

in the pastime, unless some trilling betting might be so considered. Not so, however, with Barley Hudson, who was foremost in the bloody conflict and most conspicuous in the noisy ring, for many a fine game bird among the combatants was his that day, on whose high tempered spur of glittering steel depended many a heavy wager; but

"From every shout  
Of that rattle rout"

a by-stander might tell the day had gone against him.

"Well done, Gipsy Jim!" or, "hit him, Poacher!" or, "hurrah for the mole-catcher!" was loudly halloed by a hundred tongues at once. A shout for Hudson followed, but so feebly seconded that it soon died away in the noisy confusion in the moving crowd, which showed the day was done. Not so, however, the merry night, when all that joyous throng, bent on fun and frolic, assembled at the village inn; all save Barley Hudson, Gipsy Jim, and Tom Mitchell, better known as Tom the Poacher. Without any apparent understanding with each other, these three worthies left the village by different routes. The gipsy went by Reagill Grange, as if for Newby, where his gang were known to be; the poacher bent his way towards Oddendale, the road to his rude house at Orton bridge; while through the long and scattered hamlet of Mauls Meaburn, the way to Appleby, Hudson spurred as if in eager haste to reach La Vennet's swollen ford before the night set in. A short half hour had hardly passed away before they turned each from his pretended path, and met again in a deep dingle on the mountain side, a mile or two from Crosby Ravensworth. Here, after a short conference, they determined on some dark and fearful deed, the gipsy and the poacher were to do at Hudson's instigation.

"Remember," he said, as he prepared to mount his horse again, "remember Wastel Beck and brig, and twenty good spade guineas each!"

In less than two months after this, just before the assizes, when this important suit was to come on, two suspicious looking men might have been seen late in the evening prowling about the half deserted streets of Appleby, for some time till all was clear; and then, as if by stealth, to enter Hudson's office. The door was open. A feeble and hesitating tap upon the screen within, was answered by a rude and bluff "come in," and Hudson's two companions stood before him; or, rather, behind him, as he was sitting at his desk, in the little recess already so minutely described, with his back to them. He was either reading or writing. A dim lamp was before him, which burned so faint and flickering that ever and anon

he would look up and watch it, as if doubtful of the final issue of his conflict with departing day. He was alone—his clerk had left the office for his evening meal. There the two men stood; but oh! how strangely altered from what they were when last he met them! The sunken eye that never rested in its hollow orbit. The haggard, downcast, guilty look. The tremulous, husky voice, which even Hudson did not know when first he heard it; all told a fearful tale. The broken shattered wreck upon some rocky strand does not more clearly prove the resistless power of some tempest blast than did the outward man of those poor conscience-stricken wretches, that of the pitiless storm that raged within. There they stood—lumbly silent, like enlprits at the bar, to hear their doom.

"Well," he said at last, after a long and painful pause, and without deigning to turn a single look upon them; "and what do *you* want at this untimely hour?" There was a harshness in his tone and manner, such as a saucy craftsman uses when he has no competitor. "The day is surely long enough," he added, in a still more surly tone, supposing them some over-anxious clients come to pester him with questions which he could not answer; "then why come here at night?"

"Because," replied the gipsy, "that's the only time that owls, and bats, and birds of evil omen go abroad."

Hudson started and turned pale, for although he did not exactly know the voice, yet it was not altogether strange to him. And conscience with her chain of triple traps had bound it to his memory with something dark and terrible.

"Yes, master, it's a bad job, nae doubt!" timidly ventured the poor poacher, in answer to what he conceived to be an indication of Hudson's deep and uncontrolled contrition for the part he'd taken in the horrid deed. The words reached not the heart of him who doubtless was the deepest villain of the three. Their import was unheeded, not so the sound of Mitchell's well-known voice. It reassured, and cheered, and freed him from that vague and abject fear of wrath and retribution, the gipsy's words, as if by some mysterious spell, so strongly had inspired. He roused up all his energies and rallied in an instant. Rising from his huge arm-chair, he hastened to the door—closed and locked it—put the key into his pocket—and resumed his seat, after having offered one of his visitors a stool and the other the old "arm-chair," the fellow to the one he occupied himself, exclaiming, as he performed these little acts of courtesy, in a bland tone of equanimity which few could have assumed as he did them.

"This miserable lump," he trimmed it as he spoke, "burns somehow so dim tonight I could not see my friends—well, what cheer?" giving up