

"PUTTY-FACE"

A TALE OF A WEAVING-SHED.

By John Ackworth.

Number seven shed in Ridgeway Brook mill was admittedly the most exclusive and conservative room in the factory, and was managed not so much by its overlooker and "tacklers" as by an old and privileged hand called Peggy Pratt, who had been there time out of count, and was apparently as much a fixture as the iron pillar which stood at her loom end.

Nearly all the hands employed at the time of our story were her nominees, and how Jessie Gleave came to obtain the pair of looms which were vacant when Sally Hunter got married was a mystery which puzzled the rest of the hands and seriously piqued Peggy. It was a crisis. Peggy had a feeling that her prestige was at stake; but as the looms had been given by the head overlooker, who scarcely ever interfered in such matters, Peggy, after some reflections, was philosopher enough to see that the surest way to retain unauthorized dominion is not to strain it, and so she resolved to "take it out" of the newcomer.

She had been sulky and wordless all morning, therefore, but by the breakfast interval had made up her mind. At the entrance end of the shed, where the tacklers stood, was an open space; and when the engine stopped the weavers assembled here, and, squatting about on the floor or on upturned cop-skips, took their morning meal. Engine and machinery being still, there was unwonted silence, except for the clatter of women's tongues. The new arrival did not join the company, but sank shyly down at the far end of her loom alley, almost hidden behind the beam. It was about two hours since Jessie Gleave came among them and in that short time every woman in the place had inspected her, and could have told almost every stitch she wore. They knew also that she was married and poor, and a stranger to that part of the valley. They had likewise discovered that "Lobby," the tackler who had her under his care, was smitten with her, and that she had the best hands and teeth in the shed. She had been the one topic of all the signalings and sign language which in the din of the machinery, took the place of words, ever since she came into the room; but not a soul had spoken to her. Her introduction had been irregular, not to say unwarranted, and the manner of the unusually self-assertive Peggy left so much to the imagination that even now they were inclined to hold their peace, and wait for Peggy's lead. But Peggy found something to do at her looms, and took a long time in doing it. Presently, however, she came and took her accustomed place in the middle of the circle of breakfasters, and opening a little handkerchief, spread out her eatables on her knee, and took from the "tenter" her can of steaming tea. She knew that all her followers were watching and waiting, hence her excessive deliberation; and so presently she raised the chin of her hard face, and without looking anywhere in particular, cried out: "Heigh there! this come out here, an' let's look at thee!"

The brown head just above the distant loom ducked lower but there was no reply. "She wants a special deputation to ax her to fine our lowly circle"—and Sally laughed ominously. Conscious that every eye was upon her, and that defiance of authority, however ill-founded, must be nipped relentlessly in the bud, Peggy left her meal, stalked down three loom alleys, and almost immediately reappeared with the offending Jessie, who was evidently struggling to keep back her tears. With a blush and a sigh the stranger dropped into the nearest seat, and began quietly to consume her remaining food, which nobody in the curiosity of the moment noticed consisted of plain dry bread.

But somehow the thing did not go off properly. Jessie did not resent her rough treatment, but only seemed a little more shy and timid than was common in such cases. She answered when spoken to, enduring a dropping fire of stinging rallery without the slightest show of resentment, was conciliatory without being "soapy"; but neither then nor in the longer dinner hour did they succeed in getting the least bit nearer to her.

A month passed, but beyond the discovery that she did not belong to the valley at all, but walked three miles night and morning from and to Skillington, they knew little more of Jessie than at the end of the first day. She turned out to be a rather better weaver than the most of them, and made rather more money, and this did not improve her position but when "that silly Lobby" gave her an extra loom, though there were girls who had been waiting expectantly for the privilege for months, things began to happen. Curious accidents occurred to her machinery, her cop-skips got accidentally upset, little flaws which but for her very special assiduity, would have destroyed her reputation as a weaver, began to appear in work, and at last she had to be "called over the coals" by that terrible person the outlooker. Jessie grew limp and pensive, and had a worried look which somehow gave savage satisfaction to the hard-hearted Peggy. Meanwhile meal-times became seasons of increasing distress to the stranger, for Peggy, employing her assistants to serve her purpose, contrived that Jessie should have no

peace. And then an incident transpired which precipitated the inevitable crisis. Lancashire mill-girls are all musical, and the clatter of the looms made conversation difficult, and the nature of their employment sets both head and tongues at liberty, singing of all sorts was general.

