

The Rockwood Review.

off on their last run.

No applause this time, not a voice was raised, anxious faces, twitching fingers, the whole crowd tense as a stretched wire. A false turn, a wilful sheep, a cantankerous judge, and the gray dog would be beat. And not a man there but knew it.

Yet over the stream master and dog went about their business never so quiet, never so collected, for all the world as though they were rounding up a flock on the Muir Pike.

The old dog found his sheep in a twinkling, and a wild, scared trio they proved. Rounding the first flag, one bright eyed wether made a dash for the open. He was quick, but the gray dog was quicker—a splendid recover, and a sound like a sob from the watchers on the hill.

Down the slope they came for the gap in the wall. A little below the opening, James Moore took his stand to stop and turn them, while a distance behind his sheep loitered Owd Bob, seeming to follow rather than drive, yet watchful of every movement and anticipating it. On he came, one eye on his master, the other on his sheep, never hurrying them, never flurrying them, yet bringing them rapidly along.

No word was spoken, barely a gesture made, yet they worked, master and dog, like one individual.

Through the gap, along the hill parallel to the spectators, playing into one another's hands like men at polo.

A wide sweep for the turn at the flags, and the sheep wheeled as though at the word of command, dropped through them and travelled rapidly for the bridge.

"Steady!" whispered the crowd.

"Steady, man!" muttered Parson Leggy.

"Hold 'em, for God's sake!" croaked Kirby huskily. D——n! I knew it! I saw it coming!"

The pace down the hill had

grown quicker—too quick. Close on the bridge the three sheep made an effort to break. A dash—and two were checked, but the third went away like the wind, and after him Owd Bob, a gray streak against the green.

Tammas was cursing silently, Kirby was white to the lips, and in the stillness you could plainly hear the Dalesmen's sobbing breath, as it fluttered in their throats.

"Gallop! they say he's old and slow!" muttered the parson. "Dash! look at that!" for the gray dog, racing like the nor'easter over the sea, had already retrieved the fugitive.

Man and dog were coaxing the three a step at a time toward the bridge.

One ventured—the others followed.

In the middle the leader stopped and tried to turn—and time was flying, flying, and the penning alone must take minutes. Many a man's hand was at his watch, but no one could take his eyes off the group below him to look.

"We're beat! I've won bet, Tammas!" groaned Sam'l. (The two had a long standing wager on the matter.) "I allus knoo hoo 'twould be. I allus told yo' th' owd tyke—" Then breaking into a bellow, his honest face crimson with enthusiasm! "Coom on, master! good for yo' Owd un! Yon's the style!"

For the gray dog had leaped on the back of the hindmost sheep, it had surged forward against the next, and they were over, and making up the slope amidst a thunder of applause.

At the pen it was a sight to see shepherd and dog working together. The master, his face stern and a little whiter than its wont, casting forward with both hands, herding the sheep in, the gray dog, his eyes big and bright, dropping to hand, crawling and creeping, closer and closer.

"They're in—nay—ay—dang me! Stop er! Good, Owd Un!