

### BABY HAS GONE TO SCHOOL.

The baby has gone to school; ah, me!  
What will the mother do,  
With never a call to button or pin,  
Or tie a little shoe?  
How can she keep herself busy all day,  
With the little "hindering thing" away!

Another basket to fill with lunch,  
Another "good-bye" to say;  
And the mother stands at the door to see  
Her baby march away;  
And turns with a sigh that is half relief,  
And half a something akin to grief.

She thinks of a possible future morn,  
When the children, one by one,  
Will go from their home out into the world,  
To battle with life alone,  
And not even the baby be left to cheer  
The desolate home of that future year.

She picks up garments here and there,  
Thrown down in careless haste;  
And tries to think how it would seem  
If nothing were displaced;  
If the house were always as still as this,  
How could she bear the loneliness?

### A TALE OF MY GRAND-FATHER'S.

I lived in my youth in the old county town of Denbury, in—shire, a town of no small importance sixty years ago. It was an assize and market town in those days—a great coaching rendezvous before the iron roads had caused the large manufacturing towns round it to eclipse its magnificence—and the resort of all the country gentry roundabout, who came there for some part of the year to drink the famous waters, and obtain bits of town scandal and town manners from the London beaux who frequented the place.

In and about Denbury, in what was then the season, a great number of the county aristocracy resided. Squire Trimble and Sir Charles Heavy-boy, the members for the borough; the Dowager Lady Toothless; young Lady Bluepeter, the widow of old Admiral Bluepeter; and many others of lesser note lived in or close to the town, and added their consequence to the general importance of the place.

Squire Trimble was a curiosity in his way. He had served in the army in his youth, and had caught the infection then so prevalent—though perhaps he caught it in a worse form than usual—of using extremely strong language on very slight provocation, or no provocation at all. His eloquence, when anything crossed him, would have been perfectly charming if his language had been more choice or less expressive. He sometimes quite shocked his neighbours, who were never at any time over fastidious, by the force and energy of his expressions. Time, place, occasion, were a mere nothing to him; he swore at anybody or anything that provoked his cholera, from his dogs even to the parson; and not the most serious remonstrances, sermons, exhortations, or denunciations of that important worthy could cool down his temper or bring on a cessation of the storm when Squire Trimble was once roused.

In those days there was only one church in Denbury, and Parson Hackit was the rector. Looking now at the mouldy, dilapidated, crazy old building, with a long doctor's bill written on every pillar and stone of its draughty rheumatic form, crowned with a tumbledown rickety old spire, a foot or so out of the perpendicular, its eaves crowded with swallows' nests, its dim diamond window-panes broken and cobweb-covered, the whole traced over with ivy, and looking more like a debilitated barn than a place of worship, it is difficult to understand that in those old days that church was the centre of the very strongest attraction, and was crowded every Sunday by an enthusiastic and wealthy congregation. Joe Hackit was the most famous preacher in all the country; he could do what he pleased with his congregation—draw tears from their eyes or money from their pockets; temper with his mildness the rude justice of the country magistrate, or excite the virtuous indignation of his hearers by an eloquent tale of some grievous wrong. Parson Hackit never hesitated to exercise his enormous influence in favor of any one whom he chose to consider a deserving object of compassion, and often and often he appealed from the pulpit in a touching manner—telling the story of some poor man's wrongs, or some kind deed gone unrewarded—for aid for the deserving object. Anything that attracted his notice in the town, any passing event of politics or town scandal, anything that gave occasion for a simile, a metaphor, or a moral, was pressed into his service. He truckled to no rich or powerful squire, but exposed, in all their naked deformity, the vices of drunkenness, profligacy, and corruption, and would often threaten his dissipated and fashionable congregation with the awful consequences of a life of crime, until even the gentlemen became serious and interested, and the hard drinking and hard hunting squires, inspired by the parson's words, dealt out double sentences for weeks to come on all the criminals who had dared to emulate their betters in these respects. Squire Trimble, who, considering that he was seldom sober, and that he had spent ten thousand pounds or so over the last election, ought to have been pale with fear over the denunciations of his vicar, was the only man who was impervious to his eloquence; and he always slept peacefully in the pew all through the thunders of the parson, and sometimes quite discomfited him, and scandalised the audience, by his dreadful snoring and yawning in his slumbers.

