

"Oh, that's the end on *him*, eh, landlord? And how long ago was that?"

"Becky, lass," called the landlord within the door, "wheniver was it Maister Robert turned his back on the Court—iver so while ago? Eh, a fine lad that Maister Robert as iver I see!"

Fat laborious Becky hobbled out, holding an apple and a knife. She blinked at her husband, and then at the strangers.

"What be askin' o' the Court?" she said.

Her husband repeated the question.

She gathered her apron to her eyes with an unctuous sob:

"Doan't a' know when Maister Robert went! He comes i' the house 'ere and says, 'Becky, gie us a taste o' the red-top—and where's Jock?' He was always thinkin' a deal o' my son Jock. 'Jock be gone,' I says, 'and I knows nowt o' his comin' back'—meanin', I was, that day. 'Good for Jock!' says he, 'and I'm goin' too, Becky, and I knows nowt o' my comin' back.' 'Where be goin', Maister Robert?' I says. 'To hell, Becky,' says he, and he laughs. 'From hell to hell. I'm sick to my teeth o' one, I'll try t'other'—a way like that speaks he."

Belward was impatient, and to hurry the story he made as if to start on. Becky, seeing, hastened.

"Dear a' dear! The red-top were afore him, and I tryin' to make what be come to him. He throws arm 'round me, smacks me on the cheek, and says he: 'Tell Jock to keep the mare, Becky.' Then he flings away, and never more comes back to the Court. And that day one year my Jock smacks me on the cheek, and gets on the mare; and when I ask: 'Where be goin'?' he says: 'For a hunt i' hell wi' Maister Robert,