

Hardy, resolute, defiant ; his strong arms ready to defend the " Good God." Hammer, beside himself with rage at seeing his former ally so unexpectedly become such a formidable opponent, attacks him fiercely. In the struggle the lantern is extinguished and the combat goes on for some seconds without any perceptible advantage on either side. Finally, weakness relaxes the tension of the deadly embrace and makes them appear more like brothers than enemies locked in mortal strife. With a throb of gladness, Hardy realizes that the victory will



soon be his, when suddenly, quick as lightning, Hammer loosens his grip, seizes his sword and strikes. Hardy moans, sways and murmurs, " coward... coward ; " but he does not draw back.

Like a star the glimmering light still shines in its ruby nest, mute witness of the awful tragedy... Hardy, weak from exhaustion and loss of blood, glances up at it and imagines it looks like his mother... in a magical setting with loving arms outstretched towards him... while he hears once again the village organ ring out, sweet and glad as it did long years ago, that glorious triumphant first communion march.