

Th' Barrel Organ eBook

Th' Barrel Organ by Edwin Waugh

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EDWIN WAUGH

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I came out at Haslingden town-end with my old acquaintance, "Rondle o'th Nab," better known by the name of "Sceawter," a moor-end farmer and cattle dealer. He was telling me a story about a cat that squinted, and grew very fat because—to use his own words—it "caught two mice at one go." When he had finished the tale, he stopped suddenly in the middle of the road, and looking round at the hills, he said, "Nea then. I'se be like to lev yo here. I mun turn off to 'Dick o' Rough-cap's' up Musbury Road. I want to bargain about yon heifer. He's a very fair chap, is Dick,—for a cow-jobber. But yo met as weel go up wi' me, an' then go forrud to our house. We'n some singers comin' to neet."

"Nay," said I, "I think I'll tak up through Horncliffe, an' by th' moor-gate, to't 'Top o'th Hoof.'"

"Well, then," replied he, "yo mun strike off at th' lift hond, about a mile fur on; an' then up th' hill side, an' through th' delph. Fro theer yo mun get upo' th' owd road as weel as yo con; an' when yo'n gotten it, keep it. So good day, an' tak care o' yorsel'. Barfoot folk should never walk upo' prickles." He then turned, and walked off. Before he had gone twenty yards he shouted back, "Hey! I say! Dunnot forget th' cat."

It was a fine autumn day; clear and cool. Dead leaves were whirling about the road-side. I toiled slowly up the hill, to the famous Horncliffe Quarries, where the sounds of picks, chisels, and gavelocks, used by the workmen, rose strangely clear amidst the surrounding stillness. From the quarries I got up by an old pack horse road, to a commanding elevation at the top of the moors. Here I sat down on a rude block of mossy stone, upon a bleak point of the hills, overlooking one of the most picturesque parts of the Irwell valley. The country around me was part of the wild tract still known by its ancient name of the Forest of Rossendale. Lodges of water and beautiful reaches of the winding river gleamed in the evening sun, among green holms and patches of woodland, far down the vale; and mills, mansions, farmsteads, churches, and busy hamlets succeeded each other as far as the eye could see. The moorland tops and slopes were all purpled with fading heather, save here and there where a well-defined tract of green showed that cultivation had worked up a little plot of the wilderness into pasture land. About eight miles south, a gray cloud hung over the town of Bury, and nearer, a flying trail of white steam marked the rush of a railway train along the valley. From a lofty perch of the hills, on the north-west, the sounds of Haslingden church bells came sweetly upon the ear, swayed to and fro by the unsettled wind, now soft and low,

borne away by the breeze, now full and clear, sweeping by me in a great gush of melody, and dying out upon the moorland wilds behind.



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Up from the valley came drowsy sounds that tell the wane of day, and please the ear of evening as she draws her curtains over the world. A woman's voice floated up from the pastures of an old farm-house, below where I sat, calling the cattle home. The barking of dogs sounded clear in different parts of the vale, and about scattered hamlets, on the hill sides. I could hear the far-off prattle of a company of girls, mingled with the lazy joltings of a cart, the occasional crack of a whip, and the surly call of a driver to his horses, upon the high road, half a mile below me. From a wooded slope, on the opposite side of the valley, the crack of a gun came, waking the echoes for a minute; and then all seemed to sink into a deeper stillness than before, and the dreamy surge of sound broke softer and softer upon the shores of evening, as daylight sobered down. High above the green valley, on both sides, the moorlands stretched away in billowy wildernesses—dark, bleak, and almost soundless, save where the wind harped his wild anthem upon the heathery waste, and where roaring streams filled the lonely cloughs with drowsy uproar. It was a striking scene, and it was an impressive hour. The bold, round, flat-topped height of Musbury Tor stood gloomily proud, on the opposite side, girdled off from the rest of the hills by a green vale. The lofty outlines of Aviside and Holcombe were glowing with the gorgeous hues of a cloudless October sunset. Along those wild ridges the soldiers of ancient Rome marched from Manchester to Preston, when boars and wolves ranged the woods and thickets of the Irwell valley. The stream is now lined all the way with busy populations, and evidences of great wealth and enterprise. But the spot from which I looked down upon it was still naturally wild. The hand of man had left no mark there, except the grass-grown pack-horse road. There was no sound nor sign of life immediately around me.

