

# That Lass o' Lowrie's

A STORY OF THE LANCASTERS COAL MINES.

By FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

## CHAPTER XIII. JOAN AND THE PICTURE.

Notwithstanding Anice's interference in his behalf, Paul did not find his labors become very much lighter. And then, after all his labor, the prospect before him was not promising. Instead of appearing easier to cope with as he learned more of it and its inhabitants, Riggan seemed still more baffling. His "district" lay in the lower end of the town among ugly back streets and alleys; among dirt and ignorance and obstinacy. He spent his days in laboring among people upon whom he had obtained no hold. It really seemed that they did not want him—these people; and occasionally a more distressing view of the case presented itself to his troubled mind—namely, that to those who might chance to want him he had little to offer.

He had his temporal thorn too. He found it difficult to read, hard to fix his mind on his modest sermons; occasionally he even accused himself of forgetting his duty. This had come since the night when he stood at the door and listened to his friend's warning concerning the Rector's daughter. Derrick's words were simple enough in themselves, but they had fallen upon the young Curate's ears with startling significance. He had given this significance to them himself—in spite of himself—and then all at once he had fallen to wondering why it was that he had never thought of such a possible denouement before. It was so very possible, so very probable; nay, when he came to think of it seriously, it was only impossible that it should not be. He had often told himself, that some day a lover would come who would be worthy of the woman he had not even hoped to win. And who was more worthy than Fergus Derrick—who was more like the hero to whom such women surrender their hearts and lives. If he himself had been such a man, he thought with the simplicity of affection, he would not have felt that there was need for fear. And the two had been thrown so much together, and would be thrown together so frequently in the future. He remembered how Fergus had been taken into the family circle, and calling to mind a hundred trifling incidents, smiled at his own blindness. When next he received Anice's message, he received it as an almost positive confirmation. It was not like her to bestow favors from an idle impulse.

It was not so easy now to meet the girl in his visits to the Rectory; it was not easy to listen to Mr. Barholm while Anice and Fergus Derrick sat apart and talked. Sometimes he wondered if the time could ever come, when his friend would be less his friend because he had rivalled him. The idea of such a possibility only brought him fresh pain. His gentle chivalric nature shrank within itself at the thought of the bereavement that double loss would be. There was little room in his mind for the envious of stronger men. Certainly Fergus had no suspicion of the existence of his secret pain. He found no alteration in his gentle friend.

Among the Reverend Paul's private ventures was a small night school which he had managed to establish by slow degrees. He had picked up a reluctant scholar here, and one there—two or three pit lads, two or three girls, and two or three men, for whose attendance he had worked so hard and waited so long that he was quite surprised at his success in the end. He scarce knew how he had managed it, but the pupils were there in the dingy room, of the National School, waiting for him on two nights in the week, upon which nights he gave them instruction on a plan of his own. He had thought the matter so little likely to succeed at first, that he had engaged in it as a private work, and did not even mention it until his friends discovered it by chance.

Sail Jud Bates to Miss Barholm, during one of their confidential interviews—"Nid tha liver go to a neet skoo?" "No," said Anice.

Jud fondled Nib's ears patronisingly.

"I ha, an' I'm goin' again. So is Nib. He's gotten one."

"Who?" for Jud had signified by a gesture that he was not the dog, but some indefinite person in the village.

"Th' little Parson."

"Say, Mr. Grace," suggested Anice. "It sounds better."

"Aye—Mester Grace—but iv'rybody ca's him th' little Parson. He's gotten a neet skoo i' th' town, an' he axed me to go, an' I went. I took Nib, an' we larned our letters; leastways I larned mine, an' Nib he listened w' his ears up, an' t' Par—Mester Grace luffed. He wur na vext at Nib comin'. He said 'let him come, as he wur so owd-fashioned.'"

So Mr. Grace found himself informed upon, and was rather abashed at being confronted with his enterprise a few days after by Miss Barholm.

"I like it," said Anice. "Joan Low-

rie learned to read and write in a night school. Mr. Derrick told me so."

A new idea seemed to have been suggested to her.

"Mr. Grace," she said, "why could not I help you? Might I?"

His first thought was a selfish, underlined one, and sudden consciousness sent the color to his forehead as he answered her, though he spoke quite calmly.

"There is no reason why you should not—if you choose," he said, "unless Mr. Barholm should object. I need not tell you how grateful I should be."

"Papa will not object," she said quietly.

The next time the pupils met she presented herself in the schoolroom.

Ten minutes after Grace had given her work to her she was as much at home with it as if she had been there from the first.

"Hoo's a little un," said one of the boys, "but hoo does not seem to be easy feat. Hoo does not look a bit tuk' back."

