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THE DEVIL'S DOOR SECRET

Volume 1. No. 1.

A Christmas Story of Four Nights.

BY THOMAS HARDY, Author of "Far From the Madding Crowd, "The Trumpet Major," etc.

THE

Wery well. I perceive you are dead and lots one, "he could next be heard to say that in encoding out be heard to say that to make heard to say that to make heard to say that to make heard to say that to see you. Come alcos. Baliero that to say that to see you. Come alcos. Baliero that to say that to see you. Come alcos. Baliero that to say that to see you. Come alcos. Baliero that to sake this if my happiness that to show you now that to sake the start to say that in auch at traged. "You may see me in an offiniary way or hy should you not? But, of course, in a mark to say that in auch at traged."
"You may see me in an offiniary way or hy should you not? But, of course, the apathetic and taciturn boy way on that he window. But the could book ing too make way say that in auch at traged. The should not have gone, as it is the abait of the window. But the could book ing too mark the start is a should not have gone, as it is a should not have gone as it. I that have different the should have the say that in a should not have the say that in a should not have gone as it. I then the say that is a should not have gone as it. I then the say that is a should not have gone, as it is a should not have gone, as it is a should not have gone, as it is a should not have gone. The one that the dual to this too the should have the say that in an other the say that is a should not have gone how, if it had not happend heave the may mother to have gone. The one have the say that to have gone. The one is any if a say if a should not have gone have the say that is a should not have the say that to have gone. The one that the dual to the say the say that to have gone. The one is any the say that that the say that that that the say that the say that thappend the

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"Wills, do you think the Duchess guessed ?" "She never dil. I am sure, to the day of her death." "Did you leave all as you found it on the hill?" "I did."

"What made you think of going up there this particular afternoon?" "What your Grace says you don't wish

"READY TO DIE!" Such is the Assertion of the

Assassin.

IMPELLED BY THE DEITY.

every preceding night, sleeping often till awakened by a smack on the shoulder at 3 or 4 in the morning from the sheep-crook of the old man.

It might have been about 11 o'clock when he awoke. He was so surprised at awak-ing without, apparently, being called or struck, that on second thoughts he assumed that somebody must have called him inspite of appearances, and looked out of the hut window towards the sheep. They all lay as quiet as when he had visited them, ery little bleating being audible, and no uman soul disturbing the scene. He next The boy remained in the hit, confront-

soked from the opposite window, and here the case was different. The frost-facets and the scene, but nobody else glistened under the moon as before; an uppeared. How long he stood with his occasional furze-bush showed as a dark little face against the loophole he hardly spot on the same; and in the foreground lnew; but he was rudely awakened from stood the ghostly form of the trilithon. But in front of the trilithon stood a man. That he was not the shepherd or any one that he del of it he familiarly recognized the stem of the old shepherd's crock.

of the farm-laborers was apparent in a moment's observation, his dress being a Wills-now you have let the fire out, and dark suit, and his figure of slender build you know I want it kept in ! I thought

The shepherd lad had hardly not! speculating on the strangeness of the ui-known's presence here at such an hour, when he saw a second figure crossing the open sward towards the locality of the rilithon and furze clump that screened the hut. This second personage was a woman; and immediately on sight of her the male stranger hastened forward, meeting her just in front of the hut window. Before she seemed to be aware of his intention, he clasped her in his arms. The lady released herself, and drew back

with some dignity. "You have come, Harriet-bless you

"You have come, Harriet-Diess you for it !" he exclaimed, fervently. "But not for this," she answered, in offended accerts. And then, more good-naturedly, "I have come, Fred, because you entreated me so ! What can have offended accerts. And then, more good. naturedly, "I have come, Fred, because you entreated me so! What can have been the object of your writing such a letter? I feared I might be doing you grievous ill by staying away. How did you come here?

" I walked all the way from my father's." "Well, what is it? How have you lived since we last met?"

