

BOYS AND GIRLS

THE RED, RED WINE:

A TEMPERANCE STORY.

THE REV. J. JACKSON WRAY'S LAST STORY.

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WILLIAM BRIGGS, TORONTO.

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

"There's toss-pot and toss-port, sir. It's hard to say which on 'em tosses farthest. Both on 'em can toss to the devil; and it won't mek' much difference to the tossed 'uns which it was that tossed 'em there. Tak' a turn an' mend is a good game to play at. It's like roonders, where everybody gets their innin's, or owt to do."

Of course this sally was not greeted with applause, at least not until Mr. Norwood Hayes had passed on.

Mr. Hayes smiled, and nodded affably at old Aaron—he was seldom greatly ruffled—as he retired, saying: "True, Aaron, very true. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall."

Aaron Brigham watched his retreating form with somewhat of sadness mingled with admiration in his eyes. Had he spoken, he would have said, I think, something like this: "You're a good man, Norwood Hayes, and a strong one; what a pity you are not something more. Nobody could do so much to lift the curse of Netherborough as you, if you only were so minded. You will be, some day, but how much will it take of pain and sorrow, I wonder, to bring it about."

As the time was drawing near for the special ceremonial of the day, the various groups of gossipers dissolved, and as even Tommy Smart could find no satisfaction in lounging by himself, he, too, adjourned to his familiar resort—the bar of the 'Red Cow.' There were a few coppers in his pocket, and talking had made him thirsty. That was, at any rate, the excuse he made to himself for spending them in beer, though in his miserable 'home' down in Southgate, yonder, there are four small children, including the wee white slave, little Kitty Smart—Old Aaron Brigham's child-lover, on whose brave shoulders the whole burden of the 'mitherless bairns' was laid.

CHAPTER III.

Along the main street of Netherborough went Mr. Norwood Hayes, walking erect as was his wont, looking, as folks say, every inch a man. He had a nod and a smile for everybody who seemed to expect it, and once, on his way, he put his hand within the arm of a young man whom he overtook, and walked with him, winning a new and stronger hold on his affection and regard.

Mr. Norwood Hayes was very popular with the young men of Netherborough, and rightly so, for he was deeply interested in them, and did his best, at least he thought so, for their welfare. At length he reached his office, a quite imposing edifice, measured on the Netherborough scale, of brick and stone. On the wire window-blinds of the office, the following legend in gilded capitals was inscribed: "Norwood Hayes, Corn Merchant and Miller, Depot for Agricultural Implements of every description. Agent for the Northern Fire and Life Insurance Co."

Mr. Norwood Hayes did not 'live at the business,' though he lived by it, and made a good thing of it beyond the cost of doing so. He had quite a delightful place of his own, a little out of town, on the Scranton Road. It was hardly a mansion, perhaps, but was worthy of a better name than 'villa,' that hackneyed French importation that suggests stucco and semi-detachments. Mrs. Hayes, their son Cuthbert, their daughter Alice, and himself, constituted the entire household at Throstle's Nest, with the exception of two maids, a man-servant, and a boy, who probably made as much work as they performed, and so kept the balance even.

The 'first sod' of the new railway was to be cut at four o'clock precisely, and no less important an individual than George Huddle-

stone, Esq., the great railway king, was to perform the ceremony. That great financier and adventurous speculator was rightly regarded as the best friend that Netherborough had ever known. He had purchased a large landed estate in the immediate neighborhood, and had already given clear proof of his belief that if property has its rights it has its duties and its obligations too.

Now this was an astounding innovation. The good folks of Netherborough had not been at all accustomed to that kind of thing.

The Dukes of Debenham, from whom the estate had passed, were never seen at all, and seldom heard of, except on rent days, when the tenants were actually invited to dine with—the steward!

With Mr. Huddleston, matters were managed in a very different way. As soon as his great purchase was completed, he set to work to improve the condition, and to advance the interests, of that little market town close by. What wonder that Netherborough swore by George Huddleston? What wonder that the Debenhams and all their ducal traditions vanished into thin air, which precisely represented their genuine value. It was the new lord of the manor that lighted Netherborough's sombre streets with gas, and he it was who had brought the crowning gift—the railway! Is it to be wondered at that the railway king was the man whom the townsfolk delighted to honor? The fact is that his majesty is held in true regard and grateful remembrance at Netherborough to this day.

Of course on that great day of the turning of the first sod, the townspeople were resolved that the place should be dressed in its very best, and indeed it was well-nigh 'dressed to death,' that is to say, it was almost smothered in flags and bunting.

