

CHAPTER XVII

A MAD DOG

DAVID and Maggie, meanwhile, were drifting further and further apart. He now thought the girl took too much upon herself; that this assumption of the woman and the mother was overdone. Once, on a Sunday, he caught her hearing Andrew his catechism. He watched the performance through a crack in the door, and listened, giggling, to her simple teaching. At length his merriment grew so boisterous that she looked up, saw him, and, straightway rising to her feet, crossed the room and shut the door; tendering her unspoken rebuke with such a sweet dignity that he slunk away for once decently ashamed. And the incident served to add point to his hostility.

Consequently he was seldom at Kenmuir, and more often at home, quarrelling with his father.

Since that day, two years before, when the boy had been an instrument in the taking of the Cup from him, father and son had been like two vessels charged with electricity, contact between which might result at any mo-

ment in a shock and a flash. This was the outcome not of a moment, but of years.

Of late the contest had raged markedly fierce; for M'Adam noticed his son's more frequent presence at home, and commented on the fact in his usual spirit of playful raillery.

"What's come to ye, David?" he asked one day. "Yer auld dad's head is nigh turned wi' yer condescension. Is James Moore feared ye'll steal the Cup fra him, as ye stole it from me, that he'll not ha' ye at Kenmuir? or what is it?"

"I thought I could maybe keep an eye on the Killer gin I stayed here," David answered, leering at Red Wull.

"Ye'd do better at Kenmuir—eh, Wullie!" the little man replied.

"Nay," the other answered, "he'll not go to Kenmuir. There's Th' Owd Un to see to him there o' nights."

The little man whipped round.

"Are ye so sure he is there o' nights, ma lad?" he asked with slow significance.

"He was there when some one—I dinna say who, though I have ma thoughts—tried to poison him," sneered the boy, mimicking his father's manner.

M'Adam shook his head.

"If he was poisoned, and noo I think aiblins he was, he didna pick it up at Kenmuir, I tell ye that," he said, and marched out of the room.

In the mean time the Black Killer pursued

his bloody trade unchecked. The public, always greedy of a new sensation, took up the matter. In several of the great dailies, articles on the "Agrarian Outrages" appeared, followed by lengthy correspondence. Controversy raged high; each correspondent had his own theory and his own solution of the problem; and each waxed indignant as his were discarded for another's.

The Terror had reigned already two months when, with the advent of the lambing-time, matters took a yet more serious aspect.

It was bad enough to lose one sheep, often the finest in the pack; but the hunting of a flock at a critical moment, which was incidental to the slaughter of the one, the scaring of these woolly mothers-about-to-be almost out of their fleeces, spelt for the small farmers something akin to ruin, for the bigger ones a loss hardly bearable.

Such a woful season had never been known; loud were the curses, deep the vows of revenge. Many a shepherd at that time patrolled all night through with his dogs, only to find in the morning that the Killer had slipped him and havocked in some secluded portion of his beat.

It was heartrending work; and all the more so in that, though his incrimination seemed as far off as ever, there was still the same positiveness as to the culprit's identity.

Long Kirby, indeed, greatly daring, went

so far on one occasion as to say to the little man: "And d'yo' reck'n the Killer is a sheep-dog, M'Adam?"

"I do," the little man replied with conviction.

"And that he'll spare his own sheep?"

"Niver a doubt of it."

"Then," said the smith with a nervous cackle, "it must lie between you and Tupper and Saunderson."

The little man leant forward and tapped the other on the arm.

"Or Kenmuir, ma friend," he said. "Ye've forgot Kenmuir."

"So I have," laughed the smith, "so I have."

"Then I'd not anither time," the other continued, still tapping. "I'd mind Kenmuir, d'ye see, Kirby?"

It was about the middle of the lambing-time, when the Killer was working his worst, that the Dalesmen had a lurid glimpse of Adam M'Adam as he might be were he wounded through his Wullie.

Thus it came about: It was market-day in Grammoch-town, and in the Border Ram old Rob Saunderson was the centre of interest. For on the previous night Rob, who till then had escaped unscathed, had lost a sheep to the Killer: and—far worse—his flock of Herdwicks, heavy in lamb, had been galloped with disastrous consequences.