She had never been so near to Paul Grace during their friendship as when she walked home with him. A stronger respect for him was growing in her—a new reverence for his faithfulness. She had always liked and trusted him, but of late she had learned to do more. She recognised more fully the purity and singleness of his life. She accused herself of having underrated him.

"Please let me help you when I can, Mr. Grace," she said; "I am not blaming anybody—there is no real blame, even if I had the right to attach it to any one; but there are mistakes now and then, and you must promise me that I may use my influence to prevent them."

She had stopped at the gate to say this and she held out her hand. It was a strange thing that she could be so utterly oblivious of the pain she inflicted. But even Derrick would have taken her hand with less self-control. He was so fearful of wounding or disturbing her, that he was continually on his guard in her presence, and especially when she was thus warm and unguarded herself.

He had fancied before, sometimes, that she had seen his difficulties, and sympathised with him, but he had never hoped that she would be thus unreserved. His thanks came from the depths of his heart; he felt that she had lightened his burden.

After this, Miss Barholm was rarely absent from her place at the school. The two evenings always found her at work among her young women, and she made very steady progress among them.

By degrees the enterprise was patronised more freely. New pupils dropped in, and were usually so well satisfied, that they did not drop out again. Grace gave all the credit to Anice, but Anice knew better than to accept it. She had been his "novelty," she said; time only would prove whether her usefulness was equal to her power of attraction.

She had been teaching in the school about three weeks, when a servant came to her one night as she sat reading, with information that a young woman wished to see her.

"A fine-looking young woman, Miss," added the girl "I put her into your own room, as you gave orders."

The room was a quiet place, away from the sounds of the house, which had gradually come to be regarded as Miss Barholm's. It was not a large room, but it was a pretty one, with wide windows and a good view, and as Anice liked it, her possessions drifted into it until they filled it—her books, her pictures, and as she spent a good deal of her time there, it was invariably spoken of as her room, and she had given orders to the servants that her village visitors should be taken to it when they came.

Carrying her book in her hand, she had been very much interested in what she was reading, and had hardly time to change the channel of her thought. But when she opened the door, she was brought back to earth at once.

Against the end wall was suspended a picture of Christ in the last agony, and beneath it was written, "It is finished."

Before it, as Anice opened the door, stood Joan Lowrie, with Liz's sleeping child on her bosom. She had come upon the picture suddenly, and it had seized on some deep, reluctant emotion. She had heard some vague history of the Man; but it was different to find herself in this silent room, confronting the upturned face, the crown, the cross, the anguish and the mystery. She turned toward Anice, forgetting all else but her emotion. She even looked at her for a few seconds in questioning silence, as if waiting for an answer to words she had not spoken.

When she found her voice, it was of the picture she spoke, not of the real object of her visit.

"Tha knows," she said, "I dunnot, though I've heard of it afore. What is it as is finished? I dunnot quite see. What is it?"

"It means," said Anice, "that God's Son has finished His work."

Joan did not speak.

"I have no works of my own to explain," continued Anice. "I can tell you better in the words of the men who loved Him and saw Him die."

Joan turned to her.

"Saw Him die?" she repeated.

"There were men who saw Him when He died, you know," said Anice. "The New Testament tells us how. It is as real as the picture, I think. Did you never read it?"

The girl's face took an expression of distrust and sullenness.

"Th' Bible has na been i' my line," she answered; "I've left that to th' parsons an' th' loike; but th' pictur' tuk' my eye. It seemt different."

"Let us sit down," said Anice, "you will be tired of standing."

When they sat down, Anice began to talk about the child, who was sleeping, lowering her voice for fear of disturbing it. Joan regarded the little thing with a look of half-subdued pride.

"I browt it because I knowed it ud be easier w' me than w' Liz," she said.

"It worrits Liz an' it neer worrits me. I'm so strong, yo' see, I can carry it, an' scarce feel its weight, but it wears Liz out, an' it seems to me as it knows it too, for th' minute she begins to iret it frets too."

There was a certain shamefacedness in her manner, when at last she began to explain the object of her errand. Anice could not help fancying that she was impelled on her course by some motive whose influence she reluctantly submitted to. She had come to speak about the night school.

"Theer wur a neet skoo here once afore as I went to," she said; "I larn't to read ther an' write a bit, but—but theer's other things I'd loike to know. Tha canst understand," she added a little abruptly, "I need na tell you. Little Jud Bates said as yo' had a class o' yore own, an' it comn into my mind as I would ax yo' about it. If I go to th' skoo I—d loike to be w' yo'."

"You can come to me," said Anice.

"And you know, I think you can help me," This thought had occurred to her suddenly. "I am sure you can help me," she repeated.

When Joan at last started to go away, she paused before the picture, hesitating for a moment, and then she turned to Anice again.

"Yo' say as th' book makes it seem real as th' pictur'," she said.

"It seems so to me," Anice answered.

"Will yo' lend me th' book?" she asked abruptly.

