

The gray dog—it was who found Cyril Gilbraith by the White Stones, with a cigarette and a sprained ankle, on the night the whole village was out with lanterns searching for that well-loved young scapegrace. It was the Tailless Tyke and his master who on a bitter evening came upon little Mrs. Burton, lying in a huddle beneath the lee of the fast whitening Druid's Pillar with her latest baby on her breast. It was little M'Adam who took off his coat and wrapped the child in it; little M'Adam who unwound his plaid, threw it like a breast-band across the dog's great chest, and tied the ends round the weary woman's waist. Red Wullie it was who dragged her back to the Sylvester Arms and life, straining like a giant through the snow, while his master staggered behind with the babe in his arms. When they reached the inn it was M'Adam who, with a smile on his face, told the landlord what he thought of him for sending his wife across the Marches on such a day and on his errand. To which: "I'd a cauld," pleaded honest Jem.

For days together David could not cross the Stony Bottom to Kenmuir. His enforced confinement to the Grange led, however, to no more frequent collisions than usual with his father. For M'Adam and Red Wullie were out at all hours, in all weathers, night and day, toiling at their work of salvation.

At last, one afternoon, David managed to cross the Bottom at a point where a fallen thorn-tree gave him a bridge over the soft snow. He stayed but a little while at Kenmuir, yet when he started for home it was snowing again.

By the time he had crossed the ice-draped bridge over the Wastrel, a blizzard was raging. The wind roared past him, smiting him so that he could barely stand; and the snow leaped at him so that he could not see. But he held on doggedly; slipping, sliding, tripping, down and up again, with one arm shielding his face. On, on, into the white darkness, stumbling on; sobbing, stumbling, dazed.

At length, nigh dead, he reached the brink of the Stony Bottom. He looked up and he looked down, but nowhere in that blinding mist could he see the fallen thorn-tree. He took a step forward into the white morass, and sank up to his thigh. He struggled feebly to free himself, and sank deeper. The snow wreathed, twisting, round him like a white flame, and he collapsed, softly crying, on that soft bed.

"I canna—I canna!" he moaned.

Little Mrs. Moore, her face whiter and frailer than ever, stood at the window looking out into the storm.

"I canna rest for thinkin' o' th' lad," she said. Then, turning, she saw her husband, his fur cap down over his ears, buttoning his pilot-coat about his throat while Owd Bob stood at his feet, waiting.

"Ye're no goin', James?" she asked, anxiously.

"But I am, lass," he answered; and she knew him too well to say more.

So those two went quietly out to save life or lose it, nor counted the cost.

Down a wind-shattered slope—over a spar of ice—up an eternal hill—a forlorn hope.

In a whirlwind chaos of snow, the tempest storming at them, the white earth lashing them, they fought a good fight. In front, Owd Bob, the snow clogging his shaggy coat, his hair cutting like lashes of steel across his eyes, his head lowered as he followed the finger of God; and close behind, James Moore, his back stern against the wind, stalwart still, yet swaying like a tree before the wind.

So they battled through to the brink of the Stony Bottom—only to arrive too late.

For, just as the Master peering about him, had caught sight of a shapeless lump lying motionless in front, there loomed across the snow-choked gulf through the white riot of the storm a gigantic figure, forging doggedly forward, his great head down to meet the hurricane. And close behind, buffeted and bruised, stiff and staggering, a little dauntless figure holding stubbornly on, clutching with one hand at the gale, and a shrill voice, whirled away on the trumpet tones of the wind, crying: "Noo, Wullie, wi' me!"

"Scots wha' hae wi' Wallace bled! Scots wham Bruce has often led! Welcome to—!" Here is he, Wullie!

"—or to victorie!" The brave little voice died away. The quest was over, the lost sheep found. And the last James Moore saw of them was the same small, gallant form, half carrying, half dragging the rescued boy out of the Valley of the Shadow and away.

David was none the worse for his adventure, for on reaching home M'Adam produced a familiar bottle.

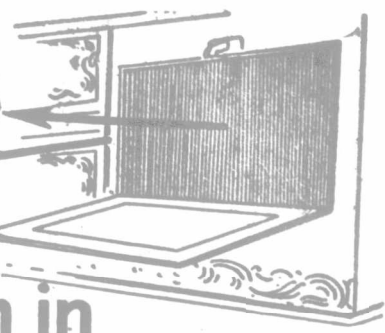
"Here's something to warm yer inside, and"—making a feint at the strap on the wall—"here's something to do the same by yer—But, Wullie, oot again!"

And out they went—unreckoned heroes.

It was but a week later, in the very heart of the bitter time, that there came a day when, from gray dawn to grayer eve, neither James Moore nor Owd Bob stirred out into the wintry white. And the Master's face was hard and set as it always was in time of trouble.

Outside the wind screamed down the Dale; while the snow fell relentlessly softly fingering the windows, blocking the doors, and piling deep against the walls. Inside the house there was a strange quiet; no sound save for hushed voices, and upstairs the shuffling of muffled feet.

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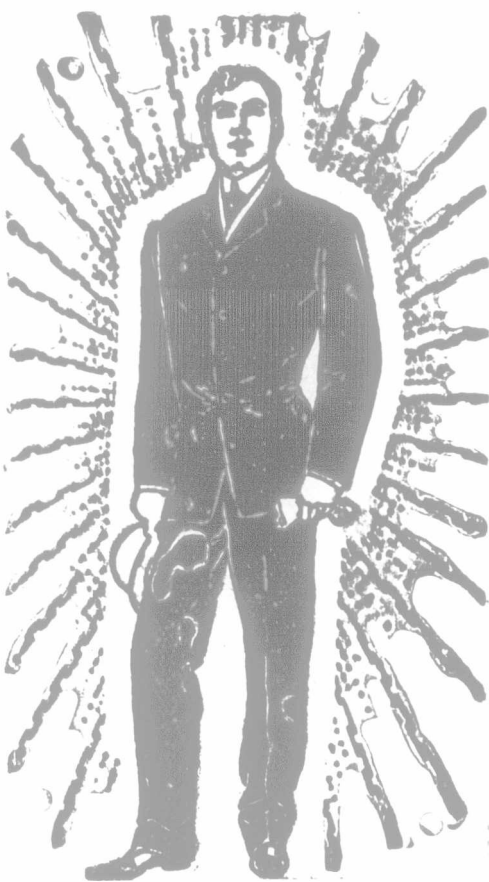
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