

Solomon with a clouded notion that he was in some way being defrauded of seven and six.

Harold strained his eyes till they hurt, but there were no signs of the trap or horse, and his temper was not improved when he felt his arm taken by Solomon.

"Where be my seven-and-six?" was the anxious enquiry.

"And where be my pig?" shouted Harold in unconscious imitation. "The horse and trap have been stolen, evidently, and I shall have to pay for them. But I'm going to have the pig, if it costs me seven pounds ten. Go and catch it instead of looking at me like a turnip."

Harold was by now thoroughly roused, and swore to himself that he would take that pig home, and very likely drive it into the Lowne's drawing-room, too, by Jove!

Solomon looked at the rope end which has slipped off the hind leg, and declared that pig catching would run the costs up to half a sovereign.

"You catch the pig, and we'll see," said Harold. And when the animal was captured he solemnly presented Solomon with—one shilling!

"My terms be seven-and-six," expostulated the aggrieved one.

"Very likely. But the tariff, as far as I am concerned, is one shilling sterling. And now, if you don't mind, I'll move."

And giving the pig a push with his foot, Harold followed it through the gate, holding on to the string with grim determination.

The pig hurried on amiably until it came to the cross-roads. Here it stopped and investigated the ditch and a heap of stones, and was seized with a desire to explore a neighbouring field.

Harold gave the string a twitch and tried to guide the prize on to the road for Stowe, his own abiding place.

But the pig had other ideas, and deliberately took the turn for Blakesley, a village three miles distant. Harold tugged and tugged, but the pig appeared to be possessed of the perversity of seven demons and the strength of seven horses. On it trotted for at least a mile, with the perspiring Harold clutching the string and hoping with fevered anxiety that the knot would hold its own.

"If I walk to Edinburgh, you brute, I'll stick to you," he muttered. "Thank goodness, here's a village. I'll see if anyone will board and lodge you while I go back to Stowe and explain to Mabel."

By this time they had arrived at Blakesley, and up the street turned the pig, with Harold in the rear, his collar limp, his hair dishevelled, and moving almost at a run to keep pace with the possessed animal in front.

"I say," gasped Harold, as the pig, attracted by a bucket in front of the butcher's shop, stopped and had a pleasant search for food. "I say, will you look after this thing that calls itself a pig? I'll pay you anything."

The butcher, who was standing in front of his shop, looked at the pig and then at Harold.

"Certainly," he said; "bring it in here."

He opened a side gate, and to Harold's intense delight and surprise, the pig walked in, and was soon installed in an empty stable.

"By Jove!" said Harold, "that's a relief. Now will you keep it here till I send for it?"

"I'll keep it right enough," answered the butcher; "but what I want to know, young man, is what are you doing with my pig?"

"Your pig!" almost shrieked Harold.

"My pig, that's the word. He was won at the Maidford Bazaar by Thomson, over the road, and I bought it from him for a pound and meant to have sent for it to-day. You seem to have been a bit in front of me, mister. I don't want to be nasty, but have you got anything to say?"

"Nothing," said Harold feebly, "except to ask you to kill me. This world doesn't seem to be the place for me."

"I don't know anything about killing you, but I am going to kill the pig to-morrow morning, and now you can hook it."

"No," said Harold firmly, "it's my pig—at least, it's a lady's pig, and I will not go without it, and here I stop till I get it back."

"Right you are," replied the butcher; "then you stop and keep the pig company till I fetch a policeman."

And he banged the door and left Harold in the stable with the animal that had been his undoing. For what seemed a weary hour he sat in the manger and watched the monstrous pig slumbering peacefully till he almost felt inclined to strangle the creature with his handkerchief.

At last the butcher reappeared, bringing with him the village constable, who, not having had a case for a year, was rather undecided as to the proper procedure. He first of all hinted that he should

have to apply for a warrant, which would take a day to procure, and then he suggested that it should be treated as a case of disorderly and the criminal locked up for the night in the stable on bread and water.

"Now, look here," at length broke in Harold, "if you wouldn't like to stun me and then hang me, may I suggest that you come with me to Stowe, where I can prove my respectability?"

After a suggestion from the policeman that this would be compounding a felony, the proposition was adopted, and Harold set forth like Eugene Aram, the gyves upon his wrist being excepted.

On the road to Stowe the policeman drew a voluminous store of reminiscences concerning the days when people were hanged for sheep stealing, and expressed a professional regret that the annexation of pigs did not nowadays call for capital punishment.

Harold bore it all in silence, trying to think out an effective speech of sarcasm for the time when explanations would ensure his release.

"Now then," he said, when they arrived at Stowe, "we'll go and see Mathers, the landlord, and he'll tell who I am, and if necessary I'll pay for the pig."

"I'll take five pounds now and say no more about it," observed the butcher.

"Can't be done," interposed the policeman; "it'll be agin' the law."

Harold almost chuckled as he thought of his captor's confusion when he was identified, and led the way boldly to the inn.

"Now then, Mathers," he said, when the landlord had been fetched, "will you kindly tell these intelligent people that I am a respectable person and not a highway robber?"

"Certainly, sir. What are you doing with my lodger, you two? He's been staying here for three weeks, and if he wasn't respectable, do you think I should trust him with my horse and trap? By the way, sir, where have you left them? I'm wanting to run over to the town after tea."

The question hit Harold with a sickening thud, for he had forgotten in his anguish all about the conveyance which had so mysteriously disappeared.

