

He struck a match and lifted his foot to see where the hand had clutched him.

God! there was blood on his heel.

Then a great fear laid hold on him. A cry was suffocated in his breast by the panting of his heart.

He crept back to the kitchen door and listened.

Not a sound.

Fearfully he opened it a crack.

Silence of the tomb.

He banged it to. It opened behind him, and the fact lent wings to his feet.

He turned and plunged out into the night, and ran through the blackness for his life. And a great owl swooped softly by and hooted mockingly:

"For your life! for your life! for your life!"

PART V

OWD BOB O' KENMUIR

CHAPTER XXII

A MAN AND A MAID

IN the village even the Black Killer and the murder on the Screes were forgotten in this new sensation. The mystery in which the affair was wrapped, and the ignorance as to all its details, served to whet the general interest. There had been a fight; M'Adam and the Terror had been mauled; and David had disappeared—those were the facts. But what was the origin of the affray no one could say.

One or two of the Dalesmen had, indeed, a shrewd suspicion. Tupper looked guilty; Jem Burton muttered, "I knoo hoo 'twould be"; while as for Long Kirby, he vanished entirely, not to reappear till three months had sped.

Injured as he had been, M'Adam was yet sufficiently recovered to appear in the Sylvester Arms on the Saturday following the battle. He entered the tap-room silently with never a word to a soul; one arm was in a sling and his head bandaged. He eyed every man present critically; and all, except Tammas, who was brazen, and Jim Mason, who was innocent, fidgeted beneath the stare. Maybe it was well for Long Kirby he was not there.

"Onythin' the matter?" asked Jem, at

length, rather lamely, in view of the plain evidences of battle.

"Na, na; naethin' oot o' the ordinar'," the little man replied, giggling. "Only David set on me, and me sleepin'. And," with a shrug, "here I am noo." He sat down, wagging his bandaged head and grinning. "Ye see he's sae playfu', is Davie. He wangs ye o'er the head wi' a chair, kicks ye in the jaw, stamps on yer wame, and all as merry as May." And nothing further could they get from him, except that if David reappeared it was his [M'Adam's] firm resolve to hand him over to the police for attempted parricide.

"'Brutal assault on an auld man by his son!' 'Twill look well in the *Argus*; he! he! They couldna let him aff under two years, I'm thinkin'."

M'Adam's version of the affair was received with quiet incredulity. The general verdict was that he had brought his punishment entirely on his own head. Tammas, indeed, who was always rude when he was not witty, and, in fact, the difference between the two things is only one of degree, told him straight: "It served yo' well reet. An' I nob'but wish he'd made an end to yo'."

"He did his best, puir lad," M'Adam reminded him gently.

"We've had enough o' yo'," continued the uncompromising old man. "I'm fair grieved he didna slice yer throat while he was at it."

At that M'Adam raised his eyebrows, stared, and then broke into a low whistle.

"That's it, is it?" he muttered, as though a new light was dawning on him. "Ah, noo I see."

The days passed on. There was still no news of the missing one, and Maggie's face became pitifully white and haggard.

Of course she did not believe that David had attempted to murder his father, desperately tried as she knew he had been. Still, it was a terrible thought to her that he might at any moment be arrested; and her girlish imagination was perpetually conjuring up horrid pictures of a trial, conviction, and the things that followed.

Then Sam'l started a wild theory that the little man had murdered his son, and thrown the mangled body down the dry well at the Grange. The story was, of course, preposterous, and, coming from such a source, might well have been discarded with the ridicule it deserved. Yet it served to set the cap on the girl's fears; and she resolved, at whatever cost, to visit the Grange, beard M'Adam, and discover whether he could not or would not allay her gnawing apprehension.

Her intent she concealed from her father, knowing well that were she to reveal it to him, he would gently but firmly forbid the attempt; and on an afternoon some fortnight after

David's disappearance, choosing her opportunity, she picked up a shawl, threw it over her head, and fled with palpitating heart out of the farm and down the slope to the Wastrel.

The little plank-bridge rattled as she tripped across it; and she fled faster lest any one should have heard and come to look. And, indeed, at the moment it rattled again behind her, and she started guiltily round. It proved, however, to be only Owd Bob, sweeping after, and she was glad.

"Comin' wi' me, lad?" she asked as the old dog cantered up, thankful to have that gray protector with her.

