

PETHERICK'S FEEL.

FEEL STORY.
BY E. W. THOMSON.

Each story of the Shelton Cotton Factory now building is fifteen feet between floors; there are seven such over the basement, and this rises six feet above the ground. The brick walls narrow to eight inches as they ascend, and form a parapet rising above the roof. One of the time-keepers of the factory, Jack Hardy, a young man about my own age, often runs along the brick-work, the practice giving him a singular delight that seems to increase with his progress in it. Having seen a clerk in the works from the beginning, I have frequently used the parapet for a footpath, and although there is a sheer fall of one hundred feet to the ground, have done it with ease and without discomfiture. One day, however, I had run across, on the opposite wall, an exercise in which I was invariably beaten, because I became timid with increased pace.

Hopefully distanced last Wednesday, while the men were off at noon, I gave up midway, and looking down, observed the upturned face of an old man, gazing at me with parted lips, wide eyes and an expression of horror so startling that I involuntarily stepped down to the brick-layers' platform inside. I then saw that the apparently frightened specter was Mr. Petherick, who had been for some weeks paymaster and factotum for the contractors.

"What's the matter, Petherick?" I called down. He made no answer, but, walking off rapidly, disappeared around the mill. Curious about his demeanor, I descended, and after some little seeking, found him smoking alone.

"You quite frightened me just now, Petherick," said I. "Did you think I was a ghost?" "Not just that," he replied, sentimentally. "Did you expect me to fall, then?" I inquired.

"Not just that, either," said he. The old man was evidently disinclined to talk, and apparently much agitated. I began to joke about his lugubrious expression, when the one o'clock bell rang, and he shuffled off hastily to another quarter.

Though I was puzzled awhile over the incident, it soon passed so entirely from my mind that I was surprised when, passing Petherick in the afternoon intending to go aloft, he said, as I went by,—"Don't do it again, Mr. Fraser!" "What?" I asked.

marked by a line of grass, tufts of weeds and small bushes stretching along as far as the ledge itself, and within a foot or so of the cliff's edge.

"Eggs were not so many as usual, and I went a long piece from my rope before turning back. Then I noticed the very strange conduct of the hosts of sea-towls below. Usually there were hundreds, but now there were millions on the wing, and instead of darting forth with playful motions, they seemed to be wildly excited, screaming shrilly, rushing out as in terror, and returning in masses as though to alight, only to wheel in dread, and to keep in the air vast clouds.

"The weather was beautiful, the sea like glass. As to great distance two large bills, and nearer, a small yacht, lay becalmed, heaving on the long billow. I could look down the cabin stairway almost, and it seemed scarcely more than a long leap to her deck.

"Puzzled by the singular conduct of the sea-birds, I soon stopped and set my back against the cliff, to rest while watching them. The day was deadly still and very warm.

"I remember taking off my cap and wiping the sweat from my face and forehead with my sleeve. While doing this I looked down involuntarily to the fissure at my feet. Instantly my blood almost froze with horror! There was a distinct crack between the inner-edge, and the fissure and the hard-packed rock-chained soil with which it was filled! Forcibly I pressed back, and in a flash looked along the ledge. The fissure was widening under my eyes, the rock before me seemed sinking outward, and with a shudder and a groan and a roar, the whole long platform fell crashing to the sea below! I stood on a margin of rock scarce a foot wide, at my back a perpendicular cliff, and five hundred feet below the ocean, now almost hidden by the vast concourse of wheeling and terrified birds.

"Can you believe that my first sensation was one of relief? I stood safe! Even a feeling of interest held me for some moments. Almost coolly I observed a long and mighty wave roll out from beneath. It went forth with a high, curling crest—a solid wall of water! It struck the yacht stern on, plunged down on her deck, smashed through her swell of sail, and swept her out of sight forever.

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