

# That Lass o' Lowrie's,

A STORY OF THE LANCASHIRE COAL MINES.  
BY FRANCIS HODGSON BURNETT.

## CHAPTER IX. THE NEWS AT THE RECTORY.

If she did not hear of the incident from Grace, Anice heard of it from another quarter.  
The day following, the village was ringing with the particulars of "th' feicht betwix th' Lunnon chap an' Dan Lowrie."

Having occasion to go out in the morning, Mr. Barholm returned to luncheon in a state of great excitement.  
"Dear me!" he began, almost as soon as he entered the room. "Bless my life! what ill-conditioned animals these colliers are."

Anice and her mother regarded him questionably.  
"What do you suppose I have just heard?" he went on. "Mr. Derrick has had a very unpleasant affair with one of the men who work under him—no other than that Lowrie—the young woman's father. They are a bad lot it seems, and Lowrie had a spite against Derrick, and attacked him openly, and in the most brutal manner, as he was going through the village yesterday evening."

"Are you sure?" cried Anice. "Oh! papa," and she put her hand upon the table as if she needed support.  
"There is no the slightest doubt," was the answer, "everybody is talking about it. It appears that it is one of the strictest rules of the mine that the men shall keep their Davy lamps locked while they are in the pit—indeed they are directed to deliver up their keys before going down, and Derrick having strong suspicions that Lowrie had procured a false key, gave him a rather severe rating about it, and threatened to report him, and the end of the matter was the trouble of yesterday. The wonder is that Derrick came off conqueror. They say he gave the fellow a sound thrashing. There is a good deal of force in that young man," he said, rubbing his hands. "There is a good deal of—of pluck in him—as we used to say at Oxford."

Anice shrank from her father's evident enjoyment, feeling a mixture of discomfort and dread. Suppose the tables had turned the other way. Suppose it had been Lowrie who had conquered. She had heard of horrible things done by such men in their blind rage. Lowrie would not have paused where Derrick did. The newspapers told direful tales of such struggles ending in the conquered being stamped upon, maimed, beaten out of life.

"It is very strange," she said, almost impatiently. "Mr. Grace must have known, and yet he said nothing. I wish he would come."  
As chance had it, the door opened just at that moment, and the Curate was announced. He was obliged to drop in at all sorts of unceremonious hours, and to-day some school business had brought him. The Rector turned to greet him with unwonted warmth. "The very man we want," he exclaimed. "Anice was just wishing for you. We have been talking of this difficulty between Derrick and Lowrie, and we are anxious to hear what you know about it."

Grace glanced at Anice uneasily.  
"We wanted to know if Mr. Derrick was quite uninjured," it said. "Papa did not hear that he was hurt at all, but you will be able to tell us."  
There was an expression in her upraised eyes the Curate had never seen there.

"He met with an injury," he answered. "but it was not a severe one. He came to my rooms last night and remained with me. His wrist is fractured."  
He was not desirous of discussing the subject very freely, it was evident, even to Mr. Barholm, who was making an effort to draw him out. He seemed rather to avoid it, after he had made a brief statement of what he knew. In his secret heart he shrank from it with a dread far more nervous than Anice's. He haddoubt of his own concerning Lowrie's action in the future. Thus the Rector's excellent spirits grated on him, and he said but little.

Anice was silent too. After luncheon, however, she went into a small conservatory adjoining the room, and before Grace took his departure she called him to her.  
"It is very strange that you did not tell us last night," she said. "Why did you not?"  
"It was Derrick's forethought for you," he answered. "He was afraid that the story would alarm you, and as I agreed with him that it might, I remained silent. I might as well have spoken, it appears."

"He thought it would frighten me?" he said.  
"Yes."  
"Has this accident made him ill?"  
"No, not ill; though the fracture is a very painful and inconvenient one."  
"I am very sorry; please tell him so. And, Mr. Grace, when he feels able to come here I have something to say to him."