The wind was cold, and daylight was dying down. It was getting too near dark to go by the moor tops, so I made off towards a cottage in the next clough, where an old quarryman lived, called "Jone o'Twilter's." The pack-horse road led by the place. Once there, I knew that I could spend a pleasant hour with the old folk, and, after that, be directed by a short cut down to the great highway in the valley, from whence an hour's walk would bring me near home. I found the place easily, for I had been there in summer. It was a substantial stone-built cottage, or little farm-house, with mullioned windows. A stone-seated porch, white-washed inside, shaded the entrance; and there was a little barn and a shippon, or cow-house attached. By the by, that word "shippon," must have been originally "sheep-pen." The house nestled deep in the clough, upon a shelf of green land, near the moorland stream. On a rude ornamental stone, above the threshold of the porch, the date of the building was quaintly carved, "1696," with the initials, "J.



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S.," and then, a little lower down, and partly between these, the letter "P.," as if intended for "John and Sarah Pilkington." On the lower slope of the hill, immediately in front of the house there was a kind of kitchen garden, well stocked, and in very fair order. Above the garden, the wild moorland rose steeply up, marked with wandering sheep tracts. From the back of the house, a little flower garden sloped away to the edge of a rocky back. The moorland stream rushed wildly along its narrow channel, a few yards below; and, viewed from the garden wall, at the edge of the bank, it was a weird bit of stream scenery. The water rushed and roared here; there it played a thousand pranks; and there, again, it was full of graceful eddies; gliding away at last over the smooth lip of a worn rock, a few yards lower down. A kind of green gloom pervaded the watery chasm, caused by the thick shade of trees overspreading from the opposite bank. It was a spot that a painter might have chosen for "The Kelpie's Home."

The cottage door was open; and I guessed by the silence inside that old "Jone" had not reached home. His wife, Nanny, was a hale and cheerful woman, with a fastidious love of cleanliness, and order, and quietness, too, for she was more than seventy years of age. I found her knitting, and slowly swaying her portly form to and fro in a shiny old-fashioned chair, by the fireside. The carved oak clock-case in the corner was as bright as a mirror; and the solemn, authoritative ticking of the ancient time-marker was the loudest sound in the house. But the softened roar of the stream outside filled all the place, steeping the senses in a drowsy spell. At the end of a long table under the front window, sat Nanny's granddaughter, a rosy, round-faced lass, about twelve years old. She was turning over the pictures in a well-thumbed copy of "Culpepper's Herbal." She smiled, and shut the book, but seemed unable to speak; as if the popped enchantment that wrapt the spot had subdued her young spirit to a silence which she could not break. I do not wonder that old superstitions linger in such nooks as that. Life there is like bathing in dreams. But I saw that they had heard me coming; and when I stopt in the doorway, the old woman broke the charm by saying, "Nay sure! What; han yo gotten thus far? Come in, pray yo."

"Well, Nanny," said I; "where's th' owd chap?"

"Eh," replied the old woman; "it's noan time for him yet. But I see," continued she, looking up at the clock, "it's gettin' further on than I thought. He'll be here in abeawt three-quarters of an hour—that is, if he doesn't co', an' I hope he'll not, to neet. I'll put th' kettle on. Jenny, my lass, bring him a tot o' ale."

I sat down by the side of a small round table, with a thick plane-tree top, scoured as white as a clean shirt; and Jenny brought me an old-fashioned blue-and-white mug, full of homebrewed.

"Toast a bit o' hard brade," said Nanny, "an' put it into't."

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I did so.

The old woman put the kettle on, and scaled the fire; and then, settling herself in her chair again, she began to re-arrange her knitting-needles. Seeing that I liked my sops, she said, "Reitch some moor cake-brade. Jenny'll toast it for yo."

I thanked her, and reached down another piece; which Jenny held to the fire on a fork. And then we were silent for a minute or so.

"I'll tell yo what," said Nanny, "some folk's o'th luck i'th world."

"What's up now, Nanny?" replied I.

"They say'n that Owd Bill, at Fo' Edge, has had a dowter wed, an' a cow cauve't, an a mare foal't o' i' one day. Dun yo co' that nought?"

Before I could reply, the sound of approaching footsteps came upon our ears. Then, they stopt, a few yards off; and a clear voice trolled out a snatch of country song:—

"Owd shoon an' stockins,
An' slippers at's made o' red leather!
Come, Betty, wi' me,
Let's shap to agree,
An' hutch of a cowd neet together.