"But roughly: you might have known that without asking. I have seen many lands and many faces since I last walked these downs; but I have only thought of you."

you." "Is it only to tell me this that you have

summoned me so strangely ?" A passing breeze blew away the murmur of the reply and several succeeding sen-tences, till the man's voice again became audible in the words, "Harriet-truth hetween us two." between us two! I have heard that the Duke does not treat you too well."

the does not treat you too well." 'He is warm-tempered; but he is agood sband."

"He is warm-tempered, which is a corner. In a corner. The Duke came close to the clump of times even threatens to lock you out of doors." "Only once, Fred! On my honor, only "Only once, Fred! On my honor, only the came close to the clump of furze and stood by the spot where his wife and the captain had held their dialogue; hiding place; and in doing so discovered by the spot where his wife are the captain had held their dialogue; hiding place; and in doing so discovered by the spot where his wife are the drouge and the dot held the dialogue is the drouge are the drouge once. The Duke is a fairly good husband, I repeat. But you deserve punishment for this night's trick of drawing me out. What

should elapse before the shepherd b old enough to reason out this. The third individual stood still for

a moment, as if in deep meditation; he crossed over to where the lady and gentle man stood, and looked at the ground; then at the second descent (where the Ringdor he too turned and went away, in a third road crossed before you came to the old drection, as widely divergent as possible park entrance on that side-now closed up from those taken by the two interlocutors. His course was towards the highway ; and and the lodge cleared away, though at the time it was wondered why, being considered the most convenient gate of all). s few moments afterwards the trot of a lorse might have been heard upon its frosty Once within the sound of the horse's footsteps Bill Wills felt comparatively com-

fortable; for, though in awe of the Duke because of his position, he had no moral repugnance to his companionship on ac-count of the grisly deed he had committed. considering that powerful nobleman to have a right to do what he chose on his own lands. The Duke rode steadily on beneath his ancestral trees, the boofs of his horse sending up a smart sound now that he had reached the hard road of the dive, and

"Blame thy young eyes and limbs, Bil surmounted by parapets with square-cut battlements that cast a notched shade upon and graceful carriage. He walked back something would go wrong with ye up wards and forwards in front of the trili- here, and I couldn't bide in bed no more than thistledown on the wind, that I could

"You said I could go to sleep for a ho lerday, and I did."

"Don't you speak to your betters like that, young man, or you'll come to the gailows-tree! You didn't sleep all the saw the horseman's outlines she ran for ward into the monlight to meet him. time, or you wouldn't have be "Ab, dear-and are you come!" she aid. "I heard Hero's tread just when out of that there hole! Now, you can go home, and be up here again by breakfast time. I be an old man, and there's old men that deserve well of the world; but no said. you rode over the hill, and I knew it in a moment. I would have come further if " Glad to see me, eh?" -I must rest how I can !"

The elder shepherd then lay down inside " How can you ask that ?" the hut, and the boy went down the hill to the hamlet where he dwelt.

"How can you ask that?" "Well: it is a lovely night for meetings." "Yes, it is a lovely night." The Duke dismounted and stood by her side. "Why should you have been listen-ing at this time of night, and yet not expecting me?" he asked. "Why, indeed ! There is a strange SECOND NIGHT. When the next night drew on the action

story attached to that, which I must tell you at once. But why did you come a night sooner than you said you would come? I am rather sorry—I really am !" combe Towers had struck 11 that he observed the opening of the second act of this midnight drama. It consisted in the (shaking her head playfully); "for as a surprise to you I had ordered a bonfire to be built, which was to be lighted on your appearance of neither lover nor Duch ss, but of the third figure, the stout man booted arrival to-morrow : and now it is wa You can see the outline of it just out there.

The Duke looked across to a spot of ris-ing glade, and saw the faggots in a heap. He then bent his eyes with a blank and clump concealing the hut, the moonlight shining full upon his face and revealing him to be the Duke. Fear seized upon the shepherd boy ; the Duke was Jove himself puzzled air on the ground. "What is this strange story you have to tell me that kept you awake?" he murmured. "It is this—and it is really rather to the rural population, whom to offend was starvation, homelessness, and death, and whom to look a was to be mentally scathed

serious. My cousin, Fred Pentridge-Captain Pentridge as he is now-was in his and dumbfoundered. He closed the stove boyhood a great admirer of mine, as I think I have told you, though I was six years his senior. In strict truth, he was absurdly fond of me."

