

In which this History is Ended 515

toiler, seated sideways on his weary horse, fares homewards, nodding sleepily with every plodding hoof-fall, but rousing to give one a drowsy "good night," then who can resist the somnolent charm of the place, save only the "Bull" himself, snorting down in lofty contempt — as rolling of eye, as curl of horn, as stiff as to tail as any indignant bull ever was, or shall be.

But as I rode, watching the evening deepen about me, soft and clear rose the merry chime of hammer and anvil, and, turning aside to the smithy, I paused there, and, stooping my head, looked in at the door.

"George!" said I. He started erect, and, dropping hammer and tongs, came out, running, then stopped suddenly, as one abashed.

"Oh, friend!" said I, "don't you know me?"

"Why — Peter —" he stammered, and broke off.

"Have you no greeting for me, George?"

"Ay, ay — I heerd you was free, Peter, and I was glad — glad, because you was the man as I loved, an' I waited — ay, I've been waitin' for 'ee to come back. But now — you be so changed — so fine an' grand — an' I be all black wi' soot from the fire — oh, man! ye bean't my Peter no more —"

"Never say that, George — never say that," I cried, and, leaping from the saddle, I would have caught his hand in mine, but he drew back.

"You be so fine an' grand, Peter, an' I be all sooty from the fire!" he repeated. "I'd like to just wash my 'ands first."

"Oh, Black George!" said I, "dear George."

"Be you rich now, Peter?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"A gentleman wi' 'orses an' 'ouses an' servants?"

"Well — what of it?"

"I'd — like to — wash my 'ands first, if so be you don't mind, Peter."

"George," said I, "don't be a fool!" Now, as we stood thus, fronting each other in the doorway, I heard a light