The music in Number Seven shed was a curious medley of concert-hall ditties, Sunday-school songs and Sankey hymns. It was soon noticed—another offense—that Jessie Gleave never joined in; but when they recalled her low, masculine sort of voice, the more reasonable were not surprised. In the dinner-hour the better singers, and those who could not sing but thought they could, were sometimes roughly constrained to give solos; and on several occasions Slippery Jane, who was a sort of self-appointed stage-manager, invited Jessie, whom she called "Putty-face," to "oblige the company." Jessie joined in her soft, quiet way in the laugh against her, but nobody thought seriously of pressing her to sing. Then Slippery Jane made a discovery. Spying in Jessie's temporary absence in the warehouse, among the newcomer's personal belongings, she came across a paper-back copy of "The Messiah." With a little whoop of triumph Jane held it up, and in a few seconds some thirty girls were standing round examining and discussing it.

The secret, such as it was, was out, and for three days poor Jessie was bullied and quizzed until her pale face grew pitiful to behold. And then an amazing thing occurred. One afternoon the telegraph boy—a rare comer, indeed—was led into the shed, and conducted straight to Jessie. A few minutes later he departed with a reply, and at four o'clock Jessie stopped her looms and went home. What could it mean? Some thought she was leaving the shop for good, but when Jessie came back next morning more weary-looking than ever, the queen of the shop was jeered so unmercifully for her failure that she determined to drive her away. On Friday, the payday, Peggy Pratt, who had all day been unusually taciturn, left the shed and went out.

In ten minutes she was back, with the still damp local paper just issued. She threw off her shawl, called to her side Dinah Belt, who acted as public reader to the shed, and handing her the paper doubled down at a certain paragraph, laconically commanded her to read.

Dinah did as she was bidden and announced: "Miscellaneous Concert at Siddenham." The extract proved rather lengthy, and we have no space to insert it here. The part which concerns us, however, related that the popular contralto, Miss Lottie Rymer, had been taken ill, and that in the emergency the management had been directed to a local singer, living almost in their midst, who had been prevailed upon at briefest notice to take the vacant place. Her name was Miss Jessie Haezelstine.

There was a puzzled pause when the reader concluded and nobody noticed the alarming distress of the unpopular weaver. Then some of the more impatient ones demanded somewhat sulkily: "Well, Peg, what's it all about?" Peggy, mute and still, glared around in stern triumph and uttered not a word.

"Well, what's t' concert to do wi' us?" "That singer's name wur Jessie summat, worn't it?" "Well?" and though every face was set on Peg, eyes began to steal round toward the white-lipped, half-fainting Jessie.

"An' there's a girl I' this shed called Jessie, isn't there—only she says she's married." The shrinking culprit covered on her up-turned skip, and hid her face in her hands.

"That's what that telegraph means, it wur her as sung." Dull wonder and blank incredulity chased each other over fifty female faces, and then vanished before hot resentment, and Peg lifted a bony finger, and pointing accusingly at Jessie, said: "An' her pertendin' she couldn't sing at all!"

Abashed before the lowering, hardening faces, Jessie began a pleading protest, but Peg, reading her supporters like a book, looked round them, and demanded: "Shall she sing, or shall she not?"

"Aye, she shall, she shall!" cried at least forty of the fifty voices. "I will—I will sing!" and she lifted a face that would have melted a stone—"but not now. Oh, not today!" "Now, now; strike up! Go on wi' thee!"

"Oh, lassies! friends! please have pity! Yes, yes. I'll sing, if you'll let me alone." At a word from Peg the rest fell back, and, dropping upon the floor and folding their legs under them, they made ready to listen and laugh, or mock or ironically applaud, as seemed fittest.

Jessie, her face whiter than ever, and her lips quivering, puckered her brow in evident endeavor to recall some song, but suddenly she broke down and pathetically begged to be excused.

"Let t' girl alone!" cried two of the elder ones; but Peg, taking a stride nearer and standing over her, said: "I'll gi' thee till I count twenty, and

then—" And Peg shook a significant fist.

Pitiful, abashed and tremulous, Jessie desperately braced herself and then as a sudden thought came rushing upon her, her face flushed, her eyes began to shine, and next moment that old shed rang with such notes as it had certainly never heard before. Few of the listeners knew the song, but all recognized the words, and presently the sneers began to fade, incredulity and grudging surprise both gave way to solemn wonder, and in a moment or two fifty pairs of eyes were fixed on the soloist and fifty mouths stood half open in ever-increasing appreciation.

Jessie was singing, "Oh, Rest in the Lord," and as the immortal solo asserted its ascendancy the most flippant and empty face in that company became soft and solemn and Peggy Pratt, who had a Sunday school past, looked and listened with rapt melting expression.

But presently there was a change. Even that wonderful voice and its equally wonderful subject faded in interest before the notice given to the singer herself. All fear, all shyness had gone, the face had become impassioned; the singer had escaped them, forgotten them, floated out of their reach, her throat swelling, her face glowing, and her eyes ablaze with glory. She was somewhere else, singing to somebody else, and all the fire and passion of her soul were in her song. Every eye was riveted upon her, fascinated and hypnotized, the music forgotten in the musician; they watched and watched, and suddenly another flush and an eager, radiant smile passed over her face, tears gushed from eyes that seemed drowning in glory; she swayed a moment, expanded her chest for a last effort, and the next moment lay swooning on the floor.