Round Langholm now fled the two conspirators; over the summer-clad lower slopes of the Pike, until, at length, they reached the Stony Bottom. Down the bramble-covered bank of the ravine the girl slid; picked her way from stone to stone across the streamlet tinkling in that rocky bed; and scrambled up the opposite bank.

At the top she halted and looked back. The smoke from Kenmuir was winding slowly up against the sky; to her right the low gray cottages of the village cuddled in the bosom of the Dale; far away over the Marches towered the gaunt Scaur; before her rolled the swelling slopes of the Muir Pike; while behind—she glanced timidly over her shoulder—was the hill, at the top of which squatted the Grange, lifeless, cold, scowling.

Her heart failed her. In her whole life she had never spoken to M'Adam. Yet she knew him well enough from all David's accounts—ay, and hated him for David's sake. She hated him and feared him, too; feared him mortally—this terrible little man. And, with a shudder, she recalled the dim face at the window, and thought of his notorious hatred of her father. But even M'Adam could hardly harm a girl coming, broken-hearted, to seek her lover. Besides, was not Owd Bob with her?

And, turning, she saw the old dog standing a little way up the hill, looking back at her as though he wondered why she waited. "Am I not enough?" the faithful gray eyes seemed to say.

"Lad, I'm fear'd," was her answer to the unspoken question.

Yet that look determined her. She clenched her little teeth, drew the shawl about her, and set off running up the hill.

Soon the run dwindled to a walk, the walk to a crawl, and the crawl to a halt. Her breath was coming painfully, and her heart pattered against her side like the beatings of an imprisoned bird. Again her gray guardian looked up, encouraging her forward.

"Keep close, lad," she whispered, starting forward afresh. And the old dog ranged up beside her, shoving into her skirt, as though to let her feel his presence.

So they reached the top of the hill; and the house stood before them, grim, unfriendly.

The girl's face was now quite white, yet set; the resemblance to her father was plain to see. With lips compressed and breath quick-coming, she crossed the threshold, treading softly as though in a house of the dead. There she paused and lifted a warning finger at her companion, bidding him halt without; then she turned to the door on the left of the entrance and tapped.

She listened, her head buried in the shawl, close to the wood panelling. There was no answer; she could only hear the drumming of her heart.

She knocked again. From within came the scraping of a chair cautiously shoved back, followed by a deep-mouthed cavernous growl.

Her heart stood still, but she turned the handle and entered, leaving a crack open behind.

On the far side the room a little man was sitting. His head was swathed in dirty bandages, and a bottle was on the table beside him. He was leaning forward; his face was gray, and there was a stare of naked horror in his eyes. One hand grasped the great dog who stood at his side, with yellow teeth glinting, and muzzle hideously wrinkled; with the other he pointed a palsied finger at her.

"Ma God! wha are ye?" he cried hoarsely.

The girl stood hard against the door, her

fingers still on the handle; trembling like an aspen at the sight of that uncannie pair.

That look in the little man's eyes petrified her: the swollen pupils; lashless lids, yawning wide; the broken range of teeth in that gaping mouth, froze her very soul. Rumors of the man's insanity tided back on her memory.

"I'm—I——" the words came in trembling gasps.

At the first utterance, however, the little man's hand dropped; he leant back in his chair and gave a soul-bursting sigh of relief.

No woman had crossed that threshold since his wife died; and, for a moment, when first the girl had entered silent-footed, aroused from dreaming of the long ago, he had thought this shawl-clad figure with the pale face and peeping hair no earthly visitor; the spirit, rather, of one he had loved long since and lost, come to reproach him with a broken troth.

"Speak up, I canna hear," he said, in tones mild compared with those last wild words.

"I—I'm Maggie Moore," the girl quavered.

"Moore! Maggie Moore, d'ye say?" he cried, half rising from his chair, a flush of color sweeping across his face, "the dochter o' James Moore?" He paused for an answer, glowering at her; and she shrank, trembling, against the door.

The little man leant back in his chair. Gradually a grim smile crept across his countenance.

"Weel, Maggie Moore," he said, half-amused, "ony gate ye're a good plucked un." And his wizened countenance looked at her almost kindly from beneath its dirty crown of bandages.

At that the girl's courage returned with a rush. After all this little man was not so very terrible. Perhaps he would be kind. And in the relief of the moment, the blood swept back into her face.