Anice's own Bible lay upon a side-table. She took it up and handed it to the girl, saying simply—

"I will give you this one if you will take it. It was mine."

And Joan carried the book away with her.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE OPEN "DAVY."

"MESTER DERIK,"

"Th' rools is been broak agen on th' quiet but as broak en afore i naim no naimen an' wudnt say nowt but our loifes is in danger And more than one, i Only ax yo' tu Wach out. I am Respeckfully,

"A HONEST MAN W' A FAMILY TU FEDE."

The engineer found this letter near his plate one morning on coming down to breakfast. His landlady explained that her daughter had picked it up inside the garden gate, where it had been thrown upon the gravel-walk evidently from the road.

Derrick read it twice or three times before putting it in his pocket. Upon the whole, he was not unprepared for the intelligence. He knew enough of human nature—such human nature as Lowrie represented—to feel sure that the calm could not continue. If for the present the man did not defy him openly, he would disobey him in secret, while biding his time for other means of retaliation.

Derrick had been on the look out for some effort at revenge; but so far since the night Joan had met him upon the road, Lowrie outwardly had been perfectly quiet and submissive.

After reading the letter, Derrick made up his mind to prompt and decisive measures, and set about considering what these measures should be. There was only one certain means of redress and safety—Lowrie must be got rid of at once. It would not be a difficult matter either. There was to be a meeting of the owners that very week, and Derrick had reports to make, and the mere mention of the violation of the rules would be enough.

"Bah!" he said aloud, "It is not pleasant; but it must be done."

The affair had several aspects, rendering it unpleasant; but Derrick shut his eyes to them resolutely. It seemed, too, that it was not disdained that he should have reason to remain undecided. That very day he was confronted with positive proof that the writer of the anonymous warning had an honest motive.

During the morning, necessity called him away from his men to a side gallery, and entering this gallery, he found himself behind a man who stood at one side close to the wall, his Davy lamp open, his pipe applied to the flame. It was Dan Lowrie, and his stealthy glance over his shoulder revealing to him that he was discovered, he turned with an oath.

"Shut that lamp," said Derrick, "and give me your false key."

Joan turned to her.

"Saw Him die?" she repeated.

"There were men who saw Him when He died, you know," said Anice. "The New Testament tells us how. It is as real as the picture, I think. Did you never read it?"

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Lowrie hesitated.

"Give me that key," Derrick repeated, "or I will call the gang in the next gallery and see what they have to say about the matter."

"Dom yore eyes! does tha think my toime 'I'll never coom?"

But he gave up the key.

"When it comes," he said, "I hope I shall be ready to help myself. Now I've got only one thing to do. I gave you fair warning, and asked you to act the man toward your fellows. You have played the scoundrel instead, and I have done with you. I shall report you. That's the end of it."

He went on his way, and left the man uttering curses under his breath. If there had not been workers near at hand Derrick might not have gotten away so easily. Among the men in the next gallery there were some who were no friends to Lowrie, and who would have given him some pretty rough handling if they had caught him just at that moment, and the fellow knew it.

Toward the end of the week, the owners came, and Derrick made his report. The result was just what he had known it would be. Explosions had been caused before by transgressions of the rules, and explosions were expensive and disastrous affairs. Lowrie received his discharge, and his fellow-workmen a severe warning, to the secret consternation of some among them.

That the engineer of the new mines was a zealous and really amiable young man, if rather prone to innovations because evident to his employers. But his innovations were not encouraged. So, notwithstanding his arguments, the blast-furnaces held their own, and "for the present," as the easy natured manager put it, other matters even more important were set aside.

"There is much to be done, Derrick," he said; "really so much that requires time and money, that we must wait a little. 'Rome, &amp;c.'"

"Ah, Rome!" returned Derrick. "I am sometimes of the opinion that Rome had better never been built at all. You will not discharge your imperfect apparatus for the same reason that you will discharge a collier—which is hardly fair to the collier. Your blast-furnaces expose the collier. Your blast-furnaces expose the miners to a greater danger than Lowrie's pipe. The presence of either may bring about an explosion when it is least expected."

"Well, well," was the good-natured response; "we have not exploded yet; and we have done away with Lowrie's pipe."

Derrick carried the history of his ill success to Anice, somewhat dejectedly.

"All this is discouraging to a man," said Derrick, and then he added meditatively, "As to the rest, I wonder what Joan Lowrie will think of it."

A faint sense of discomfort fell upon Anice—not exactly easy to understand. The colour fluttered to her cheek and her smile died away. But she did not speak—merely waited to hear what Derrick had to say.

He had nothing more to say about Joan Lowrie. When he recovered himself, as he did almost immediately, he went back to the discussion of his pet plans, and was very eloquent on the subject.