"Mash-tubs and barrels!
A mon connot olez be sober;
A mon connot sing
To a bonnier thing
Nor a pitcher o' stingin' October."

"Jenny, my lass," said the old woman, "see who it is. It's oather 'Skedlock' or 'Nathan o' Dangler's."

Jenny peeped through the window, an' said, "It's Skedlock. He's lookin' at th' turmits i'th garden. Little Joseph's wi' him. They're comin' in. Joseph's new clogs on."

Skedlock came shouldering slowly forward into the cottage,—a tall, strong, bright-eyed man, of fifty. His long, massive features were embrowned by habitual exposure to the weather, and he wore the mud-stained fustian dress of a quarryman. He was followed by a healthy lad, about twelve years of age,—a kind of pocket-copy of himself. They were as like one another as a new shilling and an old crown-piece. The lad's dress was of the same kind as his father's, and he seemed to have studiously acquired the same cart-horse gait, as if his limbs were as big and as stark as his father's.



“Well, Skedlock,” said Nanny, “thae’s gotten Joseph witho, I see. Does he go to schoo yet?”

“Nay; he reckons to worch i’th delph wi’ me, neaw.”

“Nay, sure. Does he get ony wage?”

“Nawe,” replied Skedlock; “he’s drawn his wage wi’ his teeth, so fur. But he’s larnin’, yo’ known—he’s larnin’. Where’s yo’r Jone? I want to see him abeawt some plants.”

“Well,” said Nanny, “sit tho down a minute. Hasto no news? Thae’rt seldom short of a crack o’ some mak.”

“Nay,” said Skedlock, scratching his rusty pate, “aw don’t know ’at aw’ve aught fresh.” But when he had looked thoughtfully into the fire for a minute or so, his brown face lighted up with a smile, and drawing a chair up, he said, “Howd, Nanny; han yo yerd what a do they had at th’ owd chapel, yesterday?”

“Nawe.”

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“Eh, dear!... Well, yo known, they’n had a deal o’ bother about music up at that chapel, this year or two back. Yo’n bin a singer yo’rsel, Nanny, i’ yo’r young days—never a better.”

“Eh, Skedlock,” said Nanny; “aw us’t to think I could ha’ done a bit, forty year sin—an’ I could, too—though I say it mysel. I remember gooin’ to a oratory once, at Bury. Deborah Travis wur theer, fro Shay. Eh! when aw yerd her sing ‘Let the bright seraphim,’ aw gav in. Isherwood wur theer; an’ her at’s Mrs Wood neaw; an’ two or three fro Yawshur road on. It wur th’ grand’st sing ‘at ever I wur at i’ my life.... Eh, I’s never forget th’ practice-neets ‘at we use’t to have at owd Israel Grindrod’s! Johnny Brello wur one on ‘em. He’s bin deead a good while.... That’s wheer I let of our Sam. He sang bass at that time.... Poor Johnny! He’s bin deead aboon five-an-forty year, neaw.”

“Well, but, Nanny,” said Skedlock, laying his hand on the old woman’s shoulder, “yo known what a hard job it is to keep th’ bant i’th nick wi’ a rook o’ musicianers. They cap’n the world for bein’ diversome, an’ jealous, an’ bad to plez. Well, as I wur sayin’—they’n had a deead o’ trouble about music this year or two back, up at th’ owd chapel. Th’ singers fell out wi’ th’ players. They mostly dun do. An’ th’ players did everything they could to plague th’ singers. They’re so like. But yo’ may have a like aim, Nanny, what mak’ o’ harmony they’d get out o’ sich wark as that. An’ then, when Joss o’ Piper’s geet his wage raise’t—five shillin’ a year—Dick o’ Liddy’s said he’d ha’ moor too, or else he’d sing no moor at that shop. He’re noan beawn to be snape’t wi’ a tootlin’ whipper-snapper like Joss,—a bit of a bow-legged whelp, twenty year yunger nor his-sel. Then there wur a crack coom i’ Billy Tootle bassoon; an’ Billy stuck to’t that some o’th lot had done it for spite. An’ there were sich fratchin an’ cabals among ‘em as never wur known. An’ they natter’t, and brawl’t, an’ back-bote; and played one another o’ maks o’ ill-contrive’t tricks. Well, yo’ may guess, Nanny—

