

On Hospital Road.

(Helen Shipton in 'Dawn of Day'.)

Along a newly-made, hardly-finished road on the outskirts of a large manufacturing town, a party of young men was making its somewhat riotous way.

The lads—there were about a dozen of them, and none of them much under nineteen or over twenty-one—had just left a football match; and some of them were disputing noisily about the game they had just witnessed, while others, even more noisily, were trying to settle what was to be done with the remainder of the evening.

There were no houses as yet on either side of the road; though the town lay densely packed before them, and at the end of the road was a large ugly building of raw red brick, and beyond it a few cottages which had been quite in the country not long ago.

It was an unfrequented road—perhaps none of the lads knew that it was called Hospital Road, or had passed through it more than once or twice before, though they were now trying it as a short cut from the football ground—and any person or vehicle passing that way was sufficiently rare to be noticed.

Consequently the lads ceased their talk to stare as a cab came slowly down the road towards them, then drew up just as it came alongside, the driver getting down from his box, flinging open the door, and entering upon a very hot and one-sided argument with his fare.

Apparently the young men felt some curiosity as to 'what was up,' and saw no reason why they should not gratify it, for they came to a stop, and those who were nearest peered into the cab, and saw its occupant, a woman very much muffled up, cowering in a corner of the seat.

The cabman was insisting upon her getting out at once, and she was refusing to do so or remonstrating with him, in a voice so low that the bystanders could not hear what she said.

The man's loud bullying tone awakened some gentle instincts in the heart of one of the young fellows.

'Look here,' he struck in, 'what's it all about? Why can't you take her wherever it is she wants to go?'

'Because I ain't such a fool,' snapped the man, who had talked himself into a towering passion. 'Come now, out you get, or I'll know the reason why.'

'I would thankfully get out,' said the woman—and her voice sounded as though she was not far from tears, though her face could not be seen under her thick veil—'thankfully, if I thought I could walk as far as the end of the road. But I do assure you, it's not at all as you think; and if it was, it couldn't do you any more harm to take me on that much further.'

'I'm not going to do it, anyway,' stormed the cabman, 'and you ought to take shame to yourself, ruining a poor man's trade and risking other folks' lives; and if I saw a policeman I'd give you in charge; I can tell you. Now, then! get out!'

'I wish there was a policeman anywhere about,' said the woman, faintly. 'If you'll only take me on as far as the cottage, they'll tell you there—'

'I daresay! a pack of lies! Much you'd care when you'd got where you wanted. Get out, or I'll make you.'

'But what's amiss? What's all the row about?' again put in the young fellow who had spoken before.

'Small-pox! That's what's amiss,' the cabman answered. 'I had my doubts when I was fool enough to let her get in, and as

soon as I see the Small-pox Hospital at the end of this here road, I knew what she was after.'

The young men, who had been gathering closer round the door of the cab, scattered at the word of small-pox as if it had been a bombshell, and the woman's faint protest that she didn't want to go to the Hospital, but to one of the cottages just beyond, was not heard by anyone.

'It's a bad business,' said the young man who seemed to feel a call to be the woman's champion. 'But if it's true what she says, it wouldn't make things any worse for you to take her that much further on. It isn't a quarter of a mile, and you can't leave her by the roadside.'

'I don't care how far nor how near it is,' said the other doggedly. 'She's not going to stay another moment in this here cab, and

cabman slammed the door, mounted his box, and drove off as fast as he could.

'Jack Temple, don't be a fool!' said one of the lads in an energetic whisper.

For the young fellow who had acted as spokesman now shook off the hand that his companion had laid upon his arm, and stepped back across the road, near enough to speak to the woman, and to hear her faint voice in reply.

'Where is it that you want to go, honor bright?' he asked.

'To Southview Cottage, the next but one to the Hospital yonder. But I don't know how I'm to get there, for I've been ill, and my head goes round when I try to walk by myself.'

Jack Temple stood looking at her, his fresh young cheeks a little paler than usual and many thoughts whirling through his head.



'WHERE IS IT YOU WANT TO GO?'

she wouldn't have the cheek to try it if she didn't think I durstn't touch her. But I'll have her out, if I turn the cab over!'

He shook the door with a furious hand; and then, as his anger carried him beyond fear, set his foot upon the step as though he meant to plunge in and drag his fare out by force.

Perhaps the woman thought it better not to wait for that, for she rose up stiffly and weakly, and crept out of the cab, supporting herself by the door.

The ralling at the roadside was close at hand, and she reached it and came to a stop there, leaning against it as though she had no strength to go further; while the young men eyed her from the other side of the road, to which they had retreated; and the

Her voice sounded like that of a respectable woman, but through her thick veil he could see that her face was blotched and discolored, with what might be the marks of the dreaded illness for aught he knew.

'I believe she has got small-pox,' he said to himself. 'But if she has, all the more she oughtn't to stand out here in the cold, or maybe fall down and lie on the wet ground an hour or two till somebody chances to come by.'

He was a brave young fellow enough, but his very flesh crept at the thought of this particular danger. A runaway horse, or a house on fire, or a river in flood—how much better either of these would have been to deal with!

He stood there motionless, for one of those