

"Ow, as weel as could hae been expectit," says Muckle Alick. "Is't a lassie?" "Aye," said Alick, quietly, "there's a lassie." "I just kenned it," said Mistress Fraser.

"But there's a laddie come, too!" said Muckle Alick and looked becomingly on the ground. (In great excitement she runs over to the house with Alick.) . . . "I dinna think I'll come ben wi' ye the noo. I'll gang owre by the barn instead. There's some things to look to there I mis doubt," said Alick. . . . He saw her fairly in at the kitchen door. "I think I'll gang owre by to the barn." But he had not got more than half way there when the leaves of the kitchen door sprang open, and out flew Mistress Fraser with the large wooden potstick in her hand. Alick had admired her performance as she ran towards the house. But it was nothing to the speed with which she now bore down upon him. "It was like the boat train coming down by the stream, ten minutes aint time, an' a director on board," he explained afterwards.

At the time he had too many things to think about to say anything whatever. He ran towards the barn as fast as he could for the choking laughter which convulsed him. And behind him sped the avenger with the uplifted porridge spurtle crying "O ye Muckle leevin' deevil—ye blackguaird—ye cunnin' hound, let me catch ye."

Catch him she did, and he received the reward of his duplicity. The above is a fair specimen of the style of humour in many parts. The heroic end of poor Alick is beautifully told. There are capital scenes dealing with the attempted reformation of Cleg and his friends, the "knuckle-dusters" by the charming Miss Celie Tennant, who becomes duly initiated as a full member of the band and under whose instruction they sit at regular times. The appeal to Providence with them generally takes the shape of consulting Miss Celie, "a comely providence in a new frock," as she is entitled in one delicious chapter. Another very amusing scene is where Cleg outwits a surly guard, scores off a traveller who has interfered in Cleg's business, and gets a free ride on a train, Cleg for a few brief moments playing the part of ticket collector. In fact it is dangerous to trifle with the redoubtable Cleg, as a rustic found to his cost, who rudely refused to tell Cleg the road to "Sandy Knowes," although politely asked so to do. This is what happened when the rustic laughed at his joke, as he thought it:

Cleg's hand dropped on a stone. The stone whizzed through the air and took effect on the third button of the man's new waistcoat. The laugh ended in a gasp. The gasp was succeeded by a bad word and then the young man gave chase. Cleg pretended to run slowly—"to encourage him," as he said afterwards. The yokel thought all the time that he was just about to catch Cleg, but always just at the critical moment that slippery youth darted a dozen yards ahead again avoided him. At last the young man gave up the chase. He had an appointment to keep. . . . He contented himself with promising what he would do to Cleg when he caught him.

What Cleg did was simpler. He patrolled the heights above, keeping exact pace, step for step, with the enemy below. And with the aid of pebbles he afforded the young man some of the finest and most interesting active exercise in getting out of the way he had had for many years.

"Will ye tell me the road noo?" cried Cleg jubilantly, as he kept the youth skipping from side to side of the highway. "This will maybe learn you after this to give a civil answer to a civil question."

This extract portrays one side of Cleg's versatility. His good heart comes out in his dealings with Vera, and altogether his adventures thus told deserve, and are sure of, a wide circulation. The publishers have presented it with an attractive cover.

If there has been a sweeter little story than "Tryphena in Love" written for many a long day, it has not been our good fortune to come across it. It is as delicate and dainty and wholesome as a big bunch of sweet-briar roses plucked from the hedge and brought in with the morning dew still clinging to the pale pink petals. The scene of the story is laid in an old house, part manor, part farm-house, and most of the action takes place in the old "chamber where the king hid," where John, the invalid lad, lay, day after day, watching the rooks circle in the air, drinking in the scent of the honey-suckle on the wall-side, dreaming day-dreams, and waited on by his cousin Tryphena. It had been partly Tryphena's fault that the accident had happened that had laid John on his back for six long years; and now, in the May-time of her young womanhood, the girl waited on John Pettigrew hand and foot, greedy of his affection and praise as if her happiness in life depended on his smile." The story opens with the scene in which Tryphena brings him up the new magazine that has just arrived. "The heavy oaken door creaked on its hinges, and there she stood in the door-way in her sun bonnet and light print frock. In one hand she held her gathered-up apron, for when Tryphena went in for literature she liked half a lapful of