There was not to be peace yet, however. The blush was still hot upon her cheeks, when she caught the patter of soft steps in the passage without. A dark muzzle flecked with gray pushed in at the crack of the door; two anxious gray eyes followed.

Before she could wave him back, Red Wull had marked the intruder. With a roar he tore himself from his master's restraining hand, and dashed across the room.

"Back, Bob!" screamed Maggie, and the dark head withdrew. The door slammed with a crash as the great dog flung himself against it, and Maggie was hurled, breathless and white-faced, into a corner.

M'Adam was on his feet, pointing with a shrivelled finger, his face diabolical.

"Did you bring him? did you bring *that* to ma door?"

Maggie huddled in the corner in a palsy of trepidation. Her eyes gleamed big and black in the white face peering from the shawl.

Red Wull was now beside her snarling horribly. With nose to the bottom of the door and busy paws he was trying to get out; while, on the other side, Owd Bob, snuffling also at the crack, scratched and pleaded to get in. Only two miserable wooden inches separated the pair.

"I brought him to protect me. I—I was afraid."

M'Adam sat down and laughed abruptly.

"Afraid! I wonder ye were na afraid to bring him here. It's the first time iver he's set foot on ma land, and 't had best be the last." He turned to the great dog. "Wullie, Wullie, wad ye?" he called. "Come here. Lay ye doon—so—under ma chair—good lad. Noo's no the time to settle wi' him"—nodding toward the door. "We can wait for that, Wullie; we can wait." Then, turning to Maggie, "Gin ye want him to mak' a show at the Trials two months hence, he'd best not come here agin. Gin he does, he'll no leave ma land alive; Wullie'll see to that. Noo, what is 't ye want o'me?"

The girl in the corner, scared almost out of her senses by this last occurrence, remained dumb.

M'Adam marked her hesitation, and grinned sardonically.

"I see hoo 'tis," said he; "yer dad's sent ye. Aince before he wanted somethin' o' me, and did he come to fetch it himself like a man?"

Not he. He sent the son to rob the father." Then, leaning forward in his chair and glaring at the girl, "Ay, and mair than that! The night the lad set on me he cam'"—with hissing emphasis—"straight from Kenmuir!" He paused and stared at her intently, and she was still dumb before him. "Gin I'd ben killed, Wullie'd ha' bin disqualified from competin' for the Cup. With Adam M'Adam's Red Wull oot o' the way—noo d'ye see? Noo d'ye onderstan'?"

She did not, and he saw it and was satisfied. What he had been saying she neither knew nor cared. She only remembered the object of her mission; she only saw before her the father of the man she loved; and a wave of emotion surged up in her breast.

She advanced timidly toward him, holding out her hands.

"Eh, Mr. M'Adam," she pleaded, "I come to ask ye after David." The shawl had slipped from her head, and lay loose upon her shoulders; and she stood before him with her sad face, her pretty hair all tossed, and her eyes big with unshed tears—a touching suppliant.

"Will ye no tell me wheer he is? I'd not ask it, I'd not trouble yo', but I've bin waitin' a waefu' while, it seems, and I'm wearyin' for news o' him."

The little man looked at her curiously. "Ah, noo I mind me,"—this to himself. "You're the lass as is thinkin' o' marryin' him?"

"We're promised," the girl answered simply.

"Weel," the other remarked, "as I said afore, ye're a good plucked un." Then, in a tone in which, despite the cynicism, a certain indefinable sadness was blended, "Gin he mak's you as good husband as he mad' son to me, ye'll ha' made a maist remarkable match, my dear."

Maggie fired in a moment.

"A good feyther makes a good son," she answered almost pertly; and then, with infinite tenderness, "and I'm prayin' a good wife'll make a good husband."

He smiled scoffingly.

"I'm feared that'll no help ye much," he said.

But the girl never heeded this last sneer, so set was she on her purpose. She had heard of the one tender place in the heart of this little man with the tired face and mocking tongue, and she resolved to attain her end by appealing to it.

"Yo' loved a lass yo'sel' aince, Mr. M'Adam," she said. "Hoo would yo' ha' felt had she gone away and left yo'? Yo'd ha' bin mad; yo' know yo' would. And, Mr. M'Adam, I love the lad yer wife loved." She was kneeling at his feet now with both hands on his knees, looking up at him. Her sad face and quivering lips pleaded for her more eloquently than any words

The little man was visibly touched.