"You have never told me of before.' "Then it was your sister I told-yes.

was. Well, you know I have not seen him for many years, and naturally I had quite forgotten his admiration of me in old then looked inside; finding it to all seeming "Harriet, is this fair or honest? Is it empty, he entered, closing the door behind

the sight's trick of drawing me out. What "Harriet, is this fair or honest? Is is ad one—that, in synce file sweetness of your temps to help you. You agys? I have comes to have if and boars while the boy's face help you. You agys? I have comes to have if a sweetness of that I may be able to help impass of the sweetness of that I may be able to it the sweetness of the the compassion of the sweetness of the the such and the shear form of the sweetness of the sweetness of the the such and the shear form of the sweetness of the sweetness of the the sweetness of the the sweetness of the the sweetness of the sweetness of the the sweetness of the the sweetness of the the sweetness of the sweetness of the the sweetness of the sweetness of the the sweetness of the the sweetness of the sweetness of the the sweetness of the sweetness of the the sweetness of the the sweetness of the sweetness of the the sweetness of the sweetness of the the sweetness of the the sweetness of the sweetness of the sweetness of the the sweetness of the sweetness of the sweetness of the the sweetness of the sweetness of the sweetness of the sweetness of the the sweetness of the sweetness of

hill alone. Any live company, even the most terrible, was better than the company while to come again !" the Duke insisted, as he stood still, reluctant to walk further. of the dead ; so, running with the speed of a hare in the direction pursued by the "He is more likely to come and wait all night, and it would be harsh treatment to horseman, he overtook the revengeful Duke let him do so a second time."

"He is not here; so turn and come He seems not to be here, certainly.

wonder if anything has happened to him. If it has, I shall never forgive myself !" The Duke, uneasily: "Oh, no. He has

some other engagement." "That is very unlikely." Or perhaps he has found the distance

"Nor is that probable."

Yes-he may have thought better of it; if, indeed, he is not here all the timesomewhere in the hollow behind the Devil's to search for some letter or Door. Let us go and see; it will serve him been mislaid, seemed to

right to surprise him." "Ob, he's not there." soon drew near the front door of his house, "He may be lying very quiet because of you," she said archly. "Oh, no-not because of me !" "Come, then. I declare, dearest, you iag like an unwilling schoolboy to-night, and there's

the gravelled terrace. These outlines were quite familiar to little Bill Wills, though othing within their boundary had ever and there's no responsiveness in you! You are jealous of that poor lad, and it is

When the rider approached the mansion a small turret door was quickly opened, and a woman came out. As soon as she

quite absurd of you." " I'll come ! I'll come ! Say no more Harriet !" And they crossed over green. Wondering what they would do, the you

wondering what they wond do, included shepherd left the hut, and doubled behind the belt of furze, intending to stand near the trilithon unperceived. But, in crossing the few yards of open ground he was for a

moment exposed to view. "Ah-I see him at last!" said the

Duchess. "See him?" said the Duke. "Where?" "By the Devil's Door-don't you notice a figure there? Ah, my poor lover cousin, wou't you catch it now!" And she laughed half-pityingly. "But what's the matter? she asked, turning to her husband.

"It is not he !" cried the Duke hoarsely. It can't be he !"

No-it is not he. It is too small for him. It is a boy." "Ah-I thought so. Boy, come here i

The youthful shepherd advanced with apprel sion. What are you doing here ?"

"Keeping sheep, your Grace." "Ah—you know me. Do you keep sheep

ere every night ?' "Off and on, my Lord Duke." "And what have you seen here to-night or last night?" inquired the Duchess.

