

## Bob, Son of Battle.

By ALFRED OLLIVANT.

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CHAPTER XX.—Continued.

"Adieu, dear amiable youth!" he cried in broken voice; and straightway set to sobbing again.

Half-way down to the Stony Bottom David turned.

"I'll gie yo' a word o' warnin'," he shouted back. "I'd advise yo' to keep a closer eye to yer Wullie's goings on, specially o' nights, or happen yo'll wake to a surprise one mornin'."

In an instant the little man ceased his fooling.

"And why that?" he asked, following down the hill.

"I'll tell yo', when I wak' this mornin' I walked to the window, and what d'yo' think I see? Why, your Wullie gollop' like a good un, up from the Bottom, all foam'ing, too, and red-splashed, as if he'd coom from the Screes. What had he bin up to, I'd like to know?"

"What should he be doin'," the little man replied, "but havin' an eye to the stock? and that when the Killer might be out."

David laughed harshly.

"Ay, the Killer was out, I'll go bail, and yo' may hear o't afore the evenin', ma man," and with that he turned away again.

As he had foreseen, David found Maggie alone. But in the heat of his indignation against his father he seemed to have forgotten his original intent, and instead poured his latest troubles into the girl's sympathetic ear.

"There's but one mon in the world he wishes worse nor me," he was saying. It was late in the afternoon, and he was still inveighing against his father and his fate. Maggie sat in her father's chair by the fire, knitting; while he lounged on the kitchen table, swinging his long legs.

"And who may that be?" the girl asked.

"Why, Mr. Moore, to be sure, and Th' Owd Un, too. He'd do either o' them a mischief if he could."

"But why, David?" she asked anxiously. "I'm sure dad niver hurt him, or any ither mon for the matter o' that."

David nodded toward the Dale Cup which rested on the mantelpiece in silvery majesty.

"It's yon done it," he said. "And if Th' Owd Un wins agin, as win he will, bless him! why, look out for 'me and me Wullie'; that's all."

Maggie shuddered, and thought of the face at the window.

"Me and me Wullie," David continued; "I've had about as much of them as I can swaller. It's aye the same—'Me and me Wullie,' and 'Wullie and me,' as if I never put ma hand to a stroke! Ugh!—he made a gesture of passionate disgust—the two on 'em fair madden me. I could strike the one and throttle t'other," and he rattled his heels angrily together.

"Hush, David," interposed the girl; "yo' munna speak so o' your dad; it's agin the commandments."

"Tain't agin human nature," he snapped in answer. "Why, 'twas nob' but yester' morn' he says in his nasty way, 'David, ma gran' fellow, hoo ye work! ye 'stonish me!' And on me word, Maggie"—there were tears in the great boy's eyes—"me back was nigh broke wi' toilin'. And the Terror, he stands by and shows his teeth, and looks at me as much as to say, 'Some day, by the grace o' goodness, I'll ha' my teeth in your throat, young mon.'"

Maggie's knitting dropped into her lap and she looked up, her soft eyes for once flashing.

"It's cruel, David; so 'tis!" she cried. "I wonder yo' bide wi' him. If he treated me so, I'd no stay anither minute. If it meant the House for me I'd go," and she looked as if she meant it.

David jumped off the table.

"Han' yo' niver guessed why I stop, lass, and me so happy at home?" he asked eagerly.

Maggie's eyes dropped again.

"Hoo should I know?" she asked innocently.

"Nor care, neither, I s'pose," he said in reproachful accents. "Yo' want me to go and leave yo', and go reet awa'; I see hoo 'tis. Yo' wouldna mind, not yo', if yo' was niver to see pore David agin. I niver thowt yo' welly liked me, Maggie; and noo I know it."

"Yo' silly lad," the girl murmured, knitting steadfastly.

"Then yo' do," he cried, triumphant. "I knew yo' did." He approached close to her chair, his face clouded with eager anxiety.

"But d'yo' like me more'n just likin', Maggie? d'yo'," he bent and whispered in the little ear.

The girl cuddled over her work so that he could not see her face.

"If yo' won't tell me yo' can show me," he coaxed. "There's other things besides words."

He stood before her, one hand on the chairback on either side. She sat thus, caged between his arms, with drooping eyes and heightened color.

"Not so close, Davie, please," she begged, fidgeting uneasily; but the request was unheeded.

"Do'ee move away a wee," she implored.

"Not till yo've showed me," he said, relentless.

"I canna, Davie," she cried with laughing petulance.

"Yes, yo' can, lass."

"Tak' your hands away, then."

"Nay; not till yo've showed me."

A pause.

"Do'ee, Davie," she supplicated.

And—

"Do'ee," he pleaded.

She tilted her face provokingly, but her eyes were still down.

"It's no manner o' use, Davie."

"Iss, 'tis," he coaxed.

"Niver."

"Please."

A lengthy pause.

"Well, then—" she looked up, at last, shy, trustful, happy; and the sweet lips were tilted further to meet his.

And thus they were situated, lover-like, when a low, rapt voice broke in on them,—

"A dear-lov'd lad, convenience snug, A treacherous inclination."

Oh, Wullie, I wish you were here!

It was little M'Adam. He was leaning in at the open window, leering at the young couple, his eyes puckered, an evil expression on his face.

"The creetical moment! and I interfere! David, ye'll never forgive me."

The boy jumped round with an oath; and Maggie, her face flaming, started to her feet. The tone, the words, the look of the little man at the window were alike insufferable.

"By thunder! I'll teach yo' to come spyin' on me!" roared David. Above him on the mantel-piece blazed the Shepherds' Trophy. Searching any missile in his fury, he reached up a hand for it.

"Ay, gie it me back. Ye robbed me o't," the little man cried, holding out his arms as if to receive it.

"Dinna, David," pleaded Maggie, with restraining hand on her lover's arm.

"By the Lord! I'll give him something!" yelled the boy. Close by there stood a pail of soapy water. He seized it, swung it, and slashed its contents at the leering face in the window.

The little man started back, but the dirty torrent caught him and soused him through. The bucket followed, struck him full on the chest, and rolled him over in the mud. After it with a rush came David.

"I'll let yo' know, spyin' on me!" he yelled. "I'll—" Maggie, whose face was as white now as it had been crimson, clung to him, hampering him.

"Dinna, David, dinna!" she implored.

"He's yer ain dad."

"I'll dad him! I'll learn him!" roared David half through the window.

At the moment Sam'l Todd came floundering furiously round the corner, closely followed by 'Enry and oor Job.

"Is he dead?" shouted Sam'l, seeing the prostrate form.

"Ho! ho!" went the other two.

They picked up the dragged little man and hustled him out of the yard like a thief, a man on either side and a mat behind.

(Continued on next page.)

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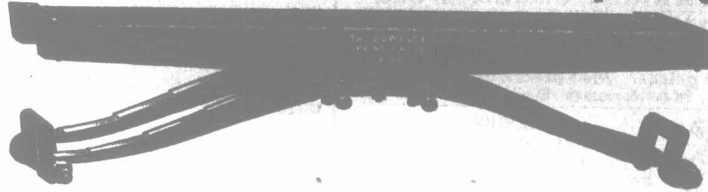
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