The old man, with tears in his eyes, was telling how on four nights that week he had been up with Shep to guard against mishap; and on the fifth, worn out with his double labor, had fallen asleep at his post. But a very little while he slumbered; yet when, in the dawn, he woke and hurried on his rounds, he quickly came upon a mangled sheep and the pitiful relic of his flock. A relic, indeed! For all about were cold wee lambkins and their mothers, dead and dying of exhaustion and their unripe travail—a slaughter of the innocents.

The Dalesmen were clustered round the old shepherd, listening with lowering countenances, when a dark gray head peered in at the door and two wistful eyes dwelt for a moment on the speaker.

"Talk o' the devil!" muttered M'Adam, but no man heard him. For Red Wull, too, had seen that sad face, and, rising from his master's feet, had leapt with a roar at his enemy, toppling Jim Mason like a ninepin in the fury of his charge.

In a second every dog in the room, from the battered Venus to Tupper's big Rasper, was on his feet, bristling to have at the tyrant and wipe out past injuries, if the gray dog would but lead the dance.

It was not to be, however. For Long Kirby was standing at the door with a cup of hot coffee in his hand. Barely had he greeted the gray dog with—

"Ullo, Owd Un!" when hoarse yells of "Ware, lad! The Terror!" mingled with Red Wull's roar.

Half turning, he saw the great dog bounding to the attack. Straightway he flung the boiling contents of his cup full in that ragged countenance. The burning liquid swished against the huge bull-head. Blinding, bubbling, scalding, it did its fell work well; nothing escaped that merciless torrent. With a cry of agony, half bellow, half howl, Red Wull checked in his charge. From without the door was banged to; and again the duel was postponed. While within the tap-room a huddle of men and dogs were left alone with a mad man and a madder brute.

Blind, demented, agonized, the Tailless Tyke thundered about the little room gnashing, snapping, oversetting; men, tables, chairs swirled off their legs as though they had been dolls. He spun round like a monstrous teetotum; he banged his tortured head against the wall; he burrowed into the unyielding floor. And all the while M'Adam pattered after him, laying hands upon him only to be flung aside as a terrier flings a rat. Now up, now down again, now tossed into a corner, now dragged upon the floor, yet always following on and crying in supplicating tones, "Wullie, Wullie, let me to ye! let yer man ease ye!" and then, with a scream and a murderous

glance, "By—, Kirby, I'll deal wi' you later!"

The uproar was like hell let loose. You could hear the noise of oaths and blows, as the men fought for the door, a half-mile away. And above it the horrid bellowing and the screaming of that shrill voice.

Long Kirby was the first man out of that murder-hole; and after him the others toppled one by one—men and dogs jostling one another in the frenzy of their fear. Big Bell, Londesley, Tupper, Hoppin, Teddy Bolstock, white-faced and trembling; and old Saunderson they pulled out by his heels. Then the door was shut with a clang, and the little man and mad dog were left alone.

In the street was already a big-eyed crowd, attracted by the uproar; while at the door was James Moore, seeking entrance. "Happen I could lend the little mon a hand," said he; but they withheld him forcibly.

Inside was pandemonium: bangings like the doors of hell; the bellowing of that great voice; the patter of little feet; the slithering of a body on the floor; and always that shrill, beseeching prayer, "Wullie, Wullie, let me to ye!" and, in a scream, "By—, Kirby, I'll be wi' ye soon!"

Jim Mason it was who turned, at length, to the smith and whispered, "Kirby, lad, yo'd best skip it."

The big man obeyed and ran. The stamp.

stamp of his feet on the hard road rang above the turmoil. As the long legs vanished round the corner and the sound of the fugitive died away, a panic seized the listening crowd.

A woman shrieked; a girl fainted; and in two minutes the street was as naked of men as the steppes of Russia in winter: here a white face at a window; there a door ajar; and peering round a far corner a frightened boy. One man only scorned to run. Alone, James Moore stalked down the centre of the road, slow and calm, Owd Bob trotting at his heels.

It was a long half-hour before the door of the inn burst open, and M'Adam came out with a run, flinging the door behind him.

He rushed into the middle of the road; his sleeves were rolled at the wrist like a surgeon's; and in his right hand was a black-handled jack-knife.

"Noo, by—!" he cried in a terrible voice, "where is he?"

