

# Bob, Son of Battle

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"Only the pictur' o' some randy quean," his father answered, chucking away at the inanimate chin. "Gie it me!" David ordered fiercely. "It's mine."

"Na, na," the little man replied. "It's no for sic douce lads as dear David to ha' ony touch wi' leddies sic as this."

"Gie it me, I tell ye, or I'll tak' it!" the boy shouted.

"Na, na; it's ma duty as yer dad to keep ye from sic limmers." He turned, still smiling, to Red Wullie.

"There ye are, Wullie!" He threw the photograph to the dog. "Tear her, Wullie, the Jezebel!"

The Tailless Tyke sprang on the picture, placed one big paw in the very center of the face, forcing it into the muck, and tore a corner off; then he chewed the scrap with unctuous, slobbering gluttony, dropped it, and tore a fresh piece.

David dashed forward.

"Touch it, if ye daur, ye brute!" he yelled; but his father seized him and held him back.

"And the dogs o' the street," he quoted.

David turned furiously on him.

"I've half a mind to brak' ivery bone in yer body!" he shouted, "robbin' me o' what's mine and throwin' it to yon black brute!"

"Whist, David, whist!" soothed the little man. "'Twas but for yer ain good yer auld dad did it. 'Twas that he had at heart as he aye has. Rin aff wi' ye noo to Kenmuir. She'll mak' it up to ye, I war'n't. She's leebal wi' her favors, I hear. Ye've but to whistle and she'll come."

David seized his father by the shoulder.

"An' ye gie me much more o' your sauce," he roared.

"Sauce, Wullie," the little man echoed in gentle voice.

"I'll twist yer neck for ye!"

"He'll twist my neck for me."

"I'll gang reet awa', I warn ye, and leave ye and yer Wullie to yer lone."

The little man began to whimper.

"It'll brak' yer auld dad's heart," he said.

"Nay; ye've got none. But 'twill ruin ye please God. For ye and yer Wullie'll get ne'er a soul to work for ye—ye cheese-parin', dirty-tongued Jew."

The little man burst into an agony of affected tears, rocking to and fro, his face in his hands.

"Waesucks, Wullie! d'ye hear him? He's gaein' to leave us—the son o' my bosom! my Benjamin! my little David! he's gaein' awa'!"

David turned away down the hill; and M'Adam lifted his stricken face and waved a hand at him.

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

In an instant the little man ceased his fooling.

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

"I'll tell ye. When I wak' this mornin' I walked to the window, and what d'ye think I see? Why, your Wullie gollop in like a good un up from the Bottom, lal foamin', too, and red-splashed, as if he'd coom from the Screes. What had he been 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 oot, I'll go bail, and ye may hear o't afore the evenin', ma man," and with that he turned away again.

As he had foreseen, David found implored.

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 ony 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 ma Wullie'; that's all."

Maggie shuddered and thought of the face at the window.

"Me and ma Wullie," David continued; "I've had about as much of them as I can swallow. It's aye the same—'Me and ma 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; "ye 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 ma word, Maggie"—there were tears in the great boy's eyes—"ma 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 yer 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 ye 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' ye, 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. "Ye want me to go and leave ye, and go reet awa'; I see hoo 'tis. Ye wouldn't mind, not ye, if ye was niver to see pore David agin. I niver thowt ye welly liked me, Maggie; and noo I know it."

"Ye silly lad," the girl murmured, knitting steadfastly.

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

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

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

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

He stood before her, one hand on the chair-back 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

"Not till ye've showed me," he said, light and the fire burnt low. So dark

relentless. "I canna Davie," she cried with

laughing petulance.

"Yes, ye can, lass."

"Tak' your hands away, then."

"Nay; not till ye'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 ye 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 forgie 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 ye to come spyin' on me!" roared David. Above him on the mantel-piece blazed the Shepherd's 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 ye 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.

"Hol' hol'!" went the other two.

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

As they forced him through the gate, he struggled round.

"By Him that made ye! ye shall pay for this, David M'Adam, ye and yer—"

But Sam'l's big hand descended on his mouth, and he was borne away before that last ill word had flitted into being.

