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a bairn, and she seems to feel that she has nothing left that's worth living for. You'll mind hoo we were aye joking about the busyness that wouldn't give him time to come to the dale to see his father and mother, and hoo we settled to give him a grand surprise by going to London oorselves and dropping in on him just as if we'd called for a cup o' tea. We shouldn't have done it. He's done famous, has Robert, but he's one of the men who can't stand corn. He's climbed so high that he's passed out of sight of his starting point. Man, it was terrible—a heartbreak—we saw it at the very first. We had a gey hard job to get into the hoose at all, for there was a silly man body who wanted to know if we'd brought cards with us, an' then he wanted oor names, and it was bodder-some to drive it until him that in t'dale a friend may always count on an open door, and that all he'd got to do was to tell his maister that a man and woman wanted a word with him."

"But you got your word at last?"  
"Aye. We got it. Robert bundled us through until a bonny back parlor. He was frightened to death that any of the servant folks should know that the woman with the plain speech and old-fashioned clothes, and the man who was a sheep-farmer, and looked like one, were just his oan father and mother. I'll spare ye the rest. There weren't any words. We just came home. And since then Margaret's been going doon the thq

I'm pretty certain that I've never been asked to prescribe for one that was suffering from hardness as well. Anyhow, you may count on me doing my best. It's no ordinary treatment that'll set her on her feet, and no physic; but while there's life there's hope, and I'll biu ye good-day." And with that he was up in the gig and driving out of the croft.

His next visit to Grayrigg was a long one, and, according to the things that Margaret has related, his talk had little to do with sickness or its treatment. Still it was amazingly effective, for when Jacob came down from the fells he found his wife sitting up in her bed, new color in her cheeks, her eyes once more ashine. She was wonderfully ready to talk; she who had been so content to lie still day after day with rarely a word upon her lips; and while Jacob marvelled at the change she began her revelation.

"I'se a wicked woman"—of all the women in the dale we had none more gentle, not one more motherly—"and I've only just found it out. Like the man in the Book, I've turned my face to the wall and been ready to give up my life, bit noo I'm wanting to live—if oanly to put the crooked things straight."

Jacob laid his hand caressingly on his wife's shoulder. "Eh, my lass," he muttered brokenly. "This just caps aw—God's mighty good—an' this'll be a bit



"He was frightened to death that any of the servant folk should know that the woman with the old-fashioned clothes and the man who was a sheep-farmer were just his own father and mother."

hill. She's scorned by her oan bairn, an' she isn't caring about living."

"And yersel', Jacob?"  
This was one of the signs that the doctor was touched. He nearly always dropped into the dialect. Jacob Steele stared steadily away to the Pike o' Blisco, glowing in the sunlight like an up-reared spear of gold; the doctor knew that his heart also carried a jagged wound, and that speech was hurting.

"I'm a proud man myself," he answered, at length; "and I'm thinking mine's a better mak' o' pride than the sort my lad has found among his money bags and his honors. Robert Steele has chosen his own track—and he may tread it. If the old home and the old folks and the old ways are not good enough, he may just make shift with the new one. I've put him out of my life. That night—after we got back fra London—when I barred the door—I barred it agains' him for ever."

"Does Margaret ken that?"  
"We've never had any secrets."  
"What does she say?"  
"She agrees with the justice of it. We both mean to be hard. There's nothing I'll ever wipe out the slight. And, doctor, there's surely a chance for her—you'll not let her slip."

"It's what ye might call a complicated case, Jacob." David's voice could be terribly dry when he chose to make it so. "I don't know that I've ever had one like it. There have been times when I've suspected the breaking of a heart, but

o' David Branthet's work."

"He's spent a gey long time with me to-day"—Margaret was full of her tale—"He's been telling me of a woman body somewhere—he wouldn't name no names, though I expect she's one of his patients. She's got a son who's one o' t' biggest wastrels on earth; he's neglected her till she's known the want o' bread, and abused her as though she'd been his worst enemy, and there's hardly one o' t' Commandments he hasn't broken; and yet, when she's had a penny to spare she's spent it in buying something for herself and she's passed it off as a present fra her son, so that the folks who kened him when he was a bit laddie shouldn't think ill of him."

"My word, lass, but that was fine."  
"Ay, wasn't it? An', Jacob, before he went the doctor asked me aboot—about our laddie. An' it wasn't so much the words he used as the queer way he handled them that set me thinking, and I've got it on my mind that the folks in the dale may be blaming Robert for the thing that's such a heartbreak to you and me. And I canna stand it. What if he is ashamed of his mother's old-fashioned ways? I can bide it. What I can't bide is that anybody should treat his name with disrespect, or point the finger of scorn at him."

"It's oanly his wages, the thing he's earned. Didn't we agree that as a matter o' justice—"  
"Ay," Margaret broke in, "we spoke in haste and pride. An' I'm not so sure

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