“One Sunday mornin’, just afore th’ sarvice began, some o’ th’ singers slipt a hawp’oth o’ grey peighs an’ two young rattons into old Thwittler double-bass; an’ as soon as he began a-playin’, th’ little things squeak’t an’ scutter’t about terribly i’ th’ inside, till thrut o’ out o’ tune. Th’ singers couldn’t get forrud for laughin’. One on ‘em whisper’t to Thwittler, an’ axed him if his fiddle had gotten th’ bally-warche. But Thwittler never spoke a word. His senses wur leavin’ him very fast. At last, he geet so freeten’t, that he chuck’t th’ fiddle down, an’ darted out o’th chapel, beawt hat; an’ off he ran whoam, in a cowl sweet, wi’ his yure stickin’ up like a cushion-full o’ stockin’-needles. An’ he bowted straight through th’ heawse, an’ reel up-stairs to bed, wi’ his clooas on, beawt sayin’ a word to chick or chight. His wife watched him run through th’ heawse; but



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he darted forrud, an' took no notice o' nobody. 'What's up now,' thought Betty; an' hoo ran after him. When hoo geet up-stairs th' owd lad had retten croppen into bed; an' he wur ill'd up, e'er th' yed. So Betty turned th' quilt deawn, an' hoo said. 'Whatever's to do witho, James?' 'Howd te noise!' said Thwittler, pooin' th' clooas o'er his yed again, 'howd te noise! I'll play no moor at yon shop!' an' th' bed fair wackert again; he 're i' sich a fluster. 'Mun I make tho a saup o' gruel?' said Betty. 'Gruel be ——!' said Thwittler, poppin' his yed out o' th' blankets. 'Didto ever yer ov onybody layin' the devil wi' meighl-porritch?' An' then he poo'd th' blanket o'er his yed again. 'Where's thi fiddle?' said Betty. But, as soon as Thwittler yerd th' fiddle name't, he gav a sort of wild skrike, an' crope lower down into bed."

"Well, well," said the old woman, laughing, and laying her knitting down, "aw never yerd sich a tale i' my life."

"Stop, Nanny," said Skedlock, "yo'st yer it out, now."

"Well, yo seen, this mak o' wark went on fro week to week, till everybody geet weary on it; an' at last, th' chapel-wardens summon't a meetin' to see if they couldn't raise a bit o' daycent music, for Sundays, beawt o' this trouble. An' they talked back an' forrud about it a good while. Tum o'th Dingle recommended 'em to have a Jew's harp, an' some triangles. But Bobby Nooker said, 'That's no church music! Did onybody ever yer "Th' Owd Hundred," played upov a triangle?' Well, at last they agreed that th' best way would be to have some sort of a barrel-organ—one o' thoose that they winden up at th' side, an' then they play'n o' theirs, beawt ony fingerin' or blowin'. So they ordert one made, wi' some favour-ite tunes in—'Burton,' and 'Liddy,' an' 'French,' an' 'Owd York,' an' sich like. Well, it seems that Robin o' Sceawter's, th' carrier—his feyther went by th' name o' 'Cowl an' Hungry;' he're a quarryman by trade; a long, hard, brown-looking felley, wi' e'en like gig-lamps, an' yure as strung as a horse's mane. He looked as if he'd bin made out o' owd dur-latches, an' reawsty nails. Robin, th' carrier, is his owdest lad; an' he fawurs a chap at's bin brought up o' yirth-bobs an' scaplins. Well, it seems that Robin brought this box-organ up fro th' town in his cart o'th Friday neet; an' as luck would have it, he had to bring a new weshin'-machine at th' same time, for owd Isaac Buckley, at th' Hollins Farm. When he geet th' organ in his cart, they towd him to be careful an' keep it th' reet side up; and he wur to mind an' not shake it mich, for it wur a thing that wur yezzy thrut eawt o' flutters. Well, I think Robin mun ha' bin fuddle't or summat that neet. But I dunnot know; for he's sich a bowster-yed, mon, that aw'll be sunken if aw think he knows th' difference between a weshin'-machine an' a church organ, when he's at th' sharpest. But let that leet as it will. What dun yo think but th' blunderin' foo,—at after o' that had bin said to him,—went and 'liver't th' weshin'-machine at th' church, an' th' organ at th' Hollins Farm."