"What have you seen here to might or last night?" inquired the Duchess. "The boy was silent. "He has seen nothing," interrupted her husband, his eyes so forbiddingly fixed on the boy that they seemed to shine like points of fire. "Come, let us go. The air is too keen here to stand in long." "When they were gone the boy retreated to the hut and sheep. less fearful now than at first, familiarity with the situation hav-ing gradually overpowered his thoughts of the buried man. But he was not to be left alone long. When an interval had elapsed of about sufficient length for walking to and from Verncombe Towers, there reappeared for that direction the heavy form of the Duke. He now came alone. The nobleman, on his part, seemed to have eyes no less sharp than the boy's, for he instantly recognized the latter among the ewes, and came straight towards him. "Are you the shepherd lad I spoke to a short time ago?"

The trembling boy repeated the words,

and kissed the stone as desired. The Duke led him off by the hand. That night the junior shepherd slept in Verncombe Towers, and next day he was sent away for tuition to a remote village Thence he went to a preparatory establish ment, and in due course to a public school. FOURTH NIGHT.

On a winter evening, many years subse quent to the above-mentioned occurrences. the *ci-devant* shepherd sat in a well-furnished office in the north wing of Verncombe Towers, in the guise of an ordinary educated man of business. He appeared a "Then he may have thought better of this time as a person of six or seven andthirty, though actually he was several years younger. A worn and restless glance of the eye now and then, when he lifted his head to search for some letter or paper which had been mislaid, seemed to denote that his was not a mind so thoroughly at ease as his surroundings might have led an observer to expect. His pallor, too, was remarkable for a countryman. He was professedly

engaged in writing, but he shaped not a word. He had sat there only a few minutes when, laying down his pen and pushing back his chair, he rested a hand uneasily on each of the chair-arms, and looked on the floor.

Soon he arose, and left the ro course was along a passage which ended in a central octagonal hall: crossing this he knocked at a door. A faint, though deep, voice told him to come in. The room he entered was the library, and it was ten-

anted by a single person only-his patron

the Duke. During this long interval of years the Duke had lost all his heaviness of build. He was, indeed, almost a skeleton; his white hair was thin, and his hands were while travertant "Oh-Wills?" he nearly transparent. "Oh-Wills?" he murmured. "Sit down. What is it?" "Nothing new, your Grace. Nobody to speak of has written, and nobody has called." "Ah-what then? You look concerned."

Old times have come to life, as they " Old times be cursed-which old times

That Christmas week nineteen year ago, when the late Dachess' cousin Frederick implored her to meet him on Verncombe Down, I saw the meeting-it was just such a night as this-and I saw more. She met him once, but not the sec-ond time."

" Wills, shall I recall some words to you

"Wills, shall I recall some words to you —the words of an eath taken on that hill by a shepherd boy?" "It is unnecessary. He has strenuously kept that eath and promise. Since that night no sound of his shepherd life has crossed his lips—even to yourself. But do you wish to hear more, or do you not, your Grace?"

seems coming may be quite near at hand -when, in spite of my lips, that episode will allow itself to go undivulged no

of that which was imminent next day. Early in the morning he called at Verncombe Towers. The blinds were down, and there was something singular upon the porter's face when he opened the door. The steward inquired for the Duke. The man's voice was subdued as

rephed, "Sir, I am sorry to say that His Grace is dead! He left his room some time in the night, and wandered about nobody knows where. On returning to the upper floor he lost his balance and fell down tairs. The steward told the tale of the Down

before the Vicar had spoken. Wills had always intended to do so after the death of

A Peterboro' telegram says: A report comes from the back country that a most horrible murder was committed last Thursday afternoon at one of Gilmour's shanties on Beaver Creek, county of Hastings. It seems that the cook, a man by the name of O'Brien, had some words with his mate or essistent at the dinner with his mate or assistant at the dinner hour. When the men returned in the evening both were missing, and the fire was out and no supper ready. Search was mede, but no clue was found until next morning, but no clue was found until bext morning, when the body of the mate, whose name is unknown, was found under a log heap, back of the sharty. He had been killed with a blow on the load, and the body cut into quarters. O'Brien was missing, but the

quarters. O'Brien was missing, but clothes worn by him the day before n the shanty covered with blo od. As yet no word has been received of his where bouts.