There was a coach running every day between York and Hull, which always stopped at the 'Netherborough Arms' for change of horses. The daily advent of the 'Highlier' gave quite a throb of life to the sleepy little town. The sound of the guard's horn, as he blew a ringing blast, not music but strong, at the 'town-end,' called out the children to shout, the dogs to bark, and the folk to gaze in curious wonder at the strangers who came and went. This was Netherborough's daily dram of excitement, and was so very mild a stimulus that the veriest teetotaler could not have found the heart to dash it from their lips.

Now the 'Highlier' used once upon a time to put up at the 'Grapes,' a rival hotel a few doors distant from the 'Netherborough Arms.' When, in consequence of some disagreement, the coach transferred its patronage to the last named inn, the 'Grapes' took huge offence, and never lost an opportunity of belittling the 'Highlier,' and predicting the time when its pride would have a fall.

Now its time had come. The 'Grapes' displayed a large and roughly effective picture, 'The Death of the "Highlier."' A railway train was crashing at full speed into the obnoxious coach, which was sadly smashed by the force of the collision. The horses were drawn in every inconceivable and impossible position of frantic alarm. The coachman was hurled into mid-air, and the guard was laid on his back, blowing a lugubrious blast through his horn, from which a thin white cloud was issuing with 'his legend on it, 'The "Highlier" is a Low-lier.' The 'Netherborough Arms' had not grace enough to forbear an ill-natured retort—there are few people who have, more's the pity—and so it made answer in its wrath, 'Not the "Highlier," but Peter Ransdall!' Now Peter Ransdall was mine host of the 'Grapes.'

At the hour of three, or soon afterwards, an open carriage with four horses came rolling through the main street of the town, driv-

en in dashing style by a coachman in brilliant livery. Two footmen, clad, as the old song says, in garments gorgeous to behold, stood behind, keeping guard over the occupants of the carriage. These were Mr. and Mrs. George Huddleston, together with Miss Huddleston and the young Lord Seaton, son-and-heir of the Right Honorable the Earl of Thaxendale, who, it was said, was a suitor for the young lady's hand and heart. People said—but then that is poor authority—that the impecunious young patrician would have been content to get on without either, if he could have their full value in railway shares. Judging from appearances, his lordship, on the other hand, was not likely to be much of a bargain at any price.

The railway king was a somewhat short, stout personage, whose general appearance made it tolerably evident that he had 'sprung from the ranks.' Shrewdness and energy were depicted in every line of his face, and so was geniality and good nature. Those who were most intimate with him spoke warmly of him. Most people do so speak of those from whom they hope to receive great things and precious in those days, and his majesty held the bestowing of them in his own right hand of power.

While the great man and his party were partaking of some light refreshments at the 'Netherborough Arms,' quite a crowd had gathered in front of the inn, standing with straining eye and ear to catch sight or sound of the illustrious guest within. And what wonder? For at that time George Huddleston was supposed to have in his possession the philosopher's stone that turned all he touched into gold, red gold!

At last the eventful hour arrived, the carriage was at the door. The great man's appearance was greeted with a deafening burst of cheers. Then the eager crowd followed the carriage at a run, as it led the way to the green fields and the chosen spot where the first sod was to be turned in state of the new railway, which was to link Netherborough with the city of York, and with the open markets of the great world outside.

I have no space to narrate in detail the historic events that followed. Are they not written in the columns of the 'York Herald' of that period? The Rev. Septimus Bartley, vicar of Netherborough, rotund, rubicund, and genial, standing with a select few within an enclosure of ropes and stakes, presented Mr. Huddleston with an address, and a few added words of welcome. The contractor for the line presented the hero of the hour with a 'silver spade.' A little polished wheelbarrow, constructed for the purpose, was placed, with its dainty wheel, upon a plank, the 'sod was cut in a workman-like manner,' so the reporters wrote, and was placed in the barrow for removal. His Majesty wheeled it along the plank, and overturned it at the appointed place with a smile and a nod that roused afresh the crowd to cheer. No navy could have done it better, most likely not so well.

Mounting a platform, improvised for the purpose, Mr. Huddleston delivered a short and stirring speech. He congratulated the townsfolk on 'this auspicious turn of the tide of fortune, and predicted a rapid rise in the trade of the town and district. He referred to the fact that he had become a near neighbor as the purchaser of the Debenham estates, and gave an earnest and truthful promise to do his best to promote the interests of the good town of Netherborough.' Mr. Norwood Hayes proposed a vote of thanks to their honored visitor in his usual graceful and winsome style, and using, as he always did, words apt and fit and few. This was seconded by Dr. Marcus Medway, whose local popularity was based on his professional faith in port wine, which he freely prescribed and imbibed. In-