He looked up and down the road, darting his fiery glances everywhere; and his face was whiter than his hair.

Then he turned and hunted madly down the whole length of the High, nosing like a weasel in every cranny, stabbing at the air as he went, and screaming, "By—, Kirby, wait till I get ye!"

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW THE KILLER WAS SINGED

No further harm came of the incident; but it served as a healthy object-lesson for the Dalesmen.

A coincidence it may have been, but, as a fact, for the fortnight succeeding Kirby's exploit there was a lull in the crimes. There followed, as though to make amends, the seven days still remembered in the Daleland as the Bloody Week.

On the Sunday the Squire lost a Cheviot ewe, killed not a hundred yards from the Manor wall. On the Monday a farm on the Black Water was marked with the red cross. On Tuesday—a black night—Tupper at Swin-thwaite came upon the murderer at his work; he fired into the darkness without effect; and the Killer escaped with a scaring. On the following night Viscount Birdsaye lost a shearling ram, for which he was reported to have paid a fabulous sum. Thursday was the one blank night of the week. On Friday Tupper was again visited and punished heavily, as though in revenge for that shot.

On the Saturday afternoon a big meeting

was held at the Manor to discuss measures. The Squire presided; gentlemen and magistrates were there in numbers, and every farmer in the country-side.

To start the proceedings the Special Commissioner read a futile letter from the Board of Agriculture. After him Viscount Birdsaye rose and proposed that a reward more suitable to the seriousness of the case than the paltry £5 of the Police should be offered, and backed his proposal with a £25 cheque. Several others spoke, and, last of all, Parson Leggy rose.

He briefly summarized the history of the crimes; reiterated his belief that a sheep-dog was the criminal; declared that nothing had occurred to shake his conviction; and concluded by offering a remedy for their consideration. Simple it was, so he said, to laughableness; yet, if their surmise was correct, it would serve as an effectual preventive if not cure, and would at least give them time to turn round. He paused.

"My suggestion is: That every man-jack of you who owns a sheep-dog ties him up at night."

The farmers were given half an hour to consider the proposal, and clustered in knots talking it over. Many an eye was directed on M'Adam; but that little man appeared all unconscious.

"Weel, Mr. Saunderson," he was saying in shrill accents. "and shall ye tie Shed?"

"What d'yo' think?" asked Rob, eying the man at whom the measure was aimed.

"Why, it's this way, I'm thinkin'," the little man replied. "Gin ye haud Shep's the guilty one I *wad*, by all manner o' means—or shootin'd be ailbins better. If not, why"—he shrugged his shoulders significantly; and having shown his hand and driven the nail well home, the little man left the meeting.

James Moore stayed to see the Parson's resolution negatived by a large majority, and then he too quitted the hall. He had foreseen the result, and, previous to the meeting, had warned the Parson how it would be.

"Tie up!" he cried almost indignantly, as Owd Bob came galloping up to his whistle; "I think I see myself chainin' yo', owd lad, like ony murderer. Why, it's yo' has kept the Killer off Kenmuir so far, I'll lay."

At the lodge-gate was M'Adam, for once without his familiar spirit, playing with the lodge-keeper's child; for the little man loved all children but his own, and was beloved of them. As the Master approached he looked up.

"Weel, Moore," he called, "and are you gaeir' to tie yer dog?"

"I will if you will yours," the Master answered grimly.

"Na," the little man replied, "it's Wullie as frichts the Killer aff the Grange. That's why I've left him there noo."

"It's the same wi' me," the Master said. "He's not come to Kenmuir yet, nor he'll not so long as Th' Owd Un's loose, I reck'n."

"Loose or tied, for the matter o' that," the little man rejoined, "Kenmuir'll escape." He made the statement dogmatically, snapping his lips.

The Master frowned.

"Why that?" he asked.

"Ha' ye no heard what they're sayin'?" the little man inquired with raised eyebrows.

"Nay; what?"

"Why, that the mere repitation o' th' best sheep-dog in the North' should keep him aff. An' I guess they're reet," and he laughed shrilly as he spoke.

The Master passed on, puzzled.

"Which road are ye gaein' hame?" M'Adam called after him. "Because," with a polite smile, "I'll tak' t'ither."

