; but Ephraim was different. What girl would care for him, plain, silent, without wickedness (*i.e.*, mischief) in him, who never made or understood a joke?

Sysy was aged seventeen when Ephraim, a man of twenty-three, came into the service of Quintin Creeber. He served faithfully for seven years, and never gave the farmer cause to reproach him for inactivity, was ever docile, obliging and industrious. Such a man was not to be found elsewhere; such a combination of great strength, skill and sobriety, Creeber esteemed himself most lucky in having such a servant. Ephraim did more than two other men, and never asked for increase of wage, never grumbled at the tasks imposed upon him.

When seven years were over, then Sysy was twenty-four, and Ephraim was thirty. There had come suitors for the girl—among them the eldest son of the farmer Weekes, the light-hearted, handsome Killeas. She had refused him. The young farmer of Ephraim had sued for her, and had been rejected, greatly to the wonder of Quintin. Now, when the seven years were over, then Ephraim, in his wonted quiet, composed manner, said to the owner of Runnage: "Maister me and your Sysy likes one another, and we reckon we'll make one. What say you to that, Master?"

Quintin stared, fell back in astonishment, and did not answer for three minutes, while he gave himself time for consideration. He did not want to lose a valuable servant. He had no thought of giving him his daughter. So he said: "Pshaw! you're both too young. Wait another seven years, and if you be in the mind then, you and she, speak of it again." Ephraim took Quintin at his word, without remonstrance, without an attempt to persuade him to be more yielding.

He remained on another seven years.

Then Sysy was aged thirty-one, and he—thirty-seven. On the very day fourteen years on which he had entered the house at Runnage, excluded when the seven years were concluded, at the end of which farmer Quintin had bid him speak of the matter again, then Ephraim went in quest of him, with the intent of again asking for Sysy. He had not wavered in his devotion to her. She had refused every suitor—for him. He found the old man in the outer barn or entrance to the house; he was filling a sack with rye.

"I say—Ephraim," he spoke, as Weeks entered: "there's the horse gone lame, and we be out of flour. What is to be done?" Sysy tells me there hain't a crumb of flour more in the bin, and her wants to bake to once."

"Maister," said Ephraim, "I've waited as you said this second seven years. The time be up to day. Me and Sysy, we ain't changed our minds, not one bit. Just the same, only us like one another a thousand times dearer now ever us did afore. Will you now give her to me?"

"Look'ye here, Ephraim. Carry this sack o' rye on your back to Widdecombe mill, and bring 'em back full o' flour—and I will."

He had set the man an impossible task. It was five miles to the mill, and the road a mountainous one. But he had put him off—that was all he cared for.

In the room was Sysy. She had heard all. She came out; she saw Ephraim tying up the neck of the sack. "Help her up on my back, Sysy," said he.

"Eph!—you do not mean it! You can't do it. It's too much."

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Sysy held the sack up. But her heart misgave her.

"Eph," she said; "my father only said that because he knew you could do it."

"I can do it—when I see you before me."

"How do you mean, Eph?"

"Bring back the sack o' flour, and you shall have her." Sys, I'd 'arrt the world on my back for that."

He was strong, broad-shouldered, and he started with his burden. Sysy watched him with doubt and unrest.

Was it possible that he could reach Widdecombe with such a burden? If he reached the mill, could he carry back the sack of flour? She watched him down the hill, and across the Wallbrook that gives its name Walna (now corrupted into Warner) to his father's farm. Then ensued an ascent, and she saw him toiling up the hill of Sousson's Moor with the sack on his back. Was there any avail in his undertaking this tremendous exertion? Surely her father, if he had intended to give his consent, would not have made it conditional on the discharge of such a task! Surely, if he had designed to make Ephraim his son-in-law, he would not have subjected him to such a strain! Was it not probable that Ephraim would do himself an injury in attempting this impossible task?

Sysy knew the resolution, the love of the silent, strong-hearted man; she felt assured that he would labor under his burden, toil up the steep slopes—struggle, with perspiration streaming, with panting lungs and quivering muscles, up the great ridge of Hamledon—that he would pursue his purpose till nature gave way.

And for what? She did not share his confidence in the good faith of her father. She watched Ephraim till the tears so clouded her eyes that she could see the patient, faithful man no longer.

Hours passed. The evening came on; and Quintin Creeber returned to the house.

"Where is Ephraim?" he asked.

"I want to have the mare blistered; she can't put a foot to the ground."

"Ephraim is gone to Widdecombe," answered Sysy.

"To Widdecombe? Who gave him leave?"

"Father, you told him to carry the sack."

Old Creeber stood aghast.

"To carry the sack o' rye!"

"You told him he was to take that to the mill, and bring back flour."

