

there is Tom Caledon. Oh ! what an Abbey we shall have !”

So the Abbey was started. And to the County it seemed a more desirable piece of madness than the farm. And nothing gave the world so much satisfaction as the name conferred upon Alan Dunlop. For, as Lucy Carrington told Lord Alwyne, as the brethren never knew what he would do next, they called him Brother Hamlet.

“But what in the name of goodness,” asked Sister Desdemona, “are we to do with the Chapel ?”

CHAPTER XII.

“We may outrun
By violent swiftness that which we do run at,
And lose by overrunning.”

MEANTIME, the days crept slowly on with Alan. To rise at dawn, or before it ; to go forth after a hasty breakfast prepared by his own hands, to receive his orders from the bailiff ; to get through the day's work as well as he could, feeling all the time that he was the least efficient labourer of the whole twelve hands, or even, counting the boys, of the whole twenty-four, employed upon the farm, a useful but humiliating lesson for the young Oxford man who had been trained in the belief that whatever a gentleman put his hand to, he would immediately do better than anybody else ; to wear those confounded corduroys, turned up at the ankles ; to meet one's friends in such a disguise that they seldom recognised him ; to pass a cavalcade of ladies riding along the road, and to pull his cart—as a carter Alan was perhaps as good as any other man on the estate—out of their way into the ditch ; to work on in a field, conscious that a dozen people were leaning over the gate, come forth on purpose to see the Squire attired as a labouring man, carrying out the teaching of the “*Fors Clavigera* ;” to acquire an enormous appetite at the ungodly hour of eleven, and appease it, sitting in a hedge, with great hunks of cold bacon and bread—actually, cold bacon and bread—and other homely cates ; to plod home at night to his dismal, damp cottage, there to light a fire and brew a solitary tea

for himself ; and after tea to fight against the physical fatigue, which seemed to numb all his faculties at once ;—this was the life which Alan for the most part led. As regards his work, he found that he made but an indifferent labourer ; that his companions, who undoubtedly excelled him in practical bucolic art, scoffed at him almost before his face ; and that, so far from becoming the friend and confidant of the men, he day by day seemed to be drifting further from them. It was from no pride or exclusiveness on his part. He fed the pigs, drove the cows, groomed the horses, carted the manure, hedged and ditched, learned to manage the steam plough, taught himself the great Art and Mystery of Thatching, learned a little rough carpentering, tried to shoe a horse, but got kicked, and grubbed up the weeds as patiently as any old man in the village.

“The busy hours,” he said to Miranda, “are doubled by the solitude. The men, among themselves, talk and make merry after their fashion. What they talk about, or what their jokes between themselves are, Heaven only knows. When I come among them they are suddenly silent. Even the boys are afraid of me.”

“You will understand them,” said Miranda, “after a time.”

He shook his head.

“I begin to despair. And in the evening when I should be useful and ready to devise new schemes for their benefit, the weariness is so great, that I sit down in my chair, and, half the week, fall fast asleep.”

“And can you live on your wages, Alan ?”

Here, I regret to say, he positively blushed, because here, he felt, was the great breakdown of his plan.

“No, Miranda, with all my economy, I spend exactly double what I earn. I cannot understand it. I began with drinking nothing but water and coffee. Yet one gets so confoundedly hungry. How *do* they manage it ?”

Not only did he begin with coffee and water, but he began by knocking off tobacco. He would no longer smoke.

“And yet,” he said to Miranda, “it made no difference to the people, whether I smoked or whether I did not. They don't seem to care what I do. As for beer, they drink as much as they can get ; and as for tobacco, they smoke as much as they can.”

“Although,” said Desdemona, “you have