"I'm off by the Windy Brae," the Master answered, striding on. "Squire asked me to leave a note wi' his shepherd t'other side o' the Chair." So he headed away to the left, making for home by the route along the Silver Mere.

It is a long sweep of almost unbroken moorland, the well-called Windy Brae; sloping gently down in mile on mile of heather from the Mere Marches on the top to the fringe of the Silver Mere below. In all that waste of moor the only break is the quaint-shaped

Giant's Chair, puzzle of geologists, looking as though plumped down by accident in the heathery wild. The ground rises suddenly from the uniform grade of the Brae; up it goes, ever growing steeper, until at length it runs abruptly into a sheer curtain of rock—the Fall—which rises perpendicular some forty feet, on the top of which rests that tiny grassy bowl—not twenty yards across—they call the Scoop.

The Scoop forms the seat of the Chair and reposes on its collar of rock, cool and green and out of the world, like wine in a metal cup; in front is the forty-foot Fall; behind, rising sheer again, the wall of rock which makes the back of the Chair. Inaccessible from above, the only means of entrance to that little dell are two narrow sheep-tracks, which crawl dangerously up between the sheer wall on the one hand and the sheer Fall on the other, entering it at opposite sides.

It stands out clear-cut from the gradual incline, that peculiar eminence; yet as the Master and Owd Bob debouched on to the Brae it was already invisible in the darkening night.

Through the heather the two swung, the Master thinking now with a smile of David and Maggie; wondering what M'Adam had meant; musing with a frown on the Killer; pondering on his identity—for he was half of David's opinion as to Red Wull's innocence; and thanking his stars that so far Kenmuir

had escaped, a piece of luck he attributed entirely to the vigilance of Th' Owd Un, who, sleeping in the porch, slipped out at all hours and went his rounds, warding off danger. And at the thought he looked down for the dark head which should be travelling at his knee; yet could not see it, so thick hung the pall of night.

So he brushed his way along, and ever the night grew blacker; until, from the swell of the ground beneath his feet, he knew himself skirting the Giant's Chair.

Now as he sped along the foot of the rise, of a sudden there burst on his ear the myriad patter of galloping feet. He turned, and at the second a swirl of sheep almost bore him down. It was velvet-black, and they fled furiously by, yet he dimly discovered, driving at their trails, a vague hound-like form.

"The Killer, by thunder!" he ejaculated, and, startled though he was, struck down at that last pursuing shape, to miss and almost fall.

"Bob, lad!" he cried, "follow on!" and swung round; but in the darkness could not see if the gray dog had obeyed.

The chase swept on into the night, and, far above him on the hill-side, he could now hear the rattle of the flying feet. He started hotly in pursuit, and then, recognizing the futility of following where he could not see his hand, desisted. So he stood motionless, listening

and peering into the blackness, hoping Th' Owd Un was on the villain's heels.

He prayed for the moon; and, as though in answer, the lantern of the night shone out and lit the dour face of the Chair above him. He shot a glance at his feet; and thanked heaven on finding the gray dog was not beside him.

Then he looked up. The sheep had broken, and were scattered over the steep hill-side, still galloping madly. In the rout one pair of darting figures caught and held his gaze: the foremost dodging, twisting, speeding upward, the hinder hard on the leader's heels, swift, remorseless, never changing. He looked for a third pursuing form; but none could he discern.

"He mun ha' missed him in the dark," the Master muttered, the sweat standing on his brow, as he strained his eyes upward.

Higher and higher sped those two dark specks, far out-topping the scattered remnant of the flock. Up and up, until of a sudden the sheer Fall dropped its relentless barrier in the path of the fugitive. Away, scudding along the foot of the rock-wall struck the familiar track leading to the Scoop, and up it, bleating pitifully, nigh spent, the Killer hard on her now.

"He'll doon her in the Scoop!" cried the Master hoarsely, following with fascinated eyes. "Owd Un! Owd Un! wheer iver are

yo' gotten to?" he called in agony; but no Owd Un made reply.

As they reached the summit, just as he had prophesied, the two black dots were one; and down they rolled together into the hollow of the Scoop, out of the Master's ken. At the same instant the moon, as though loth to watch the last act of the bloody play, veiled her face.