"Ay, ay, lass, that's enough," he said, trying to avoid those big beseeching eyes which would not be avoided.

"Will ye no tell me?" she pleaded.

"I canna tell ye, lass, for why, I dinna ken," he answered querulously. In truth, he was moved to the heart by her misery.

The girl's last hopes were dashed. She had played her last card and failed. She had clung with the fervor of despair to this last resource, and now it was torn from her. She had hoped, and now there was no hope. In the anguish of her disappointment she remembered that this was the man who, by his persistent cruelty, had driven her love into exile.

She rose to her feet and stood back.

"Nor ken, nor care!" she cried bitterly.

At the words all the softness fled from the little man's face.

"Ye do me a wrang, lass; ye do indeed," he said, looking up at her with an assumed ingenuousness which, had she known him better, would have warned her to beware. "Gin I kent where the lad was I'd be the vairy first to let you, and the p'lice, ken it too; eh, Wullie! he! he!" He chuckled at his wit and rubbed his knees, regardless of the contempt blazing in the girl's face.

"I canna tell ye where he is now, but ye'd aiblins care to hear o' when I saw him last." He turned his chair the better to address her.

"Twas like so: I was sittin' in this vairy chair it was, asleep, when he crep' up behind an' lep' on ma back. I knew naethin' o't till I found masel' on the floor an' him kneelin' on me. I saw by the look on him he was set on finishin' me, so I said——"

The girl waved her hand at him, superbly disdainful.

"Yo' ken yo're lyin', ivery word o't," she cried.

The little man hitched his trousers, crossed his legs, and yawned.

"An honest lee for an honest purpose is a matter ony man may be proud of, as you'll ken by the time you're my years, na lass."

The girl slowly crossed the room. At the door she turned.

"Then ye'll no tell me wheer he is?" she asked with a heart-breaking trill in her voice.

"On ma word, lass, I dinna ken," he cried, half passionately.

"On your word, Mr. M'Adam!" she said with a quiet scorn in her voice that might have stung Iscariot.

The little man spun round in his chair, an angry red dyeing his cheeks. In another moment he was suave and smiling again.

"I canna tell ye where he is noo," he said, unctuously; "but aiblins, I could let ye know where he's gaein' to."

"Can yo' will yo'?" cried the simple girl

all unsuspecting. In a moment she was across the room and at his knees.

"Closer, and I'll whisper." The little ear, peeping from its nest of brown, was tremblingly approached to his lips. The little man lent forward and whispered one short, sharp word, then sat back, grinning, to watch the effect of his disclosure.

He had his revenge, an unworthy revenge on such a victim. And, watching the girl's face, the cruel disappointment merging in the heat of her indignation, he had yet enough nobility to regret his triumph.

She sprang from him as though he were unclean.

"An' yo' his father!" she cried, in burning tones.

She crossed the room, and at the door paused. Her face was white again and she was quite composed.

"If David did strike you, you drove him to it," she said, speaking in calm, gentle accents. "Yo' know, none so well, whether yo've bin a good feyther to him, and him no mither, poor laddie! whether yo've bin to him what she'd ha' had yo' be. Ask yer conscience, Mr. M'Adam. An' if he was a wee aggravatin' at times, had he no reason? He'd a heavy cross to bear, had David, and yo' know best if yo' helped to ease it for him."

The little man pointed to the door; but the girl paid no heed.

"D'yo' think when yo' were cruel to him, jeerin' and fleerin', he never felt it, because he was too proud to show ye? He'd a big soft heart, had David, beneath the varnish. Mony's the time when mither was alive, I've seen him throw himsel' into her arms, sobbin', and cry, 'Eh, if I had but mither! 'Twas different when mither was alive; he was kinder to me then. An' noo I've no one; I'm alone.' An' he'd sob and sob in mither's arms, and she, weepin' hersel', would comfort him, while he, wee laddie, would no be comforted, cryin' broken-like, 'There's none to care for me noo; I'm alone. Mither's left me and eh! I'm prayin' to be wi' her!'"

The clear, girlish voice shook. M'Adam, sitting with face averted, waved to her, mutely ordering her to be gone. But she held on, gentle, sorrowful, relentless.

