

"It is an accident altogether, this going to Branksome. I made a stupid mistake at Haverholme Junction, where I got out of the train, taking my bag with me by an unaccountable bit of luck. I walked up and down the platform a few times to warm my feet, and by a feat of stupidity which I cannot in the least explain, got into the wrong train, and found myself presently at Conismere, where, as you know, the branch line ends; so, as there was no train back to Haverholme before to-morrow morning, I made up my mind to inflict myself for the night upon an old acquaintance of mine, Dr. Peele, of Branksome."

"Dr. Peele! Oh, ay, I know 'un."

"And you were kind enough to offer me a lift as far as Mereside. Branksome is about four miles further on, they say."

"Ay, a matter of four mile or so, and a straight road eno'—t' coach road. But if you don't know these parts, I should advise you to bide at Mereside till morning, for t' wind will make drifts by-and-by on t' roads by t' lake. There is a hotel and two good inns at Mereside where t' coach starts from, and t' owd doctor's ill, so there won't be much of a welcome for ye at Branksome Lodge."

"The doctor's ill, is he?"

"Ay, and t' missis won't be in t' best o' tempers. She's not one o' t' meek 'uns, isn't Mrs. Peele, though she's a good lady, and it's my belief she's saved many a one of her husband's patients by chuckin' his pills and his draughts into t' fire, and sending t' boy off wi' a pie and a bottle of port wine in place of 'em."

The Yorkshireman laughed. "I don't say there may not be occasions where a little more food and a little less physic is not a bad prescription; but you mustn't disparage medical science to me, for I'm a doctor myself."

"Lord, and are ye now? Well, I thowt I was