Derrick marched into the Barholm parlour that very night with his arm in splints and bandages.  
"It was a specially pleasant and homelike evening to him; Mrs. Barholm's gentle heart went out to the handsome invalid. She had never had a son of her own, though it must be confessed she had yearned for one, strong and deep as was her affection for her girl.  
But it was not till Derrick bade Anice good-night, that he heard what she intended to say to him. When he was going, just as he stepped across the threshold of the entrance door, she stopped him.  
"Wait a minute, if you will be so good," she said, "I have something to ask of you."  
He paused, half smiling.  
"I thought you had forgotten," he returned.  
"Oh! no, I had not forgotten," she answered. "But it will only seem a very slight thing to you perhaps." Then she began again, after a pause. "If you please, do not think I am a coward," she said.  
"A coward!" he repeated.  
"You were afraid to let Mr. Grace tell me about your accident last night, and though it was very kind of you, I did not like it. You must not think that because these things are new and shock me, I am not strong enough to trust in I am stronger than I look."  
"My dear Miss Barholm," he protested, "I am sure of that. I ought to have known better. Forgive me if—"  
"Oh," she interposed, "you must not blame yourself. But I wanted to ask you to be so kind as to think better of me than that. I want to be sure that if ever I can be of use to anybody, you will not stop to think of the danger or annoyance. Such a time may never come, but if it does—"  
"I shall certainly remember what you have said," Fergus ended for her.

CHAPTER X.  
ON THE KNOLL ROAD.  
The moon was shining brightly when she stepped into the open road—so brightly that he could see every object far before him, unless where the trees cast their black shadows, which seemed all the blacker for the light. "What a brave little creature she is!" he was saying to himself. But he stopped suddenly; under one of the trees by the roadside some one was standing motionless; as he approached, the figure stepped boldly out into the moonlight before him. It was a woman.  
"Dunnot be afeard," she said, in a low hurried voice. "It's me, mester—it's Joan Lowrie."  
"Joan Lowrie!" he said with surprise. "What has brought you out at this hour, and whom are you waiting for?"  
"I'm waiting for yo'rsen," she answered.  
"For me?"  
"—Ye; I ha' summat to say to you." She looked about her hurriedly.  
"Yo'd better come into th' shade o' them trees," she said. "I dunnot want to gi' any one a chance to see me, nor yo' eicher."  
It was impossible that he should not hesitate a moment. If she had been forced into entrapping him!  
She made a sharp gesture.  
"I am na goin' to do harm," she said.  
"Yo' may trust me. It's th' other way about."  
"I ask pardon," he said, feeling heartily ashamed of himself the next instant, "but you know—"  
"Aye," impatiently, as they passed into the shadow, "I know, or I should na be here now."  
A moonbeam, finding its way through a rift in the boughs and falling on her face, showed him that she was very pale.  
"Yo' wonder as I'm here at aw," she said, not meeting his eyes as she spoke; "but yo' did me a good turn onct, an' I ha' na had so many done me i' my life as I can forget one on 'em. I'm come here—for I may as well mak' as few words on't as I can—come here to tell yo' to tak' heed o' Dan Lowrie."  
"What?" said Fergus. "He bears me a grudge, does he?"  
"Aye, he bears thee grudge enow," she said. "He bears thee that much grudge that if he could lay his hand on thee, while th' heat's on him, he'd kill thee or dee. He will na be so bitter after a while, happen, but he'd do it now, and that's why I warn thee. Tha has no reet to be goin' out loike this," glancing at his bandaged arm. "How could tha help thyself if he were to set on thee? Tha had better tak' heed, I tell thee."  
"I am very much indebted to you," began Fergus.  
She stopped him.  
"Tha did me a good turn," she said. "And then her voice changed. "Dan Lowrie's my feyther, an' I've stuck to him. I dunnot know why—happen cause I never had nowt else to hold to and do for; but feyther or no feyther I know he's a bad un when th' fit's on an; he has a spite agen a mon. So tak' care, I tell thee agen. Their now I've done. Will tha walk on first an' let me follow thee?"  
Something in her mode of making this suggestion impressed him singularly.  
"I do not quite understand—"  
"Have you taught him to do any—"

She turned and looked at him, her face white and resolute.

"I dunnot want harm done," she answered. "I will na ha' harm done if I can help it, an' if I am speak th' truth I know thers harm afoot to meet. If I'm behind thee, thers na a mon i' Riggan as dare lay a hand on thee to my face, if I am nowt but a lass. That's why I ax thee to let me keep i' soight."  
"You are a brave woman," he said, "and I will do as you tell me, but I feel like a coward."  
"There is no need as you should," she answered in a softened voice. "Yo' dunnot seem loike one to me."  
Derrick bent suddenly, and taking her hand, raised it to his lips. At this involuntary act of homage—for it was nothing less—Joan Lowrie looked up at him with startled eyes.  
"I am na a lady," she said, and drew her hand away.