"An' what'll yo' say to his mither when yo meet her, as yo' must soon noo, and she asks yo', 'An' what o' David? What o' th' lad I left wi' yo', Adam, to guard and keep for me, faithful and true, till this Day?' And then yo'll ha' to speak the truth, God's truth; and yo'll ha' to answer, 'Sin' the day yo' left me I niver said a kind word to the lad. I niver bore wi' him, and niver tried to. And in the end I drove him by persecution to try and murder me.' Then maybe she'll look at yo'—yo' best ken hoo—and she'll say, 'Adam, Adam! is this what I deserved fra yo'?'"

The gentle, implacable voice ceased. The girl turned and slipped softly out of the room; and M'Adam was left alone to his thoughts and his dead wife's memory.

"Mither and father, baith! Mither and father, baith!" rang remorselessly in his ears.

CHAPTER XXIII

TH' OWD UN

THE Black Killer still cursed the land. Sometimes there would be a cessation in the crimes; then a shepherd, going his rounds, would notice his sheep herding together, packing in unaccustomed squares; a raven, gorged to the crop, would rise before him and flap wearily away, and he would come upon the murderer's latest victim.

The Dalesmen were in despair, so utterly futile had their efforts been. There was no proof; no hope, no apparent probability that the end was near. As for the Tailless Tyke, the only piece of evidence against him had flown with David, who, as it chanced, had divulged what he had seen to no man.

The £100 reward offered had brought no issue. The police had done nothing. The Special Commissioner had been equally successful. After the affair in the Scoop the Killer never ran a risk, yet never missed a chance.

Then, as a last resource, Jim Mason made his attempt. He took a holiday from his duties and disappeared into the wilderness. Three days and three nights no man saw him.

On the morning of the fourth he reappeared, haggard, unkempt, a furtive look haunting his eyes, sullen for once, irritable, who had never been irritable before—to confess his failure. Cross-examined further, he answered with unaccustomed fierceness: "I seed nowt, I tell ye. Who's the liar as said I did?"

But that night his missus heard him in his sleep conning over something to himself in slow, fearful whisper, "Two on 'em; one ahint t'other. The first big—bull-like; t'ither——" At which point Mrs. Mason smote him a smashing blow in the ribs, and he woke in a sweat, crying terribly, "Who said I seed——"

The days were slipping away; the summer was hot upon the land, and with it the Black Killer was forgotten; David was forgotten; everything sank into oblivion before the all-absorbing interest of the coming Dale trials.

The long-anticipated battle for the Shepherds' Trophy was looming close; soon everything that hung upon the issue of that struggle would be decided finally. For ever the justice of Th' Owd Un' claim to his proud title would be settled. If he won, he won outright—a thing unprecedented in the annals of the Cup; if he won, the place of Owd Bob o' Kenmuir as first in his profession was assured for all time. Above all, it was the last event in the six years' struggle 'twixt Red and Gray. It was the last time those two great rivals

would meet in battle. The supremacy of one would be decided once and for all. For win or lose, it was the last public appearance of the Gray Dog of Kenmuir.

And as every hour brought the great day nearer, nothing else was talked of in the country-side. The heat of the Dalesmen's enthusiasm was only intensified by the fever of their apprehension. Many a man would lose more than he cared to contemplate were Th' Owd Un beat. But he'd not be! Nay; owd, indeed, he was—two years older than his great rival; there were a hundred risks, a hundred chances; still: "What's the odds agin Owd Bob o' Kenmuir? I'm takin' 'em. Who'll lay agin Th' Owd Un?"

And with the air saturated with this perpetual talk of the old dog, these everlasting references to his certain victory; his ears drumming with the often boast that the gray dog was the best in the North, M'Adam became the silent, ill-designing man of six months since—morose, brooding, suspicious, muttering of conspiracy, plotting revenge.

The scenes at the Sylvester Arms were replicas of those of previous years. Usually the little man sat isolated in a far corner, silent and glowering, with Red Wull at his feet. Now and then he burst into a paroxysm of insane giggling, slapping his thigh, and muttering, "Ay, it's likely they'll beat us, Wullie. Yet aiblins there's a wee somethin'—a some-

thin' we ken and they dinna, Wullie,—eh! Wullie, he! he!" And sometimes he would leap to his feet and address his pot-house audience, appealing to them passionately, satirically, tearfully, as the mood might be on him; and his theme was always the same: James Moore, Owd Bob, the Cup, and the plots agin him and his Wullie; and always he concluded with that hint of the surprise to come.