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“Well, well,” said Nanny, “that wur a bonny come off, shuz heaw. But how wenten they on at after?”

“Well, I’ll tell yo, Nanny,” said Skedlock. “Th’ owd clerk wur noan in when Robin geet to th’ dur wi’ his cart that neet, so his wife coom with a leet in her hond, an’ said, ‘Whatever hasto gotten for us this time, Robert?’ ‘Why,’ said Robin, ‘it’s some mak of a organ. Where win yo ha’t put, Betty?’ ‘Eh, I’m fain thae’s brought it,’ said Betty. ‘It’s for th’ chapel; an’ it’ll be wanted for Sunday. Sitho, set it deawn i’ this front reawm here; an’ mind what thae’rt doin’ with it.’ So Robin, an’ Barfoot Sam, an’ Little Wamble, ‘at looks after th’ horses at ‘Th’ Rompin’ Kitlin,’ geet it eawt o’th cart. When they geet how’d ont, Robin said, ‘Neaw lads; afore yo starten: Mind what yo’r doin; an’ be as ginger as yo con. That’s a thing ‘at’s soon thrut eawt o’ gear—it’s a organ.’ So they hove, an’ poo’d, an’ grunted, an’ thrutch’t, till they geet it set down i’th parlour; an’ they pretended to be quite knocked up wi’ th’ job. ‘Betty,’ said Robin, wipin’ his face wi’ his sleeve, ‘it’s bin dry weather latly.’ So th’ owd lass took th’ hint, an’ fetched ‘em a quart o’ ale. While they stood i’th middle o’th floor suppin’ their ale, Betty took th’ candle an’ went a-lookin’ at this organ; and hoo couldn’t tell whatever to make on it.... Did’n yo ever see a weshin’-machine, Nanny?”

“Never i’ my life,” said Nanny. “Nor aw dunnot want. Gi me a greight mug, an’ some breawn swoap, an’ plenty o’ soft wayter; an’ yo may tak yo’r machines for me.”

“Well,” continued Skedlock, “it’s moor liker a grindlestone nor a organ. But, as I were tellin yo:—

“Betty stare’t at this thing, an’ hoo walked round it an’ scrat her yed mony a time, afore hoo ventur’t to speak. At last hoo said, ‘Aw’ll tell tho what, Robert; it’s a quare-shaped ‘un. It favvors a yung mangle! Doesto think it’ll be reet?’ ‘Reet?’ said Robin, swipin’ his ale off? ‘oh, aye; it’s reet enough. It’s one of a new pattern, at’s just com’d up. It’s o’ reet, Betty. Yo may see that bith hondle.’ ‘Well,’ said Betty, ‘if it’s reet, it’s reet. But it’s noan sich a nice-lookin’ thin—for a church—that isn’t!’ Th’ little lass wur i’th parlour at th’ same time; an’ hoo said, ‘Yes. See yo, mother. I’m sure it’s right. You must turn this here handle; and then it’ll play. I seed a man playin’ one yesterday; an’ he had a monkey with him, dressed like a soldier.’ ‘Keep thy little rootin’ fingers off that organ,’ said Betty. ‘Theaw knows nought about music. That organ musn’t be touched till thi father comes whoam,—mind that, neaw.... But, sartainly,’ said Betty, takin th’ candle up again, ‘I cannot help lookin’ at this thing. It’s sich a quare un. It looks like summat belongin’—maut-grindin’, or summat o’ that.’ ‘Well,’ said Robin, ‘it has a bit o’ that abeawt it, sartainly.... But yo’n find it’s o’ reet. They’re awterin’ o’ their organs to this pattern, neaw. I believe



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they're for sellin th' organ at Manchester owd church,—so as they can ha' one like this.' 'Thou never says!' said Betty. 'Yigh,' said Robin, 'it's true, what I'm telling yo. But aw mun be off, Betty. Aw 've to go to th' Hollins to-neet, yet.' 'Why, arto takin' thame summat?' 'Aye; some mak of a new fangle't machine, for weshin' shirts an' things.' 'Nay, sure!' said Betty. 'A'll tell tho what, Robert; they 're goin' on at a great rate up at tat shop." 'Aye, aye,' said Robin. 'Mon, there's no end to some folk's pride,—till they come'n to th' floor; an' then there isn't, sometimes.' 'There isn't, Robert; there isn't. An' I'll tell tho what; those lasses o' theirs,—they're as proud as Lucifer. They're donned more like mountebanks' foos, nor gradely folk,—wi' their fither't hats, an' their fleawnces, an' their hoops, an' things. Aw wonder how they can for shame' o' their face. A lot o' mee-mawing snickets! But they 're no better nor porritch, Robert, when they're looked up.' 'Not a bit, Betty,—not a bit! But I mun be off. Good neet to yo'.' 'Good neet Robert,' said Betty. An' away he went wi' th' cart up to th' Hollins."