It was his chance. "Noo!"—and up the hillside he sped like a young man, girding his loins for the struggle. The slope grew steep and steeper; but on and on he held in the darkness, gasping painfully, yet running still, until the face of the Fall blocked his way too.

There he paused a moment, and whistled a low call. Could he but dispatch the old dog up the one path to the Scoop, while he took the other, the murderer's one road to safety would be blocked.

He waited, all expectant; but no cold muzzle was shoved into his hand. Again he whistled. A pebble from above almost dropped on him, as if the criminal up there had moved to the brink of the Fall to listen; and he dared no more.

He waited till all was still again, then crept, cat-like, along the rock-foot, and hit, at length, the track up which a while before had fled Killer and victim. Up that ragged way he crawled on hands and knees. The perspiration rolled off his face; one elbow brushed the

rock perpetually; one hand plunged ever and anon into that naked emptiness on the other side.

He prayed that the moon might keep in but a little longer; that his feet might be saved from falling, where a slip might well mean death, certain destruction to any chance of success. He cursed his luck that Th' Owd Un had somehow missed him in the dark; for now he must trust to chance, his own great strength, and his good oak stick. And he as climbed, he laid his plan: to rush in on the Killer as he still gorged and grapple with him. If in the darkness he missed—and in that narrow arena the contingency was improbable—the murderer might still, in the panic of the moment, forget the one path to safety and leap over the Fall to his destruction.

At length he reached the summit and paused to draw breath. The black void before him was the Scoop, and in its bosom—not ten yards away—must be lying the Killer and the killed.

He crouched against the wet rock-face and listened. In that dark silence, poised 'twixt heaven and earth, he seemed a million miles apart from living soul.

No sound, and yet the murderer must be there. Ay, there was the tinkle of a dislodged stone; and again, the tread of stealthy feet.

The Killer was moving; alarmed; was off. Quick!

He rose to his full height; gathered himself, and leapt.

Something collided with him as he sprang; something wrestled madly with him; something wrenched from beneath him; and in a clap he heard the thud of a body striking ground far below, and the slithering and splattering of some creature speeding furiously down the hill-side and away.

"Who the blazes?" roared he.

"What the devil?" screamed a little voice.

The moon shone out.

"Moore!"

"M'Adam!"

And there they were still struggling over the body of a dead sheep.

In a second they had disengaged and rushed to the edge of the Fall. In the quiet they could still hear the scrambling hurry of the fugitive far below them. Nothing was to be seen, however, save an array of startled sheep on the hill-side, mute witnesses of the murderer's escape.

The two men turned and eyed each other; the one grim, the other sardonic: both dishevelled and suspicious.

"Well?"

"Weel?"

A pause and, careful scrutiny.

"There's blood on your coat."

"And on yours."

Together they walked back into the little moon-lit hollow. There lay the murdered sheep in a pool of blood. Plain it was to see whence the marks on their coats came. M'Adam touched the victim's head with his foot. The movement exposed its throat. With a shudder he replaced it as it was.

The two men stood back and eyed one another.

"What are yo' doin' here?"

"After the Killer. What are you?"

"After the Killer?"

"Hoo did you come?"

"Up this path," pointing to the one behind him. "Hoo did you?"

"Up this."

Silence; then again:

"I'd ha' had him but for yo'."

"I did have him, but ye tore me aff,"

A pause again.

"Where's yer gray dog?" This time the challenge was unmistakable.

"I sent him after the Killer. Wheer's your Red Wull?"

"At hame, as I tell't ye before."

"Yo' mean yo' left him there?"

M'Adams' fingers twitched.

"He's where I left him."

James Moore shrugged his shoulders. And the other began:

"When did yer dog leave ye?"

"When the Killer came past."

"Ye wad say ye missed him then?"

"I say what I mean."

"Ye say he went after the Killer. Noo the Killer was here," pointing to the dead sheep.

"Was your dog here, too?"

"If he had been he'd been here still."

"Unless he went over the Fall!"

"That was the Killer, yo' fule."

"Or your dog."

"There was only *one* beneath me. I felt him."

"Just so," said M'Adam, and laughed. The other's brow contracted.

"An' that was a big un," he said slowly. The little man stopped his cackling.

"There ye lie," he said, smoothly. "He was small."

They looked one another full in the eyes.

"That's a matter of opinion," said the Master.

"It's a matter of fact," said the other.

