

SAM NAYLOR.

A TALE OF METHODISM IN THE BLACK COUNTRY.

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SAM NAYLOR was the hero of Picardy Green. I do not know why it was called "Green." Perhaps there had been pleasant fields there once; but when Sam lorded it over the long rows of blackened cottages it was covered with heaps of calcined shale and cinders. Massive brick furnaces stood in its centre, the cruel, flaring flames crawling up its sides, while from underneath trickled sluggishly the scoria used in making the black, ugly roads that intersected this acre of fire and desolation.

Its inhabitants were workers in coal and iron, and long been regarded as a peculiarly wicked and degraded class. But, whatever they were, Sam was king among them, and few men in Picardy Green would have cared to say "no" to Sam's "yes."

One morning in the autumn of 1830, when the sky was brightly blue above the black, fiery plain, Sam started for the works. He was a gigantic fellow, able to swing a hammer that no other man could lift, and as he stalked along in his leather suit with an enormous bull-dog at his side, he was the very ideal of a modern Cyclops.

Passing through that part of the village where the few tradespeople lived, he met a collier toward whom he had a particular dislike—a dislike which the men's dogs seemed to share, for while their masters only glowed at each other the brutes flew to battle at once. In a very few minutes, however, the men were emulating them, and their blows and oaths mingled terribly with the hoarse growls and tearing of the animals.

The pitmen and ironmen of Picardy Green were ready fighters. No one minded their quarrels, and generally no one interfered. Both men and dogs were wont to fight out their fights at will, and spectators rather enjoyed the battles. This morning, however, in the very height of his passion, Sam felt a grasp on his arm, and turning hastily saw standing by him a girl who was an utter stranger to him. She was very pretty, with a serious, steadfast face, and a great deal of that quaint air which we are accustomed to call "Quakerish." But her eyes met Sam's with a look at once fearless and pitiful, and before he could speak she said:

"You must not fight—father says so. It is very wicked."

"Ho, there! Let-a-be, lass, or I'll trounce thee, too. Tak' care o' Bully; he'll fly at thee. Goa away!"