"Aw'll tell tho what, Skedlock," said Nanny; "that woman's a terrible tung!"

"Aye, hoo has," replied Skedlock; "an' her mother wur th' same. But, let me finish my tale, Nanny, an' then—"

"Well, it wur pitch dark when Robin geet to th' Hollins farm-yard wi' his cart. He gav a ran-tan at th' back dur, wi' his whip-hondle; and when th' little lass coom with a candle, he said, 'Aw've gotten a weshin'-machine for yo.' As soon as th' little lass yerd that, hoo darted off, tellin' o' th' house that th' new weshin'-machine wur come'd. Well, yo known, they'n five daughters; an' very cliver, honsome, tidy lasses they are, too,—as what owd Betty says. An' this news brought 'em o' out o' their nooks in a fluster. Owd Isaac wur sit i'th parlour, havin' a glass wi' a chap that he'd bin sellin' a cowt to. Th' little lass went bouncin' into th' reawm to him; an' hoo said, 'Eh, father, th' new weshin'-machine's come'd!' 'Well, well,' said Isaac, pattin' her o'th yed; 'go thi ways an' tell thi mother. Aw'm no wesher. Thae never sees me weshin', doesto? I bought it for yo lasses; an' yo mun look after it yorsels. Tell some o'th men to get it into th' wesh-house.' So they had it carried into th' wesh-house; an' when they geet it unpacked they were quite astonished to see a grand shinin' thing, made o' rose-wood, an' cover't wi' glitterin' kerlyberlys. Th' little lass clapped her hands, an' said, 'Eh, isn't it a beauty!' But th' owd'st daughter looked hard at it, an' hoo said, 'Well, this is th' strangest weshin'-machine that I ever saw!' 'Fetch a bucket o' water,' said another, 'an' let's try it!' But they couldn't get it oppen, whatever they did; till, at last, they fund some keys, lapt in a piece of breawn papper. 'Here they are,' said Mary. Mary's th' owd'st daughter, yo known. 'Here they are;'



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an' hoo potter't an' rooted abeawt, tryin' these keys; till hoo fund one that fitted at th' side, an' hoo twirled it round an' round till hoo'd wund it up; an' then,—yo may guess how capt they wur, when it started a-playin' a tune. 'Hello?' said Robin. 'A psaum-tune, bith mass! A psaum-tune eawt ov a weshin'-machine! Heaw's that?' An' he star't like a throttled cat. 'Nay,' said Mary, 'I cannot tell what to make o' this! Th' owd woman wur theer, an' hoo said, 'Mary; Mary, my lass, thou 's gone an' spoilt it,—the very first thing, theaw has. Theaw's bin tryin' th' wrong keigh, mon; thou has, for sure.' Then Mary turned to Robin, an' hoo said, 'Whatever sort of a machine's this, Robin?' 'Nay,' said Robin, 'I dunnot know, beawt it's one o' thoose at's bin made for weshin' surplices.' But Robin begun a-smellin' a rat; an', as he didn't want to ha' to tak it back th' same neet, he pike't off out at th' dur, while they wur hearkenin' th' music; an' he drove whoam as fast as he could goo. In a minute or two th' little lass went dancin' into th' parlour to owd Isaac an' hoo cried out, 'Father, you must come here this minute! Th' weshin'-machine's playin' th' Owd Hundred!' 'It's what?' cried Isaac, layin' his pipe down. 'It's playin' th' Owd Hundred! It is, for sure! Oh, it's beautiful! Come on!' An' hoo tugged at his lap to get him into th' wesh-house. Then th' owd woman coom in, and hoo said, 'Isaac, whatever i' the name o' fortin' hasto bin blunderin' and doin' again? Come thi ways an' look at this machine thae's brought us. It caps me if yean yowling divle'll do ony weshin'. Thae surely doesn't want to ha' thi shirt set to music, doesto? We'n noise enough i' this hole beawt yon startin' or skrikin'. Thae'll ha' th' house full o' fiddlers an' doancers in a bit.' 'Well, well,' said Isaac, 'aw never yerd sich a tale i' my life! Yo'n bother't me a good while about a piano; but if we'n getten a weshin'-machine that plays church music, we're set up, wi' a rattle! But aw'll come an' look at it.' An' away he went to th' wesh-house, wi' th' little lass pooin' at him, like a kitlin' drawin' a stone-cart. Th' owd woman followed him, grumblin' o' th' road,—'Isaac, this is what comes on tho stoppin' so lat' i'th town of a neet. There's olez some blunderin' job or another. Aw lippen on tho happenin' a sayrious mischoance, some o' these neets. I towd tho mony a time. But thae tays no moor notis o' me nor if aw 're a milestone, or a turmit, or summat. A mon o' thy years should have a bit o' sense.'