## CHAPTER XXI

### HORROR OF DARKNESS.

It was long past dark that night when M'Adam staggered home.

All that evening at the Sylvester Arms his imprecations against David had made even the hardest shudder. James Moore, Owd Bob, and the Dale Cup were for once forgotten as, in his passion, he cursed his son.

The Dalesmen gathered fearfully away from the little dripping madman. For once these men, whom, as a rule, no such geyser outbursts could quell, were dumb before him only now and then shooting furtive glances in his direction, as though on the brink of some daring enterprise of which he was the objective. But M'Adam noticed nothing, suspected nothing.

When, at length, he lurched into the kitchen of the Grange, there was no

light and the fire burnt low. So dark was the room that a white riband of of paper pinned onto the table escaped his remark.

The little man sat down heavily, his clothes still sodden, and resumed his tireless anathema.

"I've tholed mair fra him, Wullie than Adam M'Adam ever thocht to thole from ony man. And noo it's gan past bearin'. He struck me, Wullie struck his ain father. Ye see it yersel', Wullie. Na, ye weren't there. Oh, gin ye had but bin, Wullie! Him and his madam! But I'll gar him ken Adam M'Adam. I'll stan' nae mair!"

He sprang to his feet and, reaching up with trembling hands, pulled down the old bell-mouthed blunderbuss that hung above the mantel-piece.

"We'll mak' an end to't, Wullie, so we will, aince and for a'!" And he banged the weapon down upon the table. It lay right athwart that slip of still condemning paper, yet the little man saw it not.

Resuming his seat, he prepared to wait. His hand sought the pocket of his coat, and fingered tenderly a small stone bottle, the fond companion of his widowhood. He pulled it out, uncorked it, and took a long pull; then placed it on the table by his side.

Gradually the gray head lolled; the shrivelled hand dropped and hung limply down, the finger-tips brushing the floor; and he dozed off into a heavy sleep. While Red Wull watched at his feet.

It was not till an hour later that David returned home.

As he approached the lightless house, standing in the darkness like a body with the spirit fled, he could but contrast this dreary home of his with the bright kitchen and cheery faces he had left.

Entering the house, he groped to the kitchen door and opened it; then struck a match and stood in the doorway, peering in.

"Not home, bain't he?" he muttered, the tiny light above his head. "Wet inside as well as oot by noo, I'll lay. By gum! but 'twas a lucky thing for him I didna get ma hand on him this evenin'. I could ha' killed him." He held the match above his head.

Two yellow eyes, glowing in the darkness like cairngorms, and a small dim figure bunched up in a chair, told him his surmise was wrong. Many a time had he seen his father in such case before, and now he muttered contemptuously:

"Drunk; the leetle swab! Sleepin' it off, I reck'n."

Then he saw his mistake. The hand that hung above the floor twitched and was still again.

There was a clammy silence. A mouse, emboldened by the quiet, scuttled across the hearth. One mighty paw lightly moved; a lightning tap, and the tiny beast lay dead.

Again that hollow stillness; no sound, no movement; only those two unwinking eyes fixed on him immovable.

At length a small voice from the fireside broke the quiet.

"Drunk—the leetle swab!"

Again a clammy silence, and a life-long pause.

"I thowt ye was sleepin'," said David, at length, lamely.

"Ay, so ye said. 'Sleepin' it aff'; I heard ye." Then, still in the same small voice, now quivering imperceptibly, "Wad ye obleege me, sir, by leetin' the lamp? Or, d'ye think, Wullie, 'twad be soilin' his dainty fingers? They're mair used, I'm told to danderin' wi' the bonnie brown hair o' his—"

"I'll not ha' ye talk o' ma Maggie so," interposed the boy passionately.

"His Maggie, mark ye, Wullie—his! I thocht 'twad soon get that far."

"Tak' care, dad! I'll stan' but little more," the boy warned him in choking voice; and began to trim the lamp with trembling fingers.

M'Adam forthwith addressed himself to Red Wull.

(Continued.)

Street Car Conductor—Where do you want to get off at?

Drowsy Passenger—Minute street.

Street Car Conductor—Why, there's no such street on this line.

Drowsy Passenger—All right; let me off at 62nd street.