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thought it were Sunday but for the distant clatter of plates and dishes, and the sound of a woman's brisk steps over a concrete floor in the adjoining farmhouse kitchen.

Old Andrew thought so himself for a moment, as, stung into sudden consciousness by a gnat-bite on his double chin, he lifted himself with a start and gazed sheepishly around.

To be caught napping at 2.30 p.m. was a thing his conscience would formerly only have submitted to one day in the week. But no, this was a week-day. Through a gap in the thick privet-hedge that surrounded the garden he could get a good view of the rich pasture meadows that sloped undulatingly down from the old farmstead to the edge of the red sandstone Devonshire cliff that dropped sheer to the sea.

Andrew and his forefathers had rented and ploughed, sown and gathered these meadows for many generations, and no one on the whole countryside knew more of the science of the "rotation of crops," nor the art of the feeding and housing of cattle, nor the poetry, either, of "life on the land," better than did old Andrew. Yet now he sat dozing in an armchair at 2.30, or reading a back number of the newspaper! Old Andrew was superannuated, and superannuation to a Davey of Culmstock was tragedy! Oh, yes, his sons meant well by him in taking the farm over from him; he knew that well. Besides, was he not nearly eighty, and were not the eyes that read the back number getting dim? These things were true and facts, but the truth and fact of tragedy!

He grunted and dropped back sullenly into his chair with the air of one bowing to the inevitable. The newspaper and a large pair of spectacles slid to the ground, encountering old Gyp's long, sleek ears en route, and causing a gruff ejaculation of canine protest.

Old Andrew smiled, and stooping, picked up the offending articles, put the glasses on, and began to read.

Poor stuff—newspapers—nowadays; seem to get worse every year! Never nothin' stirrin', nor nothin' to make a man think. But there! what do I want wi' thinkin'! I'm shoved aside fer them as 'as stronger 'ands, but their 'arts ain't no stronger, nor they! 'Instead o' the feythers shall come up the childer,' the old Book says. Aye, but it's sorry work a-sittin' wi' folded 'ands, that it is."

Hullo, feyther! Yer look jolly comfy, a-sittin' ther like any gentleman a-dozin' over yer paper, while we earns the bread, that yer do."

The voice was cheery and strong, and its owner, a tall, strapping, sun-burnt man of some forty years, pushed his way through the privet-hedge, a scythe slung over his broad shoulders.

"Could yer do a bit o' scythe sharpenin' d'ye think, to while away yer time?"

"Scythe sharpenin'!" So it had come to that, and the old man looked down at the coarse, large hands, still sinewy and strong, resting in perforce idleness upon his knees and thought of the many golden harvests they had helped to gather in by the light of the harvest moon; and as he looked his soul broke in rebellion.

"Look 'ere, lad, it ain't no use disguisin' the truth any longer, but I'm fair sick of this superannation, I am. Let me come and help yer, if it's only to cut and carry in the hay. I tell ye, it isn't in me to sit wi' folded 'ands and dream all day long. Do ye, now, lad!"

And Andrew Davey's old-furrowed face was pathetic with entreaty.

"Nay, nay, feyther. You just take things easy and go on dreamin'. Why, ain't John and me a-come here a-purpose to give yer a few years o' peace? So yer won't do my scythe? Well, well!" And with a laugh the younger man disappeared through the hedge.

"Talk o' takin' things easy! W'y, it's the 'ardest work I ever did, and I won't do it longer, neither."

With a strange look of determination in his faded eyes he got stiffly up from his chair and strolled into the house.

"Enjoyed yer doze, feyther?" inquired the cheerful washer-up of crocks and pans—the buxom wife of his son.

"Right enough my girl," was the somewhat snappish reply; but I've come to tell yer that I shan't be in to meals much the next few days. I'm a-thinkin' I'm gettin' a bit stiff and cramped-up-like, a-sittin' so much, so I'm goin' to take a bit of exercise. D'ye see?"

Young Mrs. Davey did not "see" the evasive, shifty look in the old grey eyes, being too busy with her work, so she replied, cheerfully:—

"Goin' to exercise yer old bones a bit? Well, it's the age o' physical culture, the young folks tell us. So you'll tramp a bit and keep 'fit,' as they call it. Ha, ha! You'll see ninety yet, feyther?"

The "physical culture" proved most unaccountably absorbing, and occupied most of the daylight hours of the old farmer for several weeks.

"I don't quite like this new fad of yer feyther's, Ned," said young Mrs. Davey to her husband one day. "He gets up at unearthly hours; takes a snack o' breakfast in his handkerchief, and don't turn up till sunset. I don't like it, I say."

"Oh, he's all right, Sally," answered the young man, carelessly. "Folks at that age often gets a bit doddery. Don't worrit, my lass; you women are for ever worritin' about something."

And knowing in her heart that this impeachment was a justifiable one, the old man's daughter-in-law took her husband's explanation, though still, as is woman's way, reserving to herself the right to keep her own thoughts on the matter.

"Doddery" or not, old Andrew looked happier and better as the July days passed, his old, wrinkled face growing daily more cheerful and sun-burnt.

One day, when the younger Davey returned to his noonday meal, he found his wife weeping brokenly by the kitchen window.

"Good land, Sally, what's the matter?"

"I've never had such a-talkin' to in all my life," his wife sobbed from the depths of her apron. "Mrs. Heywood has been callin' you and me over the coals summat dreadful. She says all the village is talkin' about the way you and me have taken the farm out of yer feyther's hands and sent him out to work for other folk."

"Sent feyther out to work?" gasped her amazed husband.

Mrs. Davey nodded miserably. "Yer feyther's bin out every day for three weeks helpin' the different



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farmers round to get in their hay, and takin' a wage for it, too. I knew there was summat wrong, but you men are so unbelievin'."

For a moment Ned Davey stared incredulously. Then light seemed to dawn in his bewildered mind, and he said to himself, "It's his dislike to 'avin' his 'ands folded; he said so!"

"Feyther," he said, taking the old man playfully, if roughly, by the shoulders when he returned to his supper in the evening. "Feyther, I've found yer out. You're to do no more hay-makin'; no, nor anything else for other folks' farms. You jest come along wi' me if yer must be at something. I guess I've made a mistake. It ain't time to ship yer oars yet, seemingly."

The old man's eyes rested fondly on his son.

"Yer meant well, Ned, my lad. Yer done what yer thought was right by old age, but yer overdone the superannation business a bit, that's all. Yes, I canna fold me 'ands till the good Lord comes and says: 'Well and faithfully done; yer have finished the work as I gave yer to do.' No, no, lad; it isn't in me."—Laura Kingscote.

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