The two stared at one another, silent and stern, each trying to fathom the other's soul; then they turned again to the brink of the Fall. Beneath them, plain to see, was the splash and furrow in the shingle marking the Killer's line of retreat. They looked at one another again, and then each departed the way he had come to give his version of the story.

"We mucked it atween us," said the Master.

'If Th' Owd Un had kept wi' me, I should ha' had him.'

And—

"I tell ye I did have him, but James Moore pulled me aff. Strange, too, his dog not bein' wi' him!"

CHAPTER XIX

LAD AND LASS

AN immense sensation this affair of the Scoop created in the Daleland. It spurred the Dalesmen into fresh endeavors. James Moore and M'Adam were examined and re-examined as to the minutest details of the matter. The whole country-side was placarded with huge bills, offering £100 reward for the capture of the criminal dead or alive. While the vigilance of the watchers was such that in a single week they bagged a donkey, an old woman, and two amateur detectives.

In Wastrel-dale the near escape of the Killer, the collision between James Moore and Adam, and Owd Bob's unsuccess, who was not wont to fail, aroused intense excitement, with which was mingled a certain anxiety as to their favorite.

For when the Master had reached home that night, he had found the old dog already there, and he must have wrenched his foot in the pursuit or run a thorn into it, for he was very lame. Whereat, when it was reported at the Sylvester Arms, M'Adam winked at Red Wull and muttered, "Ah, forty foot is an ugly tumble."

A week later the little man called at Kenmuir. As he entered the yard, David was standing outside the kitchen window, looking very glum and miserable. On seeing his father, however, the boy started forward, all alert.

"What d'yo' want here?" he cried roughly.

"Same as you, dear lad," the little man giggled, advancing. "I come on a visit."

"Your visits to Kenmuir are usually paid by night, so I've heard," David sneered.

The little man affected not to hear.

"So they dinna allow ye indoors wi' the Cup," he laughed. "They know yer little ways then, David,"

"Nay, I'm not wanted in there," David answered bitterly, but not so loud that his father could hear. Maggie within the kitchen heard, however, but paid no heed; for her heart was hard against the boy, who of late, though he never addressed her, had made himself as unpleasant in a thousand little ways as only David M'Adam could.

At that moment the Master came stalking into the yard, Owd Bob preceding him; and as the old dog recognized his visitor he bristled involuntarily.

At the sight of the Master M'Adam hurried forward.

"I did but come to ask after the tyke," he said. "Is he gettin' over his lameness?"

James Moore looked surprised; then his

stern face relaxed into a cordial smile. Such generous anxiety as to the welfare of Red Wull's rival was a wholly new characteristic in the little man.

"I tak' it kind in yo', M'Adam," he said, "to come and inquire."

"Is the thorn oot?" asked the little man with eager interest, shooting his head forward to stare closely at the other.

"It came oot last night wi' the poulticin'," the Master answered, returning the other's gaze, calm and steady.

"I'm glad o' that," said the little man, still staring. But his yellow, grinning face said as plain as words, "What a liar ye are, James Moore."

The days passed on. His father's taunts and gibes, always becoming more bitter, drove David almost to distraction.

He longed to make it up with Maggie; he longed for that tender sympathy which the girl had always extended to him when his troubles with his father were heavy on him. The quarrel had lasted for months now, and he was well weary of it, and utterly ashamed. For, at least, he had the good grace to acknowledge that no one was to blame but himself; and that it had been fostered solely by his ugly pride.

At length he could endure it no longer, and determined to go to the girl and ask forgive-

ness. It would be a bitter ordeal to him; always unwilling to acknowledge a fault, even to himself, how much harder would it be to confess it to this strip of a girl. For a time he thought it was almost more than he could do. Yet, like his father, once set upon a course, nothing could divert him. So, after a week of doubts and determinations, of cowardice and courage, he pulled himself together and off he set.

An hour it took him from the Grange to the bridge over the Wastrel—an hour which had wont to be a quarter. Now, as he walked on up the slope from the stream, very slowly, heartening himself for his penance, he was aware of a strange disturbance in the yard above him: the noisy cackling of hens, the snorting of pigs disturbed, and above the rest the cry of a little child ringing out in shrill distress.