Meantime, there was no news of David; he had gone as utterly as a ship foundered in mid-Atlantic. Some said he'd 'listed; some, that he'd gone to sea. And "So he 'as," corroborated Sam'l, "floatin', 'eels upwards."

With no gleam of consolation, Maggie's misery was such as to rouse compassion in all hearts. She went no longer blithely singing about her work; and all the springiness had fled from her gait. The people of Kenmuir vied with one another in their attempts to console their young mistress.

Maggie was not the only one in whose life David's absence had created a void. Last as he would have been to own it, M' Adam felt acutely the boy's loss. It may have been he missed the ever-present butt; it may have been a nobler feeling. Alone with Red Wull, too late he felt his loneliness. Sometimes, sitting in the kitchen by himself, thinking of the past, he experienced sharp pangs of remorse; and this was all the more the case after

Maggie's visit. Subsequent to that day the little man, to do him justice, was never known to hint by word or look an ill thing of his enemy's daughter. Once, indeed, when Melia Ross was drawing on a dirty imagination with Maggie for subject, M' Adam shut her up with: "Ye're a maist amazin' big liar, Melia Ross."

Yet, though for the daughter he had now no evil thought, his hatred for the father had never been so uncompromising.

He grew reckless in his assertions. His life was one long threat against James Moore's. Now he openly stated his conviction that, on the evenful night of the fight, James Moore, with object easily discernible, had egged David on to murder him.

"Then why don't yo' go and tell him so, yo' muckle liar?" roared Tammas at last, enraged to madness.

"I will!" said M' Adam. And he did.

It was on the day preceding the great summer sheep fair at Grammoch-town that he fulfilled his vow.

That is always a big field-day at Kenmuir; and on this occasion James Moore and Owd Bob had been up and working on the Pike from the rising of the sun. Throughout the straggling lands of Kenmuir the Master went with his untiring adjutant, rounding up, cutting out, drafting. It was already noon when the flock started from the yard.

On the gate by the stile, as the party came up, sat M'Adam.

"I've a word to say to you, James Moore," he announced, as the Master approached.

"Say it then, and quick. I've no time to stand gossipin' here, if yo' have," said the Master.

M'Adam strained forward till he nearly toppled off the gate.

"Queer thing, James Moore, you should be the only one to escape this Killer."

"Yo' forget yoursel', M'Adam."

"Ay, there's me," acquiesced the little man.

"But you—hoo d'yo' 'count for *your* luck?"

James Moore swung round and pointed proudly at the gray dog, now patrolling round the flock.

"There's my luck!" he said.

M'Adam laughed unpleasantly.

"So I thought," he said, "so I thought! And I s'pose ye're thinkin' that yer luck," nodding at the gray dog, "will win you the Cup for certain a month hence,"

"I hope so!" said the Master.

"Strange if he should not after all," mused the little man.

James Moore eyed him suspiciously.

"What d'yo' mean?" he asked sternly.

M'Adam shrugged his shoulders.

"There's mony a slip 'twixt Cup and lip, that's a'. I was thinkin' some mischance might come to him."

The Master's eyes flashed dangerously. He recalled the many rumors he had heard, and the attempt on the old dog early in the year.

"I canna think ony one would be coward enough to murder him," he said, drawing himself up.

M'Adam lent forward. There was a nasty glitter in his eye, and his face was all a-tremble.

"Ye'd no think ony one 'd be cooard enough to set the son to murder the father. Yet some one did,—set the lad on to 'sassinate me. He failed at me, and next, I suppose, he'll try at Wullie!" There was a flush on the sallow face, and a vindictive ring in the thin voice. "One way or t'ither, fair or foul, Wullie or me, ain or baith, has got to go afore Cup Day, eh, James !'ooore! eh?"

The Master put his hand on the latch of the gate, "That'll do, M'Adam," he said. "I'll stop to hear no more, else I might get angry we' yo'. Noo git off this gate, yo're trespassin' as 'tis."

He shook the gate. M'Adam tumbled off, and went sprawling into the sheep clustered below. Picking himself up, he dashed on through the flock, waving his arms, kicking fantastically, and scattering confusion everywhere.