They went out into the road together, he first, she following at a short distance so that nobody seeing the one could avoid seeing the other. It was an awkward and trying position for a man of Derrick's temperament, and under some circumstances he would have rebelled against it; as it was, he could not feel humiliated.  
At a certain dark bend in the road not far from Lowrie's cottage, Joan halted and suddenly spoke.  
"Feyther," she said, in a clear steady voice, "is na that yo' standin' thers? I thow yo'd happen to be comin' whoom this way. Where has tha been?" And as he passed on, Derrick caught the sound of a muttered oath, and gained a side glimpse of a heavy, slouching figure coming stealthily out of the shadow.

CHAPTER XI.  
NEB AND HIS MASTER MAKE A CALL ON GUARD.  
"Hoo's a queer little wench," said one of the roughest Rigganite matrons, after Anice's first visit. "I wur i' th' middle o' my wesen when she come—up to th' neck i' th' suds—and I wur vexed enough when I seed her standin' i' th' door, lookin' at me wi' them big eyes o' hers—most loike a baby's wonderin' at summat. 'We dunnot want none,' I says, soart o' sharp loike, th' minute I clapped my eyes on her. 'Thers no one here as can read, an' none on us has no toime to spare if we could, so we dunnot want none.' 'Dunnot want no what?' she says. 'No tracks,' says I. And what do yo' think she does, lass? Why, she begins to scourt o' dimple up about th' corners o' her mouth as if I'd said summat reight down queer, an' she gie's a bit o' a laff. 'Well,' she says, 'I'm glad o' that. It's a good thing, fur I ha' not got none.' An then it turns out that she just stopped fur nowt but to leave some odd linen an' salve for to dress that sore hond Jack crushed i' th' pit. He'd tow'd her about it as he went to his work, and she promised to bring him some. An' what's more, she wouldna come in, as if she had na been th' Parson's kind, as knowd how to mind her own business an' leave other folk's a-be-"  
The Rigganites became quite accustomed to the sight of Anice's small low phaeton, with its comfortable fat grey pony. She was a pleasant sight herself as she sat in it, her little whip in her small gloved hand, and no one was ever sorry to see her check the grey pony before the door.  
"Anice!" said Mr. Barholm to his curate, "well, you see Anice understands these people, and they understand her. She has the faculty of understanding them. There is nothing, you may be assured, Grace, like understanding the lower orders, and entering into their feelings."  
There was one member of Riggan's company who had ranged himself among Miss Barholm's disciples from the date of his first acquaintance with her, who was her staunch friend and adviser from that time forward—the young master of "th' best barrier" Riggan. Neither Jud Bates nor Nib faltered in their joint devotions from the hour of their first introduction to "th' Parson's daughter." When they presented themselves at the Rectory together, the cordiality of Nib's reception had lessened his master's awkwardness. Nib was neither awkward nor one whit abashed upon his entree into a sphere so entirely new to him as a well-ordered, handsomely furnished house. Once inside the parlour, Jud had lost courage and stood fumbling his ragged cap, but Nib had bounced forward, in the best of good spirits, barking in friendly recognition of Miss Barholm's greeting, and licking her hand. Through Nib, Anice contrived to invade Jud into conversation and make him forget his overwhelming confusion. Catching her first glimpse of the lad, as he stood upon the threshold with his dubious garments and his abashed air, she was not quite decided what she was to do with him. But Nib came to her assistance. He forced himself upon her attention and gave her something to say, and her manner of receiving him was such, that in a few minutes she found Jud sidling toward her, as she half knelt on the hearth patting his favourite's rough back. Jud looked down at her, and she looked up at Jud.  
"Have you taught him to do any—"

thing?" she asked. "Does he know any tricks?"

"He'll kill more rats i' ten minutes than any dog i' Riggan. He's th' best barrier fur rats as the iver seed. Ho's the best barrier fur out as tha iver seed. There is nowt as he canna do. He can feicht any dog as thers is fro' heer to Marfort." And he glowed in all the pride of possession, and stooped down to pat Nib himself.  
He was quite communicative after this. He was a shrewd little fellow, and had not spent his ten years in the mining districts for nothing. He was thoroughly conversant with the ways of the people his young mistress wished to hear about. He had worked in the pits a little, and he had tramped about the country with Nib at his heels a great deal. He was supposed to live with his father and grandmother, but he was left entirely to himself, unless when he was put to a chance job. He knew Joan Lowrie and pronounced her a "brave un;" he knew and revered "Owd Sammy Craddock;" he knew Joan's father and evidently regarded him with distrust; but fact there was not a man, woman, or child in the place of whom he did not know something.  
Mr. Barholm happening to enter the room during the interview, found his daughter seated on a low seat with Nib's head on her knee, and Jud a few feet from her. She was so intent on the task of entertaining her guest that she did not hear her father's entrance, and the Reverend Harold left the three together, himself in rather a bewildered frame of mind.