"I don't know," he stammered, wondering whether there was any fresh trouble anywhere.

The landlord looked grave and puzzled, and listened intently while the butcher and the policeman told a damning tale about a stolen pig, and then he respectfully but firmly explained that he was sure Mr. Brand had not stolen the pig; but he would really like to have his trap and horse back again.

"Stealing a 'orse and trap as well; that'll mean five years," observed the policeman, making a note.

"Oh, hang it all," said Harold, "I'm sick of this. Take me up to Mr. Lowne's, and I can explain things there."

"Aye, up to Squire Lowne's," agreed the policeman. "He be a justice, and we could lock prisoner up in his stable."

And once more Harold set out, accompanied this time by three interested parties, two of whom apparently wished him much evil, while the third, with all due respect for his lodger, was anxious about his property. From her window Mabel Lowne saw the pageant approaching down the drive, and her heart leapt with anxiety. Could it be that Harold—in that moment she called him Harold to herself—was in any trouble? He looked so grim and determined, and there was a policeman, too—whatever could the matter be? She rushed downstairs and found the men in the study, while her father sat at his table and listened to various statements with a puzzled air.

"Oh, do you mind bearing me out in saying that I went for your pig, Miss Lowne," said Harold, when he saw Mabel at the door.

The story was told again, and with Mabel's help, Harold was freed from the charge of pig stealing.

"My pig was a dear little white thing," explained Mabel. "and Margaret Clair said she would keep it for me till I called."

"Margaret Clair," interrupted Harold, "why, she was the girl—"

"There is Miss Clair," said the innkeeper, looking out of the window, "and driving my horse and trap, too!"

And surely enough, down the drive came the trap, with Miss Margaret Clair flourishing her whip and looking as calm and demure as a nun.

"I've brought your pig, Mabel," she said, looking round on the interested little crowd. "It's in a basket behind, and I think this is your trap, Mr. Mather—I found it tied to a gate, so I borrowed it. And how is everybody?"

She jumped down, kissed Mabel, and looked at Harold without moving a muscle of her face.

The innkeeper mounted to his trap, and at Harold's request took with him the butcher, who

was satisfied that he would have his pig, and the policeman, who was disappointed at losing a case.

"Now, then, Margaret Clair," said the Squire, with an attempt at sternness, "I think I trace your hand in this. Will you explain?"

"Well, you see," said Margaret Clair, calmly, "I rather fancied this white pig myself—oh, yes, there he is—and I thought Mabel would much sooner have the other one, so I sent Mr. Brand after the black one. But when he had gone I sort of repented and went after him. Then, when I found he had left the trap at the gate, I thought perhaps it would be stolen and that it would be rather nice if I drove over myself. And there you are, you see."

"Margaret Clair, I consider you've behaved disgracefully," said Mabel hotly, while Harold felt tempted to ask for ice for the back of his head.

"That's what everyone's always saying," was the calm reply; "but I say, Mabel, I would teach your young man to drive better before you marry him. Let's have a look at the ring. I suppose you're engaged by now?"

Mabel flushed up to the eyes, and the Squire looked wrath.

"Quite right, sir," said Harold quickly. "I didn't like to give Mabel a ring till we had your consent. I hope you don't mind?" he concluded lamely.

The Squire grunted something about being very young, but did not object when Harold took Mabel's hand.

And Mabel did not object either, though she was still blushing.

"Miss Margaret Clair," said Harold half an hour later, "I shall send you the biggest box of chocolates and the prettiest brooch in London, and," he added under his breath, "may the fates protect all bachelor men when you're two or three years older."

"Thanks very much—and," added Margaret Clair respectively, "I think that little pig would be very nice roasted."

And when Margaret Clair was invited to help eat that poor little pig two days after, she noted with approval that a half hoop of diamonds flashed on Mabel's left hand.

The Weaver of Snow

IN Polar noons when the moonshine glimmers,
And the frost-fans whirl,
And whiter than moonlight the ice-flowers grow,
And the lunar rainbow quivers and shimmers,
And the Silent Laughers dance to and fro,
A stooping girl
As pale as pearl
Gathers the frost-flowers where they blow;
And the fleet-foot fairies smile, for they know
The Weaver of Snow.

And she climbs at last to a berg set free,
That drifteth slow:

And she sails to the edge of the world we see:
And waits till the wings of the north wind lean
Like an eagle's wings o'er a lochan of green,
And the pale stars glow
On berg and floe.

Then down on our world with a wild laugh of glee
She empties her lap full of shimmer and sheen.
And that is the way in a dream I have seen
The Weaver of Snow.

—Fiona Macleod.

In the Cool of the Evening

IN the cool of the evening, when the low, sweet
whispers waken,
When the labourers turn them homeward, and
the weary have their will,
When the censers of the roses o'er the forest-aisles
are shaken
Is it but the wind that cometh o'er the far green
hill?

* * * * *

In the beauty of the twilight, in the Garden that
He loveth,
They have veiled His lovely vesture with the
darkness of a name!
Through His Garden, through His Garden it is but
the wind that moveth,
No more; but O, the miracle, the miracle is the
same!

In the cool of the evening, when the sky is an old
story,
Slowly dying, but remembered, aye, and loved
with passion still,
Hush! . . . the fringes of His garment, in the
fading golden glory,
Softly rustling as He cometh o'er the far green
hill.

—Alfred Noyes, in "The Nation."