"Just wait till I'm thro' wi' 'em, will yo'?" shouted the Master, seeing the danger.

It was a request which, according to the

etiquette of shepherding, one man was bound to grant another. But M'Adam rushed on regardless, dancing and gesticulating. Save for the lightning vigilance of Owd Bob, the flock must have broken.

"I think yo' might ha' waited!" remonstrated the Master, as the little man burst his way through.

"Noo, I've forgot somethin'!" the other cried, and back he started as he had gone.

It was more than human nature could tolerate.

"Bob, keep him off!"

A flash of teeth; a blaze of gray eyes; and the old dog had leapt forward to oppose the little man's advance.

"Shift oot o' ma light!" cried he, striving to dash past.

"Hold him, lad!"

And hold him the old dog did, while his master opened the gate and put the flock through, the opponents dodging in front of one another like opposing three-quarter-backs at the Rugby game.

"Oot o' ma path, or I'll strike!" shouted the little man in a fury, as the last sheep passed through the gate.

"I'd not," warned the Master.

"But I will!" yelled M'Adam; and, darting forward as the gate swung to, struck furiously at his opponent.

He missed, and the gray dog charged at him like a mail-train.

"Hi! James Moore——" but over he went like a toppled wheelbarrow, while the old dog turned again, raced at the gate, took it magnificently in his stride, and galloped up the lane after his master.

At M'Adam's yell, James Moore had turned.

"Served yo' properly!" he called back.

"He'll larn ye yet it's not wise to tamper wi' a gray dog or his sheep. Not the first time he's downed ye, I'm thinkin'!"

The little man raised himself painfully to his elbow and crawled toward the gate. The Master, up the lane, could hear him cursing as he dragged himself. Another moment, and a head was poked through the bars of the gate, and a devilish little face looked after him.

"Downed me, by——, he did!" the little man cried passionately. "I owed ye baith somethin' before this, and noo, by——, I owe ye somethin' more. An' mind ye, Adam M'Adam pays his debts!"

"I've heard the contrary," the Master replied drily, and turned away up the lane toward the Marches.

CHAPTER XXIV

A SHOT IN THE NIGHT

It was only three short weeks before Cup Day that one afternoon Jim Mason brought a letter to Kenmuir. James Moore opened it as the postman still stood in the door.

It was from Long Kirby—still in retirement—begging him for mercy's sake to keep Owd Bob safe within doors at nights; at all events till after the great event was over. For Kirby knew, as did every Dalesman, that the old dog slept in the porch, between the two doors of the house, of which the outer was only loosely closed by a chain, so that the ever-watchful guardian might slip in and out and go his rounds at any moment of the night.

This was how the smith concluded his ill-spelt note: "Look out for M'Adam i tell you i *know* hel tri at thowd un afore cup day—failin im you. if the ole dog's bete i'm a ruined man i say so for the luv o God keep yer eyes wide."

The Master read the letter, and handed it to the postman, who perused it carefully.

"I tell yo' what," said Jim at length, speaking with an earnestness that made the other stare, "I wish yo'd do what he asks yo': keep

Th' Owd Un in o' nights, I mean, just for the present."

The Master shook his head and laughed, tearing the letter to pieces.

"Nay," said he; "M'Adam or no M'Adam, Cup or no Cup, Th' Owd Un has the run o' ma land same as he's had since a puppy. Why, Jim, the first night I shut him up that night the Killer comes, I'll lay."

The postman turned wearily away, and the Master stood looking after him, wondering what had come of late to his former cheery friend.

Those two were not the only warnings James Moore received. During the weeks immediately preceding the Trials, the danger signal was perpetually flaunted beneath his nose.

Twice did Watch, the black cross-bred chained in the straw-yard, hurl a brazen challenge on the night air. Twice did the Master, with lantern, Sam'l and Owd Bob, sally forth and search every hole and corner on the premises—to find nothing. One of the dairy-maids gave notice, avowing that the farm was haunted; that, on several occasions in the early morning, she had seen a bogie flitting down the slope to the Wastrel—a sure portent, Sam'l declared, of an approaching death in the house. While once a shearer, coming up from the village, reported having seen, in the twilight of dawn, a little ghostly figure, haggard and startled, stealing silently from tree