“Well, well,” said Isaac, hobblin' off, 'do howd thi din, lass! I'll go an' see what ails it. There's olez summat to keep one's spirits up, as Ab o' Slender's said when he broke his leg.' But as soon as Isaac see'd th' weshin'-machine, he brast eawt a-laughin', an' he sed: 'Hello! Why, this is th' church organ! Who's brought it?' 'Robin o' Sceawter's.' 'It's just like him. Where's th' maunderin' foo gone to?' 'He's off whoam.'

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'Well,' said Isaac, 'let it stop where it is. There'll be somebody after this i'th mornin'.' An' they had some rare fun th' next day, afore they geet these things swapt to their gradely places. However, th' last thing o' Saturday neet th' weshin'-machine wur brought up fro th' clerk's, an' th' organ wur takken to th' chapel."

"Well, well," said th' owd woman; "they geet 'em reet at the end of o', then?"

"Aye," said Skedlock; "but aw've noan done yet, Nanny."

"What, were'n they noan gradely sorted, then, at after o'?"

"Well," said Skedlock, "I'll tell yo.

"As I've yerd th' tale, this new organ wur tried for th' first time at mornin' sarvice, th' next day. Dick-o'-Liddy's, th' bass singer, wur pike't eawt to look after it, as he wur an' owd hond at music; an' th' parson would ha' gan him a bit of a lesson, th' neet before, how to manage it, like. But Dick reckon't that nobody'd no 'casion to larn him nought belungin' sich like things as thoose. It wur a bonny come off if a chap that had been a noted bass-singer five-and-forty year, an' could tutor a claronet wi' ony mon i' Rosenda Forest, couldn't manage a box-organ,—beawt bein' teyched wi' a parson. So they gav him th' keys, and leet him have his own road. Well, o' Sunday forenoon, as soon as th' first hymn wur gan out, Dick whisper't round to th' folk i'th singin'-pew, 'Now for't! Mind yor hits! Aw 'm beawn to set it agate! An' then he went, an' wun th' organ up, an' it started a-playin' 'French,' an' th' singers followed, as weel as they could, in a slattery sort of a way. But some on 'em didn't like it. They reckon't that they made nought o' singin' to machinery. Well, when th' hymn wur done, th' parson said, 'Let us pray,' an' down they went o' their knees. But just as folk wur gettin' their e'en nicely shut, an' their faces weel hud i' their hats, th' organ banged off again, wi' th' same tune. 'Hello!' said Dick, jumpin' up, 'th' divle's oft again, bith mass!' Then he darted at th' organ; an' he rooted about wi' th' keys, tryin' to stop it. But th' owd lad wur i' sich a fluster, that istid o' stoppin' it, he swapped th' barrel to another tune. That made him warse nor ever. Owd Thwittler whisper'd to him, 'Thire, Dick; thae's shapt that nicely! Give it another twirl, owd bird!' Well, Dick sweat, an' futter't about till he swapped th' barrel again. An' then he looked round th' singin'-pew, as helpless as a kittlin'; an' he said to th' singers, 'Whatever mun aw do, folk?' an' tears coom into his e'en. 'Roll it o'er,' said Thwittler. 'Come here, then,' said Dick. So they roll't it o'er, as if they wanted to teem th' music out on it, like ale oat of a pitcher. But the organ yowl't on; and Dick went wur an' wur. 'Come here, yo singers,' said Dick, 'come here; let's sit us down on't! Here, Sarah; come, thee; thou'rt a fat un!' An' they sit 'em down on it; but o' wur no use. Th' organ wur reet ony end up; an' they couldn't smoor th' sound.