Going home one evening, Derrick found himself at a turn of the road only a few paces behind Joan. He had thought much of her of late, and wondered whether she was able to take an utterly unselfish view of his action. She had a basket upon her arm and looked tired. He strode up to her side and spoke to her without ceremony.

"Let me carry that," he said. "It is too heavy for you."

The sun was setting redly, so perhaps it was the sunset that flung its colour upon her face as she turned to look at him.

"Thank you," she answered. "I'm used to carryin' such-luik loads."

But he took her burden from her, and even if she had wished to be left to herself she had no redress, and accordingly submitted. Influences long at work upon her had rendered her less defiant than she had been in the past. There was an element of quiet in her expression, such as Derrick had not seen when her beauty first caught his attention. They walked together silently for awhile.

"I should like to hear you say that you do not blame me," said Derrick at last, abruptly.

She knew what he meant, it was evident.

"I conna blame yo' fur doin' what we're reet," she answered.

"Right—you thought it right?"

"Why should na I? Yo' couldna ha' done no other."

"Thank you for saying that," he returned. "I have thought once or twice that you might have blamed me."

"I did na know," was her answer.

"I did na know as I had done owt to mak' yo' think so ill of me."

He did not find further comment easy. He felt, as he had felt before, that Joan had placed him at a disadvantage. He so often made irritating mistakes in his efforts to read her, and in the end he seldom found that he had made any advance. Anice Barholm, with her

problems and her moods, was far less difficult to comprehend than Joan Lowrie.

Liz was at the cottage door when they parted, and Liz's eyes had curiosity and wonder in them when she met her friend.

"Joan," she said, peering over the door-sill at Derrick's retreating figure, "is na that one o' th' mesters? Is na it the Lunnion engineer, Joan?"

"Yes," Joan answered briefly.

The pretty silly creature's eyes grew larger, with a shade of awe.

"Is na it th' one as yore feyther's so bitter agen?"

"Yes."

"An' is na he a gentleman? He dunnot look loike a workin' mon. His cloas dunnot fit him loike common foakes. He mun be a gentleman."

"I've heard foak ca' him one; an' if his cloas fit him reet, he mun be one, I suppose."

Liz looked after him again.

"Aye," she sighed, "he's a gentleman sure enow. I've seed gentlemen enow to know th' look on 'em. Did—"

hesitating fearfully, but letting her curiosity get the better of her discretion nevertheless—"did he court thee, Joan?"

The next moment she was frightened into wishing she had not asked the question. Joan turned round and faced her suddenly, pale and wrathful.

"Nay, he did na," she said. "I am na a lady, an' he is what tha ca's him—a gentleman."

Famous Swimmers.

Another Englishman has won the romantic honor of having successfully swam across one of the straits that divide Asia from Europe. It is Lord Claudeboye, the eldest son of Lord Dufferin, and so old and experienced a swimmer in these historic waters as Sir Patrick Colquhoun declares that his sire is undoubtedly greater than Lord Byron's. He accomplished it in little more than one hour—about the same time that Lord Byron consumed—but he went from Therapia to Beicos, or from the European to the Asiatic shore, across the Bosphorus, while Byron swam down the current in the Hellespont, "which is no feat at all." By the course Lord Claudeboye took, the direct swimming distance was three and one-half miles; by that which Lord Byron took it was about one mile, but Byron was carried by the strong currents so far out of his way that he really traversed nearly four English miles. Sir Patrick does not tell us if Lord Claudeboye was interfered with by the currents, but the natural supposition would be that he was, as they are almost constant there, though not so strong as in the Hellespont; and yet, if that was the case, he must have gone more miles than Lord Byron and in shorter time. The figures are a little confusing at best, but we have Sir Patrick's word for it that the newest feat was the greater, and that Byron's was "no feat at all." Were Byron alive to hear this he would probably avenge the injury more than any assault that might be made on his genius or his good name. About three years ago was published in London, for the first time a letter from him to his friend Hodgson, in which, perhaps, he expressed, as never before, the genuine pride this achievement gave him. "I shall begin by telling you," he writes from Constantinople in 1810, "having only told you twice before, that I swam from Sestos to Abydos. I do this that you may be impressed with proper respect for me, the performer, for I plume myself on this achievement more than I could possibly do on any kind of glory—political, poetical or rhetorical." If Lord Claudeboye has really outdone the poet to the great extent which Sir Patrick says, Sir Patrick ought, at any rate, to have given a more definite explanation of it, and Lord Claudeboye we shall hope now to hear from as having successfully crossed the more famous swimming water to the southwest. It has always been said that the great test of strength was not so much the mere swimming of the mile from Sestos to Abydos as the power to push ahead through the swift waters. Lord Claudeboye, while swimming more miles than Lord Byron, may have had a much easier sea against him. This would make all the difference in the world.—N. Y. Times.

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