"It was nonsense. I never meant it."

"It was a put-off. He can't do it."

No man can. He'll chuck the sack down, on the way and come back without it."

"He'll never do that, Father."

Quintin Creeber was much astonished. The man had taken him at his word. The more fool he. He had attempted the impossible. Well, there was this advantage. When Weekes returned without the "four or rye, he, Quintin, would be able to laugh at him and say: "You have not fulfilled the condition, therefore not Sysy for you."

Quintin Creeber walked out of his farm buildings and went to the Widdecombe road.

"Pshaw," said he, "the man is an ass. He couldn't do it. He should have known that, and not have attempted it."

As he said these words to himself he discerned in the evening glow over Sousson's Moor a figure descending the path or road.

"By gum!" said the farmer, "it is Ephraim. He's never done it; he has come back beat—turned halfway. How the chap staggers! By crock! he's down, he's fallen over a stone. The weight is too much for him descending. I swear, if I didn't know he were as temperate as—no one else on the moor, I'd say he were drunk, he feels so. There he is now at the bridge. Ha! he has set the sack down, and is leaning—his head on it. I reckon he's just about dead beat. The more fool he! He should ha' known I never meant it. What! he's coming on again. Up hill! That'll go faster. He has a half every three steps. He hasn't set down the sack; he'd never get her up on his back again. There he is, down on one knee; kneeling to his prayers, be he? or taking his breath? He's up again, and crawling on. Well, I reckon this is a pretty bit of a strain for Ephraim, up this steep ascent w' a sack o' flour on his back, and four to five miles behind him."

The farmer watched the man as he toiled up the road, step by step; it seemed as if each must be the last, and he must collapse, go down in a heap at the next. Slowly, however, he forged on till he came up to Quintin. Then the yeoman saw his face. Ephraim was haggard, his eyes starting from his head; he breathed hoarsely, like one snoring, and there was froth on his lips.

Quintin Creeber put his hand under the sack. "By gum!" said he; "flour!"

It was even so. That man had carried the burden of rye to the mill, and had come back with it in the condition of death.

Half-supporting the sack, the farmer attended his man as he stumbled forward, turned out of the road, and took the track to Runnage.

Ephraim could not speak. He looked out of his great, starting eyes at the master, and moved his lips; but foam, not words, formed on them. They were purple, cracked and bleeding. So they went on till they reached the farm. Then, in the outer chamber, without a word, Ephraim dropped the sack and sank against it, and pointed to Sysy, who appeared at the door.

"Gammon!" said Quintin; "you won't such a fool as to think to have her? Her's not for you—not you! you'd never do it, and bring 'em back again. Sysy—yours never!"

The man could not speak. He sank, slipped down, and fell before the sack, that partly held him up. His head dropped forward on his breast.

"Look up, Ephraim; don't be a fool!" said the yeoman.

He was past looking up. He was dead.

On the old ordnance map of 1809, I see that the steep ascent up which Weekes made his last climb, laden with the sack of rye flour, is marked as "Ephraim's Pinch."

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It was a joke.

"I don't understand a joke. He said it! He's man of his word, straight up and down."

Ephraim was able to move and get into place blocks which two and even three other men would avoid touching. He was not a tall man, but was admirably set and proportioned. He had fair hair and blue-gray eyes, a grave, undemonstrative manner, and a resolute mouth.

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COZY-LOOKING COATS.

MANY NOVELTIES ARE PRESENTED THIS SEASON.

Frock Coats for Dress Occasions Come to the Knees, White the Ulster-Like Shapes Are Long Enough to Come Below a Walking Skirt.

Gotham Fashion Gossip.

New York Correspondence:

It is interesting to know that while the United States is one of the richest countries in the world, its stock of gold and silver money is not by any means so large as that of France, which has more metallic money than any other nation.

The gold coins of the world are equal in value to \$1,582,605,000, and the silver coins to \$4,042,700,000, while the paper money has a face value of \$2,635,873,000.

Of this vast amount France has \$800,000,000 worth of gold and \$700,000,000 worth of silver; the United States \$604,000,000 worth of gold and \$615,000,000 worth of silver, and Great Britain \$550,000,000 of gold and \$100,000,000 of silver. Germany has \$600,000,000 worth of gold and \$211,000,000 worth of silver, while Russia, with a much larger population, has \$50,000,000 worth of gold and \$60,000,000 worth of silver coin. She has, however, \$500,000,000 worth of paper money, while South America keeps in circulation \$600,000,000 worth of gold and \$12,000,000 of silver; Austria, \$260,000,000; Italy, \$163,000,000; Germany, \$107,000,000; France, \$81,000,000, and Great Britain, \$50,000,000.