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At last Dick gav in; an' he leant o'er th' front o' th' singin'-pew, wi' th' sweat runnin' down his face; an' he sheawted across to th' parson, 'Aw cannot stop it! I wish yo'd send somebry up.' Just then owd Pudge, th' bang-beggar, coom runnin' into th' pew, an' he fot Dick a sous at back o' th' yed wi' his pow, an' he said, 'Come here, Dick; thou'rt a foo. Tak howd; an' let's carry it eawt.' Dick whisked round an' rubbed his yed, an' he said, 'Aw say, Pudge, keep that pow to thisel', or else I'll send my shoon against those ribbed stockin's o' thine.' But he went an' geet howd, an' him an' Pudge carried it into th' chapel-yard, to play itsel' out i'th open air. An' it yowlt o' th' way as they went, like a naughty lad bein' turn't out of a reawm for cryin'. Th' parson waited till it wur gone; an' then he went on wi' th' sarvice. When they set th' organ down i'th chapel yard, owd Pudge wiped his for-yed, an' he said, 'By th' mass, Dick, thae'll get th' bag for this job.' 'Whau, what for,' said Dick. 'Aw 've no skill of sich like squallin' boxes as this. If they'd taen my advice, an' stick't to th' bass fiddle, aw could ha stopt that ony minute. It has made me puff, carryin' that thing. I never once thought that it 'd start again at after th' hymn wur done. Eh, I wur some mad! If aw'd had a shool-full o' smo' coals i' my hond, aw'd hachuck't 'em into't.... Yer, tho', how it's grindin' away just th' same as nought wur. Aye, thae may weel play th' Owd Hundred, divvleskin. Thae's made a funeral o' me this mornin'.... But, aw say, Pudge; th' next time at there's aught o' this sort agate again, aw wish thae'd be as good as keep that pow o' thine to thysel', wilto? Thae's raise't a nob at th' back o' my yed th' size of a duck-egg; an' it'll be twice as big by mornin'. How would yo like me to slap tho o' th' chops wi' a stockin'-full o' slutch, some Sunday, when thae'rt swaggerin' at front o' th' parson?'

"While they stood talkin' this way, one o'th singers coom runnin' out o'th chapel bare yed, an' he shouted out 'Dick, thae'rt wanted, this minute! Where's that pitch-pipe? We'n gated wrang twice o' ready! Come in, wi' tho'!' 'By th' mass,' said Dick, dartin' back; 'I'd forgetten o' about it. I'se never seen through this job, to my deenin' day.' An' off he ran, an' laft owd Pudge sit upo' th' organ, grinnin' at him.... That's a nice do, isn't it, Nanny?"

"Eh," said the old woman, "I never yerd sich a tale i' my life. But thae's made part o' that out o' th' owd yed, Skedlock."

"Not a word," said he: "not a word. Yo han it as I had it, Nanny; as near as I can tell."

"Well," replied she, "how did they go on at after that?"

"Well," said he, "I haven't time to stop to-neet, Nanny; I'll tell yo some time else, I thought Jone would ha' bin here by now. He mun ha' co'de at 'Th' Rompin' Kitlin'; but, I'll look in as I go by."

“I wish thou would, Skedlock. An’ dunnot’ go an’ keep him, now; send him forrud whoam.”

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“I will, Nanny—I dunnot want to stop, mysel’. Con yo lend me a lantron?”

“Sure I can. Jenny, bring that lantron; an’ leet it. It’ll be two hours afore th’ moon rises. It’s a fine neet, but it’s dark.”

When Jenny brought the lantern, I bade Nanny “Good night,” and took advantage of Owd Skedlock’s convoy down the broken paths, to the high road in the valley. There we parted; and I had a fine starlight walk to “Th’ Top o’ th’ Hoof,” on that breezy October night.

After a quiet supper in “Owd Bob’s” little parlour, I took a walk round about the quaint farmstead, and through the grove upon the brow of the hill. The full moon had risen in the cloudless sky; and the view of the valley as I saw it from “Grant’s Tower” that night, was a thing to be remembered with delight for a man’s lifetime.

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