"Do you know?" he asked of his wife when he found her, "do you know who it is Anice is amusing in the parlour? What singular fancies the girl has, with all her good sense!"  
CHAPTER XII.  
ON GUARD.  
Though they saw comparatively little of each other, the friendly feeling established between Anice and Joan, in their first interview, gained strength gradually as time went on. Coming home from her work at noon or at night, Joan would see traces of Anice's presence, and listen to Liz's praises of her. Liz was fond of her and found comfort in her. The days when the grey pony came to a stop in his joggrot on the roadside before the gate had a kind of pleasurable excitement in them. They were the sole spice of her life. She understood Anice as little as she understood Joan, but she liked her. She had a vague fancy that in some way Anice was like Joan; that there was the same strength in her,—a strength upon which she herself might depend. And then she found even a stronger attraction in her visitor's personal adornments, in her graceful dress, in any elegant trifle she wore. She liked to look at her clothes and ask questions about them, and wonder how she would look if she were the possessor of such beautiful things.

"She wur loike a pictur," she would say mournfully to Joan. "She had a blue gown on, an' a hat wi' bluebells in it, an' summat white an' soft frilled up round her neck. Eh! it wur pretty. I wish I wur a lady. I dunnot see why ivverbody canna be a lady an' have such loike."  
Later Joan got up and went to the child, who lay upon the bed in a corner of the room.  
There were thoughts at work within her of which Liz knew nothing. Liz only looked at her wondering as she took the sleeping baby in her arms, and began to pace the floor, walking to and fro with a slow step.  
"Have I said owt to vex yo'?" said Liz.  
"No, lass," was the answer. "It is na thae as worrits me. I can scarce tell what it is mysen, but it is na thae, niver fear."  
But there was a shadow upon her all the rest of the night. She did not lay the child down again, but carried it in her arms until they went to bed, and even then it lay upon her breast.  
"It's queer to me as yo' should be so fond o' that choild, Joan," said Liz, standing by the side of the bed.  
Joan raised her head from the pillow, and looked down at the small face resting upon her bosom, and she touched the baby's cheek lightly with her finger, flushing curiously.  
"It's queer to me, too," she answered. "Get thee into bed, Liz."  
Many a battle was fought upon that homely couch when Liz was slumbering quietly, and the child's soft, regular breathing was the only sound to be heard in the darkened room. Amid the sordid cares and humiliations of Jean's rough life, there had arisen new ones. She had secret struggles—secret yearnings—and, added to these, a secret terror. When she lay awake thinking, she was listening for her father's step. There was not a night in which she did not long for, and dread to her it. If he stayed out all night, she went down to her work under a load of forboding. She feared to look into the faces of her work-fellows, lest they should have some evil story to tell; she feared the road over which she had to pass, lest at some point its very dust should cry out to her in a dark stain. She knew her father better than the oldest of his companions,

and she watched him closely.

"He's what yo' wenchens ud ca' a hansum chap, that thers," said Lowrie to her the night of his encounter with Derrick. "He's a tall chap an' a strappin' chap, an' he's gotten a good-lookin' mug o' his own, but," clenching his fist slowly and speaking, "I've not done wi' him yet—I ha' not quite done wi' him. Wait till I ha', and then see what yo'll say about his beauty. Look yo' here, lass"—more slowly and heavily still—"he'll noan be so tall then nor yet so straight and strappin'. I'll smash his good-lookin' mug if I'm dom'd to hell fur it. Hoed tha that?"  
Instead of taking lodgings nearer the town or avoiding to Knoll Road, as Grace advised him to do when he heard of Joan's warning, Derrick provided himself with a heavy stick, stuck a pistol into his belt every night when he left his office, and walked home as usual, keeping a sharp look-out, however.  
"If I avoid the fellow," he said to Grace, "he will suspect at once that I fear I have cause to fear him; and if I give him grounds for such a belief as that I might as well have given way at first."  
Strange to say, he seemed not molested. The excitement he had to die a natural death in the course of a few days. Lowrie came back to his work looking sullen and hard, but he made no open threats, and he even seemed easier to manage. Certainly, Derrick found his companions more respectful and submissive. There was less grumbling among them, and more passive obedience. The rules were not broken, openly; at least, and he himself was not defied. It was not pleasant to feel that what reason and civility could not do, a tussle had accomplished; but this really seemed to be the truth of the matter, and the result was one which made his responsibilities easier to bear.

