

"If ever he comes to Hartland I'll set him on the broad of his back," said he, and her face was peaked. "That is all," he cried; "it taxes me too much to come to see you, Grace." And she kissed him fondly as he went; and he remembered how her hand plucked his shoulder.

Now and then, it is true, when neighbours met and, talking the talk of the countryside, "turned over," as the phrase goes, the Upcott household, some shaggy one might suggest (perhaps more from contrariety than belief) that a wife could do a deal to keep a husband straight. But such suggestions either fell flat as though unheard or were violently repudiated. And a fate seemed to follow those who made such suggestions: the ordinaries would presently claim their more frequent presence, and the mid-night ditch.

You will gather that Upcott's was no common backsliding. Even those who loved to be "merry," or, as they said in quay parlance, "half-caulked," had a loathing for the man who would throw his money into the tavern tills, hunt all the loose petticoats of the back streets, be none so drunk but he recollected to save horseflesh going up hill home, and then, at the turn off from Abbotsham Hill, start bellowing to the night so that he raised the roosted crows: "Put the pan on the fire; I'm a-coming hoom." You begin to feel the atmosphere at the Upcott farm; and if the place was always clean as a new pin and wore a smiling air that meant very much just what the smile of the mistress meant, you have guessed whose mind directed