One bright Sunday morning in summer Parson Hackit was hurrying to church across the road from his snug little vicarage, which stood opposite, looking rather nervously at his watch as he went down the street—for he was rather later than usual—when at the gate leading to the vestry he saw standing a shabby-looking man, meanly and rather flashily dressed in an old green coat with long flap pockets, brown gaiters, and a very shabbily-smart cocked hat trimmed with tarnished gold lace. The appearance and manner of this person roused the parson's suspicions, and reminded him that he had left the door of his house open; a circumstance which, owing to his excessive forgetfulness, very often occurred, and for which Betty, his maid, had several times seriously scolded him, as he had twice lost a good overcoat, and once Betty's own umbrella and mittens had been stolen out of the hall by some tramps; for which luxury, in addition to the lecture he received on the occasion, Parson Hackit had to pay some four times their value.

Now, however, as he was hesitating whether to turn back and shut the door or to hurry on into church, the shabby-looking stranger stepped forward as he entered the churchyard, touched his hat to him and accosted him with, "Are you the clergyman, sir?"

"Yes, my good man," said Hackit impatiently; "what do you want with me?"

"I thought it right that I should come to you, sir," continued the stranger, "a poor servant on my way to see my sick daughter, and—"

"Yes, yes, my friend," said the parson, as the bell stopped at that moment and he hurried forward; "call at the vicarage after service, and I'll see what I can do for you. I can't stop now."

"Nay, nay, your honour," said the man, clutching at Hackit's sleeve as he spoke; "hear me a minute, sir. I want your honour to help me now—in the church."

"What do you mean, my friend?" asked the astonished vicar rather coldly, for he had a sort of dim notion that the mysterious pauper wanted leave to carry round the plate and collect for himself. "Speak out, man, if you have anything to say to me; I don't understand you."

"I will explain to your honour," said the stranger. "I am a poor man, and I hope an honest one, and I have a large family dependent on my exertions; and I have nothing in the world, your honour, but what I earn by my own labour. I have a daughter that is ill in Derbyshire" ("This isn't the way to Derbyshire," said the vicar), "and I was walking down from London to see her when I lost my way, and came towards this town. As I was walking along the road, breathing a prayer that my dear daughter might be delivered of her affliction, I saw lying on the roadside, this box, sir," and the stranger drew from his pocket a little leather case; "and upon opening it I found it contained jewels. Now, sir, as I said before, I am an honest man, and would not touch the jewels of another for all the gold in the world; and if you would mention it to your people that this is found, maybe the owner may be here and will take his own, for, sir, though I am a poor man—"

"Open the box, and let me see them," said Hackit, abruptly.

The vicar's mind, during the whole of this tedious harangue, had been tortured by the recollection of that open door. It stared him right in the face across the road, all the while the man was talking to him, and swayed and creaked with the wind as if to remind him of his duty to it. Should he go back and shut it? What would Porridge the clerk say, when he found him so late; and Betty, what would she say? How long had the bell stopped? Perhaps the congregation would be coming out again. But when the man mentioned jewels the parson pricked up his ears; and the moment that he saw the drift of the man's request, without waiting for a repetition of his pleas of poverty and morality, he authoritatively ordered him to open the box, and show him the treasure. The man complied, and a most magnificent set of diamonds were displayed to the view of the astonished vicar.

"I am a poor man, your honour," began again the man, as he saw the vicar's eyes opened to their widest over the lovely jewels—"I am a poor man, your honour, and I hope an honest one."

"Oh, yes, yes," said the vicar, interrupting him, "I have no doubt of it. You go into the church, and sit down there, and I'll mention it for you."

Hackit rushed in to the vestry and found his clerk in a state bordering on hysterics. The bell had stopped for several minutes, and all the congregation had been waiting in anxious expectation of the parson. Hackit was never known to be unpunctual. Besides, only three Sundays back he had preached a stirring sermon on the awful sin of unpunctuality, and had consigned to an unmentionable place all people with unsettled notions as to the virtue of keeping appointments, and by a natural application of the doctrine the simple-hearted congregation expected Hackit to be a model of punctuality. Doctor Slaughter had made threatening movements in the direction of the parson's door, under the impression that he must have been seized with an apoplexy; Lady Bluepeter, who was always on the look-out for some new bit of scandal, and who, according to reports, spread, no doubt, by some ill-natured enemy, was by no means free from peccadilloes of her own, suggested that the dear man must have eloped with Betty, and was already drawing up in her mind

a sketch of the letter in which he would disclose the event to her cousin, Lady Heartbreaker, in London; and old Squire Trimble, who was brought regularly to church by his good old wife, was in high glee at the idea that for this once he would be respited, and would be able to go back to his pipe and his bottle. He pulled out his watch with a triumphant air, compared it with the clock over the lion and unicorn who fought over King George, in the west tower, and informed Mrs. Trimble that he had never kept the parson waiting so long for his dinner, which was, perhaps, the only truth he ever told in his life.