He set to running, and sped up the slope as fast as his long legs would carry him. As he took the gate in his stride, he saw the white-clad figure of Wee Anne fleeing with unsteady, toddling steps, her fair hair streaming out behind, and one bare arm striking wildly back at a great pursuing sow.

David shouted as he cleared the gate, but the brute paid no heed, and was almost touching the fugitive when Owd Bob came galloping round the corner, and in a second had flashed between pursuer and pursued. So close were

the two that as he swung round on the startled sow, his tail brushed the baby to the ground; and there she lay kicking fat legs to heaven and calling on all her gods.

David, leaving the old dog to secure the warrior pig, ran round to her; but he was anticipated. The whole matter had barely occupied a minute's time; and Maggie, rushing from the kitchen, now had the child in her arms and was hurrying back with her to the house.

"Eh, ma pet, are yo' hurted, dearie?" David could hear her asking tearfully, as he crossed the yard and established himself in the door.

"Well," said he, in bantering tones, "yo'm a nice wench to ha' charge o' oor Annie!"

It was a sore subject with the girl, and well he knew it. Wee Anne, that golden-haired imp of mischief, was forever evading her sister-mother's eye and attempting to immolate herself. More than once she had only been saved from serious hurt by the watchful devotion of Owd Bob, who always found time, despite his many labors, to keep a guardian eye on his well-loved lassie. In the previous winter she had been lost on a bitter night on the Muir Pike; once she had climbed into a field with the Highland bull, and barely escaped with her life, while the gray dog held the brute in check; but a little while before she had been rescued from drowning by the Tailless Tyke; there had been numerous other

mischances; and now the present mishap. But the girl paid no heed to her tormentor in her joy at finding the child all unhurt.

"Theer! yo' bain't so much as scratted, ma precious, is yo'?" she cried. "Rin oot agin, then," and the baby toddled joyfully away.

Maggie rose to her feet and stood with face averted. David's eyes dwelt lovingly upon her, admiring the pose of the neat head with its thatch of pretty brown hair; the slim figure, and slender ankles, peeping modestly from beneath her print frock.

"Ma word! if yo' dad should hear tell o' hoo his Anne——" he broke off into a long-drawn whistle.

Maggie kept silence; but her lips quivered, and the flush deepened on her cheek.

"I'm fear'd I'll ha' to tell him," the boy continued, "'Tis but ma duty."

"Yo' may tell wham yo' like what yo' like," the girl replied coldly; yet there was a tremor in her voice.

"First yo' throws her in the stream," David went on remorselessly; "then yo' chucks her to the pig, and if it had not bin for me——"

"Yo', indeed!" she broke in contemptuously. "Yo'! 'twas Owd Bob reskied her. Yo'd nowt' to do wi' it, 'cept lookin' on—'bout what yo're fit for."

"I tell yo'," David pursued stubbornly, "an' it had not bin for me yo' wouldn't have no sister by noo. She'd be lying', she would,

pore little lass, cold as ice, pore mite, wi' no breath in her. An' when yo' dad coom home there'd be no Wee Anne to rin to him, and climb on his knee, and yammer to him, and beat his face. An he'd say, 'What's gotten to oor Annie, as I left wi' yo'?' And then yo'd have to tell him, 'I never took no manner o' fash after her, dad; d'reckly yo' back was turned, I——'"

The girl sat down, buried her face in her apron, and indulged in the rare luxury of tears.

"Yo're the cruellest mon as iver was, David M'Adam," she sobbed, rocking to and fro.

He was at her side in a moment, tenderly bending over her.

"Eh, Maggie, but I am sorry, lass——"

She wrenched away from beneath his hands.

"I hate yo'," she cried passionately.

He gently removed her hands from before her tear-stained face.

"I was nob'but laffin', Maggie," he pleaded; "say yo' forgie me."

"I don't," she cried, struggling. "I think yo're the hatefulest lad as iver lived."

The moment was critical; it was a time for heroic measures.

"No, yo' don't, lass," he remonstrated; and, releasing her wrists, lifted the little drooping face, wet as it was, like the earth after a spring shower, and, holding it between his two big hands, kissed it twice.

"Yo' coward!" she cried, a flood of warm

red crimsoning her cheeks; and she struggled vainly to be free.