Chinese Emigration

A despatch from Sydney, N. S. W., says Lord Augustus Loftus, Governor of New South Wales, in closing Parl'sment said that the law restricting the influx o Cainese into the colony had attained it bject without in s or without p

R. Coverdale was caught by a rotating shaft at MoBride's planing mill, Erie, Pa., and his suspenders getting twisted around his neck he was strangled. His around

unwilling to arouse him, the steward fol-lowed noiselessly. The Duke kept on his path unerringly, entered the park and made for the house, where he let himself in by a tindow that stood open—the one probably by which he had come out. Wills softly closed the window behind his patrca and then retired homeward to await the revelations of the morning, deeming it unnecessary to alarm the house. However, he felt uneasy during the re-mainder of the night, no less on account of the Duke's personal condition than because of that which was imminent nextday. Early m the morning he called at Verncombe Towers. The blinds were down, and there

FOOT-PADS ON THE WARPATH

A Lonely Teamster's Tragical Experience With Tramps-Narrow Escape from Being Shot.

A Peterboro' despatch says Mr. John Kelly, residing on the Grovers' property, just outside of the limits of Norwood, on Tuesday last was engaged to remove the household goods of Mrs. R. Richardson by team to Peterboro'. He safely accomplished this job, and about 6 o'clock in the evening left for home, and had got a few miles on his journey on the road between the town

The steward told the taile of the Down be for the Vicar [had spoken. Wills had always intended to do so after the death of the Duke. The consequences to himself his job, and about 6 o'clock in the evening of the Duke. The consequences to himself he underwent cheerfully; but his lide was a data between the town and therewent the evening of the Duke. The sonewhat under 39 years of age.
 The splendid Verncombe breeding flock is as renowned as ever, and, to the eyer, resembles in every particular what it was in earlier times; but the animals while a pipe. Kelly said no, he did not composed it on the occasion of the events for lambing purposes, though the name of Distort of the high splet at that date. Partly, too, it may shelter at the begnet of christmas week fitting shapes are seen in the open space. For it is said by present shepherds in that distift that during the nights of Christmas week fitting shapes are seen in the open space. For it is said by present shepherds in that distift that during the nights of Christmas week fitting shapes are seen in the open space. For it is said by present shepherds in that distift that during the nights of Christmas week for the set set of a Shantyman-Killed by His Companion and Cati in the solve on the back country that a most form his revolver. They, too, tim may shapes are seen in the open space. For it is shanties on Beaver Creek, county of Hastings. It seems that the cook, a man the stance of Sillenge and the shadow of a man dragging a burden into the hollow.
 Brutal Marder of a Shantyman-Killed the the sector is the companionaling to other was a constelled in the event of the same of O'Brien, had some words when he is mane of O'Brien, had some words when he is mane of O'Brien, had some words words with his mate or assistant at the dimore intower with the forst individu

Mr. Kelly inferred that he was in wait for some farmer returning home with the prc-ceeds of a load of grain, but not meeting with the identical person, he determined that Kelly should fall a prey to his evil intentions. Mr. Kelly's escape is a miraculous one, and it is to be hoped will make parties in future travelling at night cautious with those they may may road.

CARACAS, Dec. 11 .- President Blance asked the legis ative body for authority to organize a force of 25,000 men, with the object of warding off the approaching revolu-tion. It is rumored the Legislature will

Mark Twain explains that his trip to Canada to obtain a copyright on a book was not in vain, though the Dominion Govern-ment did refuse to issue a copyright. By being on British soi! when the work was published in England, he put himself in the requisite legal attitude to protect it from piracy anywhere in Great Britain or her provinces. "My experiment," he adds, " also established the fact, as far as it can be established without the decision of a court, that 'elective downicil' is set of a

Grace?" "I wish to hear no more," said the Duke sullenly. "Very well; let it be so. But a time