

Besides I'm sure Crooks would not stop, if he found out Mr. Purdee had bought it."

"Then," said the Squire, Purdee *must* buy it; and if he wants any money, or any other assistance, he can have it here. Quill are you asleep there?"

"No Sir, I'm listening."

"Ring for the butler and let Wyatt have something to drink. I say Wyatt, can't you call on Purdee to-day and tell him I should like to see him about this business."

"I'll do so, Sir, with very great pleasure."

The Butler now came in with a large pewter mug of porter for Wyatt, and shortly after with a china posnet of mulled wine for the Squire himself, who was sitting apparently in a musing mood, looking into the fire.

"Wyatt," said the Squire quite suddenly, "what is Tom Snarr doing now?"

"I can hardly tell," said Wyatt, "times have been hard with Tom lately, I know he's had no regular work for some time, and his wife is sick which makes the matter still worse. The neighbours have been very kind to him in their way but they cannot do much."

"I see, I see," said the Squire "I can form an idea. I must make Tom some little arrears. Quill we owe Tom some reparation."

"I think so, I am of opinion we are wrong about that business"

"Why of course we are, but general acknowledgments won't answer, will they?"

Mr. Stone was occupied with an original idea, and did not answer at once; but at length out it came. "Find him some work Sir."

"Very good," said the Squire, "is there anything we can set him to do just now?"

"I think," said Mr. Stone, "I heard the Coachman saying something this very morning about the paddock wall."

"Wyatt," said the Squire "you see Tom and tell him, I want him to come to work and we'll make things right, so far as we can. Quill see Miss Cater about Tom's wife."

Wyatt started on his own errands, Mr. Stone to see Miss Cater, the housekeeper,

and before dinner at the Hall, Miss Cater, herself, with the Coachman and one of his boys were on their way to Tom Snarr's Cot in the "Hollow."

It requires a very small exercise of the imagination, to picture the raptures among Tom's children when the contents of that basket were exposed to their view.

Wyatt had but just informed Tom of the sudden change in his prospects, when the housekeeper arrived with the large basket of provisions, which the coachman had brought, and a smaller one which the boy carried..

As to the number of Tom's children, we may refer to his own answer, when questioned on this point. "Dang it mester, I can hardly tell, our Mary could tell you, let me see there's,"—counting on his fingers, 'there's about thirteen *on 'em.*' And all that Tom earned was with dry-walling, and hedging and ditching, when he could obtain work,

His brother Jim had been sent to gaol for poaching rabbits "to let," as he said "the children have a tid-bit now and then."

Being a single man he lived with his brother, to assist him to maintain his family. But, no matter how good his motives, the Squire was inexorable on the subject of poaching; and as it was impossible for Jim to pay the fine, he had been sent for three months to prison.

This term of hard labour was nearly expired so that it was expected he would soon return to enjoy the improved prospects of his brother's family.

The owner of the "Black Farm" was desirous to sell this property, because he wanted the money in his business; being convinced that this additional capital would yield him a much better return than the annual rental.

The unexpired lease of the 'Black Farm' was about fifty years, and as the "Quarry Farm" was of the same date, Mr. Purdee was the more pleased at the opportunity which offered to secure it; and as the Squire facilitated the purchase, the transfer was soon effected, and the business arranged to the satisfaction of both parties.

Of course Crooks was at once notified of the circumstance, and was no little ir-