

them out of their boxes. Time enough to put them on the market when the others were gone. That would not be long now. He wondered dully whether nearly all who wanted towels had not already supplied themselves. It seemed to him that he had sold nothing but towels for a week.

He went forward to wait on a customer, another old friend.

'Some towels like those Mrs. McDonald got here,' she said, with the easy familiarity of long acquaintance. 'You have them still in stock?'

'Only a few left now,' Delmar replied. 'They are beauties, I think, and a real bargain.'

'I agree with you. Do you know, Delmar, we are all saying how nice it is to have a place where we can buy with confidence that things are all right? We say as we used to Milburn's, "If you bought it at Bennett's, it is right."'

'At least, if you buy it at Bennett's, Bennett means to have it right,' Delmar replied. And then the hot-blood surged over his face. Was it true? He thought of those odious towels.

His shop was left to the care of his assistant for a half-hour after that. Alone, in the little back room which served as a storeroom, Delmar Bennett faced anew the question. Possibly he might sell these towels without forfeiting the good opinion of others. But his good opinion of himself was gone, and there was only one way to regain it.

'Somebody says something about the foolishness of a "purchase of repentance,"' he said to himself grimly. 'I think I have been laying out money in that kind of a bargain.'

'Are you going to get that new lot of towels out right away?' queried the assistant, looking in upon him.

'The new lot isn't going on sale,' he said, with a promptness which surprised himself. 'The general public will have to do without towels for a day or two, or get them somewhere else.'

He went forward into the shop. 'Take down all those cards announcing the linen sale,' he directed. 'We'll make the run on ribbons the rest of this week. Those new towels aren't good enough for my trade.'

'I don't believe he ever looked at them,' murmured the assistant as he made the changes ordered. He was still more surprised when the goods were neither sold nor returned. He never knew that in his own mind his employer had labelled the case, 'A Purchase of Repentance,' and kept it as a reminder of a standard which, for a little while, he had forgotten.

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What are the Wild Waves Saying?

A SHETLAND IDYLL.

(George Aitken, author of 'Home in Heathenland, in 'Christian Leader'.)

In the Shetlands Islands the sense of remoteness and isolation becomes oppressive, and one has the feeling of being still at sea. Turn where you will, the blue ocean catches your eye and its briny breezes fill the nostrils. Terraces of siena rock line the green hilly islands, and form ragged fringes far into the sea. Over these rocks diminutive sheep, black, 'murret,' and grey, wander and nibble the seaweed, until the returning tide drives them to the hillsides where the pasturage is about equally scant. Innumerable islets with sharp majestic crags stand sentinel around the mainland; upon these many a gallant ship has met her fate.

The scenery is stupidly quiet on calm days; not a gull screams, no spray dashes upon the rocks, the water seems too lazy to ripple as the slimy seaweed and sturdy tangles float and bob upon its oily surface. No horizon divides the waters above from the waters below; and the mid-sea can be distinguished only by brown dots here and there, seemingly fishing boats with all sail set, yet for lack of wind forced to swing there, unable to put to sea, helpless to come to land.

'Dey suidna gid out dis day, nae ae whuff on da wide watter is der!'

'Dat's truth, Maggie, dey micht a bidden dis day at da'peats.'

The speakers were descending the main-road from the peat-hill, each bending beneath a piled-up 'keshie' or creel of cured turf. Many journeys were needed between hill and hamlet to build the peat-stack before the door high enough to ensure a warm hearth during the long, dark winter. The two women were clad in short, wincy petticoats and wrappers of print, their heads and shoulders were shrouded in hand knitted shawls, while upon their feet flexible, raw-hide sandals were bound. But the home-bringing of the peats, however necessary, was too unremunerative a task to deserve exclusive time and attention; so each woman was busy at her stocking, and as she sturdily tramped on the needles flashed and the conversation flew. Presently reaching the stony beach they strode over the burn upon stepping stones and clambered up the face of the brae to the spongy, sloppy bog in which their houses stood.

The hamlet consists of half-a-dozen huts scattered and set at various angles. The walls are built in unequal layers of flat stones without lime or cement of any kind; they are extremely low, for it would be unsafe to carry them high. The roofs are of turf sods and scanty layers of straw. Some have an old fishing-net cast over all and weighed down by stones. Each of these cabins is a home, sheltering respectively the Jamiesons, the Malcomsons, the Hoskisons, to the third and fourth generation. It is the season of the long line fishing, and the brave lads are all at sea, while the women, children and auld done folks toil about the crofts ashore.

Having stacked her load of peats, Janet Duncanson turned into her own cabin and lifted the latch of the thin plank door into

the living room. A pungent odor of warm reek pervades the interior. The roof is low, and the rafters are ebony black with ages of smoke. They are decorated with fishing-nets, bunches of long lines and hooks and other sea gear; with elbow skeletons of salted mutton and huge dried had-docks. The floor is a mosaic of flag stones, indifferently fitted, and but nominally flat. Over a pyramid of glowing peats a large pot swings and simmers. Two shaggy dogs and a sedate cat circle the capacious hearth, while behind these, and sunk deeply in his chair sits old Eric, laboring heavily in sleep. Gnarled old sea-dog and true Scandinavian, he is bonneted and jerkin-ed as if waiting the call, 'all hands,' yet he is caked and begrimed as if his watch had just tumbled below. There he sits, relic of forty years arduous, perilous fisherman's life, stoutly denying day by day that his sea days are over, yet perceptibly failing under a dropsy and a dastardly lumbago. He started with a gasp and a growl to find his daughter-in-law at his side, and gripping the arms of his chair he ponderously pulled himself to his feet.

'Ay, ay, lass, has Magney come in?'

'Na, faider, dey'll no can come in dis nicht, noo.'

Eric struggled to the window and with his hands spread upon the table solemnly peered out of the small panes. Then he stumbled noisily to the door followed by the dogs. Taking off his bonnet he rubbed his face and white head as if bathing them in the cold air. Slowly he scrutinized sky and sea, dreamily at first, then more keenly. True, early dusk was already shadowing the east, but the grey haze there was too distinct to be accounted for by that alone. The water had become steely grey, and sea gulls were wheeling fitfully over the rocks, as if tentatively trying their powers of flight. True, all was supremely calm, and the odor of the rotting seaweed engrossed the senses, but it was an oppressive calm such as old Eric instinctively disliked. He jolted down the hillside to have a look at Magnus Goudie's weather glass. He encountered Maggie returning from the spring and bravely shouted—

'Tu wull hae nae lad, dis nicht, Marget lass!'

'Thinkst du nae, Eric,' and she too turned and scanned the now leaden sea.

'Der's a blaw comin', lass, but a misdoot dey'll no come in,' he explained as he moved on.

A strain of concern was in his words and Maggie felt it; it was in his manner too, and she sighed as she scaled the sodden hillside to her cottage and went inside. The teapot stood upon the hearth, and a thick barley-meal cake was slowly crusting at the peat embers. A woman, worn and gray, was attending to it; having felt it all over with her thin fingers she turned its remotest segment toward the warm glow, then rising she groped for her chair and turned a vacant face in Maggie's direction. She was blind!

'The lads are nae hame yet, Marget?' she asked.

Maggie was bending over the cradle of her first-born and crooning faintly, but she stopped to say rather curtly, 'No!'

'Dost du no see da boats, lassis?'

It was another voice this time and came from the box-bed. The wooden sides and door looked like a wall of the apartment;