

THE TRIP OF THE "MARY ANN."

[CONCLUDED.]

"Dear Joe, what is the matter? You are going away, and yet you are unhappy. Tell me what it is, isn't it?"

"Nothing," said Joe.

"There must be something," continued Dolly, "or you wouldn't leave me and go off among strangers who don't know you or care for you."

"Do you care whether I go or not?" he said, looking up eagerly.

"Of course I care," she answered, blushing. "Haven't we grown up together, and didn't you save me from those robbers?"

"Oh, is that all?" he said, disappointed.

"Why, what would you have?" she asked, gazing up into his face with an innocent expression. That dear, bright face was so near; her voice so soft and sweet; her eyes so tender; her warm, fragrant breath was in his cheek; and Joe—was it any wonder?—Joe forgot himself.

"I would have you!" he cried passionately. "Dolly, I love you better than life—better than anything else in the world. I know that I am not worthy—that you don't care for me. And yet I could not bear to see you belong to anyone else. And so I am going away where I shall never see you again."

There was a moment's pause, and then, with her sweet voice all in a tremble, Dolly asked:

"Is that the only reason for your going?"

"Yes," he answered, sadly. "Isn't it enough?"

"No," she replied, hiding her blushing face in her hands. "For Dolly wants you to stay—and love her."

The great gush of happiness that flowed in upon Joe's quivering heart with those words will not attempt to describe. Suffice it to say that he staid.

When the frost came, and the Mary Ann was laid up for the winter, there was a joyous wedding at the village church; and amidst music and flowers, and the merry chime of bells, Joe and Dolly were joined in wedlock. The happy bride bore his blushing bride away, followed by the good wishes of all the town, and a perfect shower of shoes, he thought himself the luckiest, happiest fellow in all the land, and, strange to say, although the honeymoon has long been over, he still continues in the same belief.

OUT OF WORK.

"If you please, sir, John Yates wants to see you."

"John Yates?" I said to myself, "John Yates! What can he want? I thought he was at work for Combs & Plank."

"Show him into the library, Jane; I'll be there directly."

"I wonder what it is," I said to myself again. "He isn't the sort of man to come to me in a usual way. Some certificate he wants signed, perhaps."

So, laying down a paper, on which I had been reading, sorrowfully, an account of the distress in the east end of London, I went into the library.

John was sitting down on a chair close to the door, leaning forward, and swinging his cap between his knees, as if he did not feel quite at home. When I came into the room he rose and touched his forehead civilly, but with a downcast, half-ashamed look.

"Good morning, John," I said; "sit down, and bring your chair over here nearer the fire. It's rather cold this morning."

"It is, sir; thank you, sir; but I ask your pardon, sir, for coming to trouble you. And here John, as if he didn't know what to say, looked down and blurted, "Well, sir, it's no use making any bones about it. If it's church you mean, it's true as gospel I don't often go, and I won't say nothing to make that better nor worse. Perhaps you ought. But the fact is, sir, I'm in trouble, and I didn't know anybody as I could go to but you."

Perhaps John meant this to be understood as a testimony to my benevolent disposition; anyhow I was vain enough to take it in that light, and said in kinder tones "Anybody in trouble is welcome to see me, John. What is it? You shall have my help if I can help you."

"Well, sir, I'm out of work, that's what it is, and the missus she's near her time, and two of the little 'uns is down with fluenza, or fever, or something of that sort; and truth is, sir, I ain't got a penny, let alone a shilling, to bless myself with." Here John looked harder still at the hearthrug, and winked his eyes very fast. "I can bear it myself, sir; it ain't for that as I'm come; but they ain't had a bit for a drop, this blessed morning." Here he covered his face with one hand, while the other held the cap hanging quite still.

"How is that?" I thought. "It must be some misfortune. He looks distressed, which should at once reduce him to such abject poverty, was hardly possible; and as to his being out of work, a man like him, earning good wages, might be out of work a week or two, and yet not be wanting bread for his family." I began to fear there was something wrong.

"How long have you been out of work?" I asked.

"About a month, sir; leastways, a month come Saturday." I fancied he looked a little ashamed as he said this, and caught my eye looking fixedly at him.

"A month!" I exclaimed. "Surely!" but I thought I would try to find out a little more about this matter, and so kept the rest of the sentence to myself. I was going to say, "Surely you ought not to be so long out of work, only a month out of work."

After a few seconds' pause, during which the cap was being held very violently than ever—it must have been strong to have stood it, but I suppose, by the look of it, it was used to it—I said to him, "Well, sir, I'm glad that if a man goes to a lawyer or a doctor, the first thing he has to do is to tell him the whole truth. I must ask you a few questions."

"If you please, sir," I don't think, however, he much liked the idea of having to answer them.

"What wages have you been earning?"

"Well, sir, in a regular way, it's five-and-twenty shillings a week; but I'll tell you all, sir, as you say. I made a good deal overtime in the summer, and maybe, then, it was thirty, or more."

"About that, take one week with other."

"Yes, sir."

"Are you in any club?"

To be continued.

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