cherries; in the other she brought flowers; more pinks, more gilawfirs, and a bloomy down or so. The precious book she carried tucked under her arm, together with a buck-horn-handled table-knife. 'Quick, Tryphena. Have you got it?' he cried, eagerly holding out his thin white hand. 'The sun is too hot here. Wheel me to the other window.' 'To the other window, what then?' Tryphena was quite the young woman and a stickler for her due. 'Please, Tryphena. There's a dear.' He laughed quite gaily. She slipped the flowers into the cup; and with the hand then vacant swung round the couch and pushed it across the room as if it had been a toy. This was the only journey of his life, from the west window to the east, from the east window to the west, just as he chanced to love the sun or long for the sweet shade. This was his only change of scene. The tiny shining tracks upon the oaken floor could tell how often Tryphena had truckled John Pettigrew to and fro. She fetched the rush-bottomed chair and sat down beside the couch. But he could not wait. He took the book himself, and the leaves quivered with excitement whilst he cut the pages with the dinner-knife.

"'Shall I read it out to you,' asked Tryphena, sucking a cherry from its stem with her red lips. There was a rich contentment about this maid, a never-failing good nature, fresh and inexhaustible as the fragrance of a honeysuckle. She was pretty, too, with her brown hair, bright eyes, and broad, sunburnt face. There was nothing too much trouble, nothing that she would not do. She had read Hamlet aloud—surely a test of complacency in any country girl—and the more so, since Tryphena had no real feeling for poetry, but made rhetorical pauses to crack nuts between the phrases of the soliloquy. 'Presently, Tryphena,' he replied, impatiently; for in some respects the reading left out something to be desired.

"'Tryphena, what then?'

"'Tryphena, darling.'

"He muttered it mechanically, like an oft-repeated response in a liturgy, for he was already pre-occupied with the pictures."

Then two visitors came in to see the "chamber where the king lay," and Tryphena is never quite a thoughtless girl again. One of the visitors is a young lady belonging to the family who have newly taken the Hall. She is touched by the sight of the lad and shows him kindness. He is nineteen and of course he loses his heart to her, while she thinks of him only as a delicate, dreamy boy, to whom she can bring some pleasure. And Tryphena, who has loved her cousin ever since they were "sweet-heart high," looks on and can say no word. The story is so naturally told that the little drama moves us as many a more pretentious story fails to do. John himself is such a loveable boy, with his enthusiasms and his fancies, and Tryphena is so unselfish, so wholesome and so pretty. When the inevitable end comes and Miss Mervin, full of sorrow for the trouble she has unintentionally wrought, moves off the scene, John turns naturally to Tryphena again. "He could not do without Tryphena—not for the little cares and services she so willingly performed, but because he wanted the warmth of a human presence. He longed to have her sitting there, even if they did not talk, and he wanted to talk to someone to ease his heart. 'Look, Tryphena! If there were somebody you were very fond of; but it was quite impossible—you could see that from the first. Somebody who did not think of you at all in that way—would not dream of it in fact—would you be in love just the same?'

"Tryphena moved.

"'Don't go away, come closer, Tryphena. You can't understand what it is until you are in love. If it is hopeless you do not think about that. You only love. I could never make it clear. You can only feel. You can't understand what I mean—can you, Tryphena?'" So they sit in their youthful misery that is yet so real, and we are glad of the epilogue that shows them to us, years later, happy husband and wife.

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Thomas Hardy used to live in London, but he now spends most of his time at Max Gate, near Dorchester, where he lived when a child, and where he has built a house after his own plan on a hill, from whose brow can be seen many of the places and landscape features described in his stories.