At length the flurried and rosy face of the vicar appeared, and that worthy gentleman without delay commenced the service. Whilst reading he cast his eyes around to survey the congregation, and count up absentees, for from his position in the reading-desk he could peep into all the high pews and review their contents. Young Pennywinkle, his churchwarden's youngest son, was trying to hide himself inside a box hassock, whilst the elder was busily employed in tearing up his father's best hymn book, and strewing the floor of the pew with the remnants. He viewed with terror the frantic efforts of the little Bastings to scale the sides of the pew; and frowned at Lady Bluepeter sharing a Prayer-book with her cousin Sir Henry, who was supporting her with his arm, and putting his lips in close proximity to hers.

As the vicar's eyes wandered round the church they lit on a quiet-looking man, a stranger, decently dressed, looking careworn and anxious, his features sometimes turned despairingly upwards and his hands wrung together, as if some deep grief weighed upon his mind. Although the eye of the awful Mr. Porridge was upon him, his mind was too intent upon his own woes to drink in the deadly terror of that worthy's gaze; he neither stood nor knelt, but sitting with his hands clasped between his knees, and his head now bent down with grief, now raised in earnest supplication to heaven, seemed wrapt in the contemplation of some absorbing affliction of his own. The good old parson was deeply interested in this mysterious man; it must be, he thought, some mental affliction that weighed upon him so heavily; some crime, undetected in times past, revived from the forgotten years, when reflection and a flood of half-awakened memories were brought to his mind by the sound of the church bell; perhaps he felt a desire of ghostly consolation. At any rate Hackit thought he would speak to him after the service and desire him to unbosom his grief. But his good intentions were never destined to be put in execution.

After the godly congregation had bawled a hymn, in the good old fashion of those days, led by Mr. Porridge, that great functionary, after dusting out the pulpit and placing the parson's decanter and tumbler of water at the side, went to the vestry to assist in the impressive ceremony of re-robing, and then, having conducted the vicar, arrayed in a rustling black-silk gown, into the pulpit, he tucked his gown inside the door, bolted him up, and came and took his place beneath, ready to deliver his response at the conclusion of the discourse. Then the vicar began his sermon. That sermon was long remembered in the neighbourhood as being the most wonderful sermon which Hackit had ever preached. It was a torso; but no matter for that, it was a most wonderful sermon, and all listened with rapt attention except Squire Trimble, who always dropped off after the text was given out, and the clerk, who, I regret to say, had stayed up very late the night before with some social friends at the Grasshopper (discussing the imminent danger to our Empire in the East from Napoleon's advance on Moscow, and the very serious question of a French occupation of Calcutta), and who, from what he thought to be an innocent doze, fell into slumbers about as long and as light as the slumber of the Sleeping Beauty, whom it was said he remarkably resembled. With these two exceptions, as I say, no one went to sleep; but Hackit riveted the attention of his congregation to the very last word, although he was not the man, when he was once in the vein, to be particular to an hour or so about time. I forget what the sermon was about. I don't suppose I ever attended, as I and your great-aunt Jane were having a pitched battle over the hassocks in our family pew for the greater part of the time; but I know that the vicar managed to introduce into it the story of the poor stranger whom he had met that morning, and that he introduced it with such embellishments and ecstasies of eloquence, and his own version of the event was so much the more complete and circumstantial, being magnified by the microscope of his benevolent fancy, that I doubt if the poor fellow recognised his own story. He was proceeding to descant upon the worth of honesty and the virtuous example of that honest man, when that wicked old Squire Trimble, who had been unusually quiet, and had not disturbed the listeners with so many of his snortings and blowings as usual, being dead asleep and balanced for some time on the edge of his seat, after he had recovered his balance by the merest chance some five-and-fifty times, fell over on the six-and-fiftieth with a mighty crash among the dusty hassocks at the bottom of the pew, and put a period for ever to the eloquence of the good old vicar. For whilst the vicar was covering his confusion (though he was pretty well accustomed to these interruptions) by swallowing about half a gallon of cold water as a preliminary to further exertion, and whilst the old squire was swearing lustily, and struggling to free himself from the mass of straw and Prayer-books with which he

was enveloped, the distressed stranger whom the parson had watched during the service, who had hitherto listened with an expression of the utmost impatience and of blank astonishment, now hurried up from the aisle where he had been seated, and, placing himself in front of the pulpit, exclaimed, in an agitated voice, "I am the owner of these jewels! I had lost them, and had despaired of ever finding them. O kind sir, if you will restore them to me Heaven will reward you, as I never can."