When Jessie came to herself, nothing would induce her to go home, and by three o'clock, whiter and wanner than ever, she had set her looms going. But that was the quietest afternoon in the history of Number Seven shed, and though little was said, everything that those rough natures could think of was done to atone for the past.

Jessie was not in her place next morning, neither was Peggy Pratt. The latter, however, came at breakfast time, and as soon as the weavers had got all seated, with their eatables in their laps, and their cans at the corner of their knees, Peggy came out of her loom alley, and, standing in their midst, commanded, "Hearken!"

Attention was not difficult to get, for they had not yet recovered from the sudden sobering of the day before, and most of them felt there must be something yet to be told. Even the rattle of spoons and can-handles stopped.

"I've found out all about that—that there singer."

The listeners were forgetting to eat. "She wur a scholarship for singing, an' wur goin' to London fur t' larn to be a professional."

One or two looked a little supercilious.

"And her folks wanted her to break it off wi' her chap, 'cause he wur sickly."

The mention of her "chap" raised a little giggle among the juniors, but it was suppressed by sternest glances.

"An' 'stead 'o that she married him and chucked London up."

A low murmuring, supported by fifty pairs of shining eyes.

"And her folks took aegan her for it; and when he wur took bad she had to tak' to her weyving agvin to keep him and his mother."

Short little gasps of interest and several biting epithets.

"An' she's gotten him big doctors and expensive things to do him good, an' nearly worked herself to death. He wanted her to stop wi' him yesterday, but she couldn't, they were too poor."

A series of pitiful, protesting moans. "An' when she sung yesterday she wur singin' to him."

Tears were rising into eyes that were usually hard enough.

"She was feared he might be dyin'—and he wur."

Open, undisguised weeping on every side.

"There's nobbut one thing more I've gotten to say, and I want ye to mark it."

Eye-drying was stopped on the instant.

"He worn't in no clubs, an' she's nowt to bury him wi'."

Then the floodgates were opened, and a crowd of sobbing women gathered round the strangely softened Peggy, and as the engine started there was a rush and almost a fight for Jessie's looms, which for some days were worked by deputy and for her benefit.

Number Seven shed buried Jessie's husband—buried him handsomely; and when at length Jessie went to London to take up her studies her fellow students had great sport with a big German-gilt picture-frame she brought with her, and which she hung in the place of honor in her lodgings. It contained vignettes of fifty plain, even rough-looking weaver-women; but Jessie seemed to set great store by it.—Southern Christian Advocate.

Low Born Great Men.

The wise workman will not regret the poverty or the solitude which brought out his working talent. The youth is pleased with the fine air and accomplishments of the children of fortune. But all great men come out of the middle classes. "Tis better for the head; 'tis better for the heart." "The so-called high born," Marcus Aurelius, quotes from Fronto, "are for the most part heartless;" whilst nothing is so indicative of true culture as the tender consideration of the ignorant.—From Emerson's "Considerations by the Way."



BRICK FLOOR IN DINING ROOM.
A red brick floor is especially suitable for the dining room of a colonial summer home, the effect being cool, and most inviting by way of contrast with the snowy linen and gleaming silver of the table appointments.

A NEW USE FOR PAPER.
A new use for paper in which women are likely to be interested has been discovered in the adaptation of tissue paper for rugs which are intended especially for summer use and look something like a fine grade of matting. The patterns, however, are more intricate than usual in matting. The rugs, which may be bent or folded as desired, are woven much like any other kind of rug. They are not as heavy as Smyrna floor coverings and are thicker than matting.

TO REMOVE PAINT FROM STEPS.
So often when the house is being done up paint is split over the steps, and it is sometimes difficult to get rid of it. In this case, make a strong solution of potash, and wash the steps thoroughly with this, simply leaving it to soak off. After a little the paint will become quite soft, and can be washed off with soap and water; then thoroughly wash with cold water. Paint which has been on for any length of time will yield to this treatment.

BREAKFAST NOTES.
Peaches, like large plums, pears and apples, are cut in small sections and eaten from the fingers. Bananas should be cut in two, peeled and eaten with a fork.

An orange may be cut, unpeeled into small sections, the seeds removed the skin pushed back at the corners with the fingers. An orange may also be cut in halves and the juice taken out with a spoon. Chicken, game or chop bones should under no circumstances be taken up in the fingers.

At a large and formal dinner, luncheon or breakfast, a guest should never ask for a second helping to any of the dishes. At a small dinner or a family dinner the hostess may invite her guests to take a second helping, or she may direct the servant to again pass the dish to every one at the table. In the same way the host, who carves, may offer a little more meat to those who have disposed of their first helping.