But during his lonely walks homeward on these summer nights Derrick made a curious discovery. On one or two occasions he became conscious that he had a companion, who seemed to act as his escort. It was usually upon dark or unpleasant nights that he observed this, and the first time he caught sight of the figure, which always walked on the opposite side of the road, either some distance before or behind him, he put his hand to his belt; not perceiving for some moments that it was not a man, but a woman. It was a woman's figure, and the knowledge sent the blood to his heart with a rush that quickened its beatings. It might have been chance, he argued, that took her home that night at this particular time; but when time after time the same thing occurred, he saw that his argument had lost its plausibility. It was no accident, there was purpose in it; and though they never spoke to each other, or in any manner acknowledged each other's presence, and though often he fancied that she convinced herself that he was not aware of her motive, he knew that Joan's desire to protect him had brought her there.

He did not speak of this even to Grace.  
One afternoon, in making her visit at the cottage, Anice left a message for Joan. She had brought a little plant-pot, holding a tiny rose-bush in full bloom, and when she went away she left her message with Liz.  
"I never see your friend when I am here," she said. "Will you ask her to come and see me some night when she is not too tired?"  
When Joan came home from her work, the first thing that caught her eye was a lovely bit of colour,—the little rose-bush blooming on the window-sill where Anice herself had placed it.  
She went and stood before it, and when Liz, who had been temporarily absent, came into the room, she was standing before it still.  
"She browt it," explained Liz, she wur here this afternoon."  
"Aye," she answered, "wur she?"  
"Aye," said Liz. "An' Joan, what do yo' think she towld me to tell yo'?" Joan shook her head.  
"Why, she said I were to tell yo' to go and see her some meet when yo' wur na tired,—just th' same as if yo' wur a lady. Shanna yo' go?"  
"I dunnot know," said Joan awakening. "I canna tell. What does she want o' me?"  
"She wants to see thee an' talk to thee, that's what," answered Liz,—"just th' same as if tha was a lady, I tell thee. That's her way o' doin' things. She is na a bit loike the rest o' gentlefolk. Why, she'll sit thers on that three-legged stool wi' the choild on her knee an' laff an' talk to me ar' it, as if she wur nowt but a common lass an' noan a lady at aw. She's ta'en on a great fancy to thee, Joan. She's allus axin me about thee. If I wur thee I'd go. Happen she'd gie thee some o' her owd cloas, as she's ta'en to thee so."

"I dunnot want no owd cloas," said Joan brusquely, "an' she's none so daft as to offer em to me."  
"Well, I niver did!" exclaimed Liz. "Would na tha tak' em? Tha niver means to say, tha would na tak' em, Joan? Eh! tha' art a queer wench! Why! I'd be set up for th' rest o' my days, if she'd offer 'em to thee."

"They ways an' mine is na loike," said Joan. "I want no gentlefolk's finery. An' I tell you she would na offer 'em to me."  
"I niver can mak' thee out," Liz said in a fret. "Tha's as grand as if tha wur a lady thyssen. Tha't tak' nowt fro' nobody."  
"Where's the choild?" asked Joan.  
"She's laid on th' bed," said Liz. "She wur so heavy she tired me an' I gave her a rose-bud to play wi' an' left her. She has na cried sin'. Eh! but there is a noice colour," bending her pretty, large-eyed face over the flowers, and inhaling their perfume; "I wish I had a bit o' ribbon loike 'em."  
[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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A committee Miller, and Mr Miller were appointed of business.  
Mr. H. E. H. Prov. Teacher's full and interest ations of that bison, it was resolved thanks be ren that his expense tion.

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What would I had a large pit within a limited himself to it on! Evidently the c omplishment, is tedious under but such irregu witness year s schools, renders deed. The com cience in teachi mind is the foll attendance each benefit upon t Besides, there i from his or her whole school in The class of wh ors are memb the; as it were weight and mat gress, proving ambitious school is to be done? be disposed of s organization of tion of new cla modulation of the be attended wi the rest of the q itself to our mi be remedied? points out and not prescribe a ion, however, I minish the evil able to wholly this purpose, t to attend mo must employ a to impress on t the importance cation, the li want of it w Happen commu importance in to the illiteratly unprofit devoid of educ representation impression on enough to und ery opportunit judicious teach of his scholars regularly. Co classes tend