

The Inglenook.

The Cheerful Widower.

"Well, I wish you all good-day."

"Good day, Robert. And mind thou keeps thi' eyes on t' road as thou walks along or thou will be falling in love with every nice lass thou sees. Eh, my word! But it's well to be thee, a free man once more, and all the women setting their caps at thee again. Man alive, it 'most makes me wish I were a widower mysen."

The man to whom this was addressed, a burly man with a self conscious manner, laughed loudly.

"Ay, lad! I daresay," he said, as he went uneasily out of the smoke-room of a club in Stoneyshaw.

"That's a nasty speech, Hartley," said one of the men who remained. "Whatever made yo' say that, and his wife dead only a few months?"

"Why," said Hartley, "I've no patience with him. He's alwus been a merry fellow, laughing and hearty, like, and he's alwus said 'at it were his wife 'at brightened him up. And nah, sho's dead and he's just as bright as ever. He laughs as much and seems as cheerful as he war before. It isn't decent."

"Ay, well! It is a bit queer. He seemed very fond of her too. But eh! yo' can never tell."

"Did yo' know Robert Hardaker before he were wed?" asked another.

"No, I didn't."

"Well, he were one o' the most miserable chaps yo' could meet with. He never had nowt to say, an' he awlus seemed to want to slink in to a corner. And then, after he met with Lucy, he were as different as day fro' neet. She did brighten him up. There's no doubt about that. Folk said his wife had made a new man of him. But if you said that to her she used to smile and say that all she had done had been to put a match to the fire. And then Robert used to laugh and say, 'Ay, lass, but thou keeps putting bits o' coal on, or else I should soon go out!'"

"Ay, she were a fine character, were Lucy. And that's just what makes me think 'at he might for decency's sake keep a bit quieter, now sho's gone."

"Why, happen he's feeling it all the same. For my part I don't think much of a man who gets onto th' stage when his wife dies, and tries to show how terribly cut up he is. That's the sort, at soon forgets."

Mr. and Mrs. Clintell were sitting together in the study, where the minister's wife took her afternoon cup of tea on a Monday. "I cannot make Robert Hardaker out at all," she was saying. "He does not seem to mind his wife's death one little bit, and yet he seemed so wrapped up in her when she was here. Everybody is talking about it."

"Everybody is a very wise person, as usual," said the minister quietly; "and sees to the heart of things, and knows, as everybody always does."

"Well, but it does seem strange that he can go on just the same, and laugh, and talk, and do his business just as if nothing had happened."

"Yes, very strange," said the minister;

"especially as his heart is nearly breaking all the same."

"Breaking hearts do not go about laughing and joking as he does."

"But that is just exactly what they sometimes do in men like Robert Hardaker, and break all the sooner for it."

"Oh, that's nonsense!" said the wife.

"No, Clara. It is not nonsense. I met Hardaker coming out of the club on Saturday afternoon, and at first I was half inclined to think he was drunk, he was so wild and strange. And then I saw that it was not the look of a drunken man but of a stricken man. When I dropped a word or two, his face turned purple, and he began to talk at random and to laugh in a way that made me feel queer. Besides, my dear, a minister when he is in the pulpit, sees many things in a man's face which other people do not see. And I have seen Hardaker from the pulpit."

"But I thought he didn't come to church since his wife died. That is another thing that people are talking about."

"Yes, and it is another thing about which people are so wise, and—so blind," added the minister with emphasis. "He was there yesterday for the first time. And I saw his face, Clara."

"Was he crying?" asked Mrs. Clintell softly.

"No, my dear, he was not crying."

"Well what, then?"

Mr. Clintell shook his head slowly.

"He was not crying," he said, "I wish he had been."

Robert Hardaker was walking up from Fairfax to Stoneyshaw.

"It's been a fine day, Robert," said one who met him.

"Ay lad! A glorious day," he answered.

"How do, Robert?" said another.

"How do?" he answered cheerily.

"Business brisk to day?"

"Eh, grand!" he replied.

"Making your fortune like?"

"Ay, I shall soon be a millionaire." He laughed, and passed a group of men at the corner of Club House Lane.

"Coming in to have a pipe, Robert?"

"Ay, I think I will," he replied. And when he had had his pipe and left again he became once more the topic of conversation.

"Keeps up wonderfully, does Robert."

"Ay, and they say he's making money faster than any man in Fairfax. He seems to have taken a fit of speculation sin' his wife died, an' nobody can come near him. He seems to know just where to put his money. Everything comes right an' he's piling up the figures as fast as he can count 'em."

When Hardaker reached his house he was met by the servant.

"I've had yo'r tea ready ever so long," she said.

"All right," he answered, and went in and sat down to it and sent her away. He sat looking at the table but eating nothing. Then a smile broke over his face.

"Lucy," he said, "I've made a heap o' money to-day lass." Then his face changed; he stared into vacancy over the untasted meal, and presently began to laugh. He

pushed his chair back and began to walk about the room, thrusting his hands into his pockets, jingling his money and whistling rapidly. He came back to the table, took up the teapot and stroking the silver handle, said to himself, "If I could just see thy little white knuckles round this handle again, Lucy, it would be—it would—be—be—" The teapot dropped with a crash as he cried "Lucy! Lucy!"

When the servant ran into the room she found her master lying on the floor. And when, some time after, Robert Hardaker was sent away, a broken-hearted man, on a long sea voyage, people said he had overtaxed his nervous system with too close application to business.

But Mrs. Clintell said to her husband, "You were right after all, my dear, about Robert Hardaker. He will never be the same man again."

"He never has been," answered the minister.—Christian Leader.

Blessing for the Weary.

But I think the King of that country comes out from among His tireless host, And walks in this world of the weary, as if He loved it the most:

For here in the dusty confusion, with eyes that are dusty and dim, He meets again the laboring men who are looking and longing for Him.

He cancels the curse of Eden, and brings them a blessing instead:

Blessed are they that labor, for Jesus partakes of their bread.

He puts His hand to their burdens, He enters their homes at night:

Who does his best shall have as guest the Master of life and light.

This is a gospel of labor—ring it ye bells of the kirk—

The Lord of love came down from above, to live with the men who work.

This is the rose that He planted here in the thorn-cursed soil—

Heaven is blest with perfect rest, but the blessing of earth is toil.

—Henry van Dyke.

The Artist and the Queen.

In Harper's for May Benjamin-Constant, the great French portrait painter, tells in a charmingly poetic way how he painted his remarkable portrait of Queen Victoria, which appears as a frontispiece to this number of the Magazine:

"When Sir W. Ingram, proprietor editor of the Illustrated London News, ordered this portrait of me, it was understood that the reproduction would be an etching heliogravure or chromo. At first I was quite disconcerted. I inquired if the Queen would be willing to pose, and was told that no definite promise could be made. "If not," said I to myself, "how shall I succeed?" However, when a thing must be done, it is done.

"Recalling my visit to the House of Lords one beautiful day in autumn, when the yellowish rays of the westerling sun shone through the glass windows, I seemed to see one of those interiors of a golden obscurity in which Rembrandt so loved to place his figures; and I beheld as in a vision . . . the sovereign, seated on the throne of England, motionless, her gaze deep in retrospection, almost hieratic—the idol of her subjects. I saw this Queen, in gorgeous robes covered with jewels, and bathed in the rays of the setting sun from head to foot. With this sublime apparition in my mind, I wished to express as it were, an entire reign. Such was the end which I determined to accomplish. Did I succeed? That is not for me to say.