To eat slowly and quietly, taking small mouthfuls and allowing time for conversation, is indeed a sign of good breeding and should be taught every child, even in the nursery, so that when he or she grows up it may have become a habit. Nothing is more disgusting than to see a person talking with his mouth full or to hear him smack his lips as he eats or gurgle as he takes his soup.

Never, never use a toothpick except in the privacy of your bedroom, and use dental floss instead whenever possible. Do not think of taking a toothpick out of a stand in a restaurant or hotel.

RECIPES.
Meat Croquettes.—Cold meat of any kind, fat and lean together, chop fine. Add one-half as much cracker rolled with salt and pepper, one teaspoonful of made mustard and a piece of butter; knead all together and make into little balls, and dip into the beaten yoke of an egg, then in cracker crumbs, and fry a light brown; serve hot.

Cheese Biscuits.—Spread a layer of puff paste with some grated cheese, and dust with a little salt and a dash of cayenne; double up the paste, roll out rather thin, and cut it with a small round pastry cutter. Glaze with the white of an egg, lay them on a floured tin and bake in quick oven to a pale straw color.

Pineapple Filling for Shortcake.—Peel, remove the eyes, then shred or cut in tiny cubes a rich, ripe sugar-loaf pineapple. Cover with sugar to sweeten and leave overnight. When the shortcake is ready to serve fill with the pineapple dice drained from the syrup and use the latter with whipped cream for a sauce to pour over the shortcake.

Fruit Popovers.—To one cupful of flour add gradually one cupful of milk, and when the batter has been stirred perfectly smooth add two well-beaten eggs; beat the mixture with an egg beater; then add one teaspoonful of butter, a saltspoonful of salt, and bake in hot buttered gem pans. When done, split and fill with chopped fruit or jam.

White Mountain Pudding.—Add to one pint of milk a cupful of sugar, half a cupful of fine cracker crumbs, the beaten whites of two eggs, a few grains of salt, half a teaspoonful of almond extract, and two heaping tablespoonsful of cocoanut. Bake slowly until firm like custard; beat the whites of two eggs with a half a cupful of sugar and spread over the top, then brown lightly in the oven.

Strawberry Croquettes.—Cook one cupful of farina in three cupfuls of milk until soft. Then add one-half cupful of sugar, a pinch of salt, and flavoring to taste. Stir in two well beaten eggs, and cook over the fire a minute or two longer. Turn out to cool and form into croquettes, placing two or three fine strawberries in the centre of each. Dip in beaten egg and fry bread crumbs, and fry in deep, hot fat to a golden brown. Serve hot with strawberry butter.

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HORTICULTURAL HINTS.

When purchasing nursery stock this spring look carefully for disease. Scale is sometimes sent out with trees that have not been fumigated. All reliable nurserymen now fumigate young trees before shipping them, but as inexperienced workman may make mistakes every fruit grower should make it a point to examine all trees before accepting them.

Rabbits are an orchard pest second only to minor insects. They are in no respect useful about the farm and do great damage to young fruit trees by gnawing the bark at all seasons, especially in early spring. They should be trapped and hunted on every farm and, if possible, exterminated. The rabbit pest has for several years been a great drawback to agriculture in Australia, where their destruction of growing crops is simply amazing. If we are to escape the conditions in Australia rabbit hunting and trapping should be encouraged and united and systematic efforts should be made for their extermination.

It is known that pear scab differs from apple scab in some particulars. Some claim that these differences are so small as not to denote that the fungi are distinct. If they are proven to be, it follows that pear scab cannot spread to apple, nor apple scab to pear. Whether the fungi are distinct species is what the scientists are trying to determine.

Montagne and Marriage.

He went toward marriage with the quality of cheerful alacrity which would have inspired a journey to the whipping-post. "Might I have had my own will," he tells us, "I would not have married Wisdom herself, if she would have had me." No qualter piece of polite literature can be found than the letter which our philosopher addressed to his wife as a kind of necessary compliment on the occasion of the death of an only daughter. And the alacrity with which he relegates to Plutarch the task of consoling her in her affliction testifies to the entire consistency of his habitual claim that the dignity of marriage is best subserved when a husband refrains from becoming too fond of his wife. Even in view of this consideration, however, such a brief and refrigerated epistle suggests an amazing degree of reticence in a writer who needs only the turning of a faucet to enable him to pour forth a quenchless stream of ideas on any and every subject, from thumbs to immortality.—Martha Baker Dunn, in the Atlantic.

THE SHOPGIRLS.

"The department stores are talking of putting in operating departments. What do you think of that, now?" "Think! I think it's a shame. Every shopgirl will be having appendicitis!"—Life.

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