This interruption naturally caused the greatest excitement and consternation; nor was the clerk less surprised at this sudden infringement of the vicar's sole right to church oratory, as he had only just yoked up, and knew nothing of the vicar's eloquence and of the causes which had led to the disturbance. He was meditating an assault upon the stranger as some insane or intoxicated person, when the vicar averted any altercation by retiring to the vestry to unrobe.

When the good man came from the vestry he found the two strangers in the churchyard surrounded by a circle of admiring and benevolent parishioners. The hearts of even the most stingy had been softened by the vicar's eloquence, and still more so by the touching sequel to his discourse. At his request the second stranger repeated to him the tale, a simple one, already told to the others; he was a poor man, much poorer than the other (it appears he laid great stress on his poverty,) and as honest as the other too. So much was he trusted that these jewels for Lord— in the north, whose wedding they were to grace, had been intrusted to him by a great merchant in London. On his way there he had been robbed of all his own money at an inn at Morchester, a town some fifteen miles off, and he had been forced to continue his journey on foot, but somehow the thieves had managed to overlook the jewels. These, however, he had missed some few miles out of the town, and after a long and fruitless search he had wandered into Denbury in some mechanical manner, had found his way to the church, and had dropped into a seat overcome with despair and confusion, when, in the wonderful manner before related, he had found his lost property. "Ah, God pity me," exclaimed he; "it is almost my wish that I had not been so fortunate when I see this good man and think that my poverty forbids me to offer him aught but thanks and the prayers of a poor man. If those are of any avail he shall have all that I can give him. But my time is precious, and I must be on my way before dark, or more misfortune will befall me." The parson mildly rebuked him, telling him that he ought not to make the Sabbath a day of journeying, but rather stay to thank Heaven for the great mercy shown to him. But the man replied that if he failed to go forward now he would not arrive in time for the marriage of the noble lord, for whose bride the jewels were destined. He prayed the vicar to remember him in his prayers, and invoking blessings on them all, and repeatedly kissing the hand of his friend, who seemed as much affected as himself, he hurriedly left the churchyard.

Scarcely had he departed, when the pent-up fervour of the congregation burst forth upon the other poor man. He was a paragon of honesty! Should such an example go unrewarded? He was still standing among them, his eyes bedewed with tears, evidently meditating on the vanity of earthly riches and the great worth of human poverty. But he was not left long to meditation. The enthusiastic zeal of the congregation overflowed into his lap; gold, silver, banknotes were poured into his unwilling palm; and even old Pennywinkle, the churchwarden, who had never been known to give to any one person at one time more than three-and-sixpence (and that, it was supposed, was in the dark, in mistake for a penny-half-penny), and who was more than suspected of having tried to pass a bad half-sovereign between two halfpence at the town turnpike, gave liberally from the poor-box; and when the good fellow left the churchyard he was, according to the value of money in those days, quite on a par with a year's income of the parson himself, who insisted on walking with him to the inn, and on seeing him and his friend, well mounted on two good horses, set out on their way to York.

It may be dreadful for some charitably-disposed minds, devoted to organising the superfluous energies and incomes of others, and directing them how to deal out the strictly required amount of equitable sympathy towards well qualified objects, to have to read of such a spectacle of wicked extravagance and of well-meant enthusiasm as this was. They would lament, no doubt, the misplaced charity that, wasted like the precious ointment, would seal up the pockets of the parish for some time to come, would pauperise the country, and induce all people to declare themselves poor in order to become objects of such benevolence.

Not so our vicar. As he turned to go home about an hour before afternoon service, his heart was overflowing with feelings of thankfulness for the great opportunity given to him and to his flock of showing their devotion to the poor. He was equally pleased with himself and with everybody else. He had preached a good sermon, which gratified his vanity; that he had helped a poor man, roused his sympathy and excited his kind heart. His congregation had responded liberally to his appeal for help; it was evident that his bread was not cast upon the waters for naught, and that his frequent monitions had sown some good seed. Such was an occasion for great rejoicing; and the parson, as he neared his house, determined to signalise the occasion