



# THE LION IN THE PATH

(From the Publisher's advanced sheets.)

## CHAPTER XLII.—GOING HOME.

Down a Lancashire road, bright with October yellow, there rattled merrily, 'midst clashing of loose chains and jingle of bells, a miller's van. The curtains were looped back at the front and rear, and thus left a double oval frame, which filled the harvest pictures, mellow and warm, and changing incessantly as the van sped on.

The front figures in the picture—the inmates of the van—of course remained the same; and these were, the red haired miller himself, who drove, sitting sideways and winking his powdered eye-lashes in the sun; a young woman, blue-eyed and sunburnt, sitting on a heap of sacks and looking onwards in an idle reverie, with her snowy teeth half buried in a scarlet streaked apple; and lastly a lazy fellow, stretched at full length at the bottom of the van, with his head on her knees.

With these two in the foreground, the picture through the curtains of the van was always pleasant, whether it had for a background a hill of standing sheaves, touched with the fire of the sunset, or clump of oaks reddening to gold, or cottage with a lithe, bold-eyed girl clinging to its eaves, and, heedless of her mother's shaking fist, plucking and flinging down the ripe grapes to the children swarming round the gate.

The chains clattered, the curtains flapped in the mellow breeze, the great horses shook their great manes and showed their great bright shoes with a good will; sometimes the miller sang, and sometimes the girl, and sometimes they all three sang together, and were assisted in their chorus by a tramp at the tail-board, who, to have escaped the miller's whip, should have held his peace.

But mirth is contagious, and that merry, noisy van infected all the roads with it, from the ragged children gleaning in the fields, who shaded their eyes with their handful of corn, and stared and shouted after it, to the very dust that whirled behind it, round and round and over

and over, as if every grain were inspired with boisterous life.

Suddenly the girl stopped in the midst of the old song, "The Cruelty of Barbara Allen," which had sent the lazy fellow, whose head lay on her knee, fast asleep. She stopped; and with her lips still apart, as when the song flowed through them, and with kindling eyes, touched the miller's arm, and pointed to where stood against the horizon, like a grey, uneven fringe, a cluster of house-roofs.

"Master," she said to the miller, "you told me 'twas the next town we should see, but—but is that—"

"Ay, Bolton, sure," said the miller.

"It is?" cried the girl, and at the same time her hand, which was held by her sleepy companion, clasped his so tightly that he woke, turned his head, and looked up at her. She was looking right on, her eyes growing tearful, her lips beginning to quiver.

"Why, Joan, what is to do? What dost see?" asked he, in tender surprise.

"My home, sweetheart, my home!" she said;



The Miller's Van.