"Yo' used to let me," he reminded her in aggrieved tones.

"I niver did!" she cried, more indignant than truthful.

"Yes, yo' did, when we was little uns; that is, yo' was allus for kissin' and I was allus agin it. And noo," with whole-souled bitterness, "I mayn't so much as keek at yo' over a stone wall."

However that might be, he was keeking at her from closer range now; and in that position—for he held her firmly still—she could not help but keek back. He looked so handsome—humble for once; penitent yet reproachful; his own eyes a little moist; and, withal, his old audacious self,—that, despite herself, her anger grew less hot.

"Say yo' forgie me and I'll let yo' go."

"I don't, nor niver shall," she answered firmly; but there was less conviction in her heart than voice.

"Iss yo' do, lass," he coaxed, and kissed her again.

She struggled faintly.

"Hoo daur yo'?" she cried through her tears. But he was not to be moved.

"Will yo' noo?" he asked.

She remained dumb, and he kissed her again.

"Impidence!" she cried.

"Ay," said he, closing her mouth.

"I wonder at ye, Davie!" she said, surrendering.

After that Maggie must needs give in; and it was well understood, though nothing definite had been said, that the boy and girl were courting. And in the Dale the unanimous opinion was that the young couple would make "a gradely pair, surely."

M'Adam was the last person to hear the news, long after it had been common knowledge in the village. It was in the Sylvester Arms he first heard it, and straightway fell into one of those foaming frenzies characteristic of him.

"The dochter o' Moore o' Kenmuir, d'ye say? sic a dochter o' sic a man! The dochter o' th' one man in the warld that's harmed me aboon the rest! I'd no ha' believed it gin ye'd no tell't me. Oh, David, David! I'd no ha' thocht it even o' you, ill son as ye've aye bin to me. I think he might ha' waited till his auld dad was gone, and he'd no had to wait lang the noo." Then the little man sat down and burst into tears. Gradually, however, he resigned himself, and the more readily when he realized that David by his act had exposed a fresh wound into which he might plunge his barbed shafts. And he availed himself to the full of his new opportunities. Often and often David was sore pressed to restrain himself.

"Is't true what they're sayin' that Maggie Moore's nae better than she should be?" the little man asked one evening with anxious interest.

"They're not sayin' so, and if they were 'twad be a lie," the boy answered angrily.

M'Adam leant back in his chair and nodded his head.

"Ay, they tell't me that gin ony man knew 'twad be David M'Adam."

David strode across the room.

"No, no mair o' that," he shouted. "Y'ought to be 'shamed, an owd mon like you, to speak so o' a lass." The little man edged close up to his son, and looked up into the fair flushed face towering above him.

"David," he said in smooth soft tones, "I'm 'stonished ye dinna strike yer auld dad." He stood with his hands clasped behind his back as if daring the young giant to raise a finger against him. "Ye maist might noo," he continued suavely. "Ye maun be sax inches taller, and a good four stane heavier. Hooiver, aiblins ye're wise to wait. Anither year twa I'll be an auld man, as ye say, and feebler, and Wullie here'll be gettin' on, while ye'll be in the prime o' yer strength. Then I think ye might hit me wi' safety to your person, and honor to yourself."

He took a pace back, smiling.

"Feyther," said David, huskily, "one day yo'll drive me too far."

CHAPTER XX

THE SNAPPING OF THE STRING

THE spring was passing, marked throughout with the bloody trail of the Killer. The adventure in the Scoop scared him for a while into innocuousness; then he resumed his game again with redoubled zest. It seemed likely he would harry the district till some lucky accident carried him off, for all chance there was of arresting him.

You could still hear nightly in the Sylvester Arms and elsewhere the assertion, delivered with the same dogmatic certainty as of old, "It's the Terror, I tell yo'!" and that irritating, inevitable reply: "Ay; but wheer's the proof?" While often, at the same moment, in a house not far away, a little lonely man was sitting before a low-burnt fire, rocking to and fro, biting his nails, and muttering to the great dog whose head lay between his knees: "If we had but the proof, Wullie! if we had but the proof! I'd give ma right hand aff my arm gin we had the proof to-morrow."

Long Kirby, who was always for war when some one else was to do the fighting, suggested that David should be requested, in the name of the Dalesmen, to tell M'Adam that he must