The Bradford Reporter.

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September 25, 1879.

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Towanda, April 1, 1881.

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E. D. PAYNE, M. D.,
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Special attention given to
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Lessons given in Thorough Bass and Harmony Cultivation of the voice a specialty. Located at J. P. VanFleet's, State Street. Reference: Holmes & Passage. Towanda, Pa., March 4, 1880.

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Towanda, June 20, 1878.

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May28-70tf. TOWANDA, PA.

EDWARD WILLIAMS,
PRACTICAL PLUMBER & GAS FITTER.
Place of business, a few doors north of Post-Office.
Plumbing, Gas Fitting, Repairing Pumps of all kinds, and all kinds of Gearing promptly attended to. All wanting work in his line should give him a call. Dec. 4, 1879.

FIRST NATIONAL BANK,
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APITAL PAID IN.....$125,000
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This Bank offers unusual facilities for the transaction of a general banking business.
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FIRST WARD, TOWANDA, PA.
Meals at all hours. Terms to suit the times. Large stable attached.
WM. HENRY, PROPRIETOR.
Towanda, July 2, '79-tf.

SUSQUEHANNA COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE.—FIRST WINTER TERM will commence MONDAY, OCT. 31, 1881. Expenses for board, tuition and furnished room, from $172 to $180 per year. For catalogue or further particulars address the Principal,
ELWIN E. QUINLAN, A. M.
Towanda, July 7, 1881.

THE WATCH ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

Close by the chimney, on Christmas eve,
Are huddled two tiny forms;
The rafters crack and the windows shriek,
And the night is wild with storms.
'Tis a lonely watch, for the specter Doubt
Has entered a childish breast,
And faith to-night must be lost in sight,
And the spirit laid at rest.

"Are you sure he'll come?" says a tiny voice,
"O, say you are certain quite!
Oh what could we do if it shouldn't be true,
And nobody came to-night?"
But the sweeter tones of childish trust
Break in on the other's doubt;
"O, never you fear, you'll see him here
When the midnight bells ring out."

"Perhaps they have told us a story, though,
You see we're such little boys;
I should feel so bad, if I thought they had,
That I'd hate the Christmas toys.
Do you think he'll care for the wind and rain
They say he's getting old—
With that heavy pack on his poor hump-back,
And the night is so very cold?"

"I tell you the reb deer brings him here,
And the load of toys is light;
His coat is warm, and he laughs at storm;
I know he'll come to-night.
There never can be a doubt, I say,
O, never a cause to fear;
Our watch we'll keep while the others sleep,
And we're sure to see him here."

But the minutes drag, and the small heads droop
When soft through the parlor door
Two shadows creep, while bright eyes sleep;
For the bold night watch is o'er.
They cram the stockings with loads of toys,
And then with stealthy tread.
They lift each form in its night-gown warm
And put the watchers to bed.

A SEARCH FOR SANTA CLAUS.

A little girl of summers few—
Though many wintry days she knew—
Went trudging through the city street,
Unmindful of the snow and sleet,
So strong the purpose in her mind
The friends of little ones to find,
The good old Santa Claus.

She saw the holiday display,
And heard the other children say
That Santa Claus would bring them this
Or that, and she would surely miss
A share in all the Christmas joys;
No doll, no candies, cakes or toys!
Alas! no Santa Claus!

What should she do? He must be near!
He always was this time of year!
And she would know him should she meet
Him face to face upon the street;
And so she took her station there
Upon the busy thoroughfare,
To search for Santa Claus.

Some wondered at her eager look;
While others passed, nor notice took
Of those soft pleading eyes that gazed
Up in their faces, much amazed
That of the many on review
There was not any person who
Resembled Santa Claus.

Darker the shadows grew apace,
And tears rolled down the maiden's face,
At thought of wretchedness and gloom
That centered in the garret room
Where she must seek her wonted rest,
And for the day give up the quest
For dear old Santa Claus.

A hand was laid upon her head:
"What ails thee, little one?" then said
A kindly voice of manly tone:
"Why out so late? and all alone?
Her story then she briefly told,
And at its close she whispered bold,
"Is your name Santa Claus?"

He answered, "Yes" 'Twas Christmas eve;
His wife would many gifts receive,
But none she'd hold more dear, he thought,
Than this poor waif he swiftly caught
Within his arms; then homeward sped;
And, as he dropped the burden, said:
"A gift from Santa Claus!"

No longer doomed the streets to roam,
The beggar-child has found a home
With loving hearts; and should you say:
"What did you get on Christmas day?"
She'd answer you, with cheeks aglow:
"Oh, lots of goodies! for, you know,
I live with Santa Claus!"

—*Josephine Pollard in Illustrated Christian Weekly.*

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

THE INN ON HAVERLEY WOLD.

CHAPTER I.

THE GUEST OF "THE CHIMES."

A Yorkshire moor—a blinding fall of snow and a dark night are not conditions anyone would voluntarily select as conducive to the enjoyment of the Christmas season; yet, on a certain 23d of December, a few years ago, all those conditions fell to the lot of a traveler, who, mounted on a handsome chestnut horse, was proceeding slowly along an almost obliterated path.

The rider was a man of seven or eight and twenty, tall, and sat his horse like one brought up to the saddle; a military cloak was flung around him, the collar drawn high as a protection against the cold wind that swept over the waste of snow, and his slouched hat was set low on his brow; but a pair of very brilliant blue eyes to pierce through the veil of snow, strove in search of a light, and ever and anon kept watch on the path, which every moment grew less distinguishable.

"By Jove!" he muttered presently, brushing the snow from the sunny-hued mustache that shaded a handsome mouth, 'things are beginning to look queer They told me I should pass a roadside finger-post, and I have not passed one yet, and that was to be my guide to the inn—'The Chimes'—which I should not be sorry to reach. I greatly prefer campaigning in India to this sort of thing.'

Almost as the words left his lips his quick eye caught sight of some object a little way ahead that flashed for a moment through the snow and gloom and disappeared again; but the young officer—for such he seemed—urged his horse forward, and his heart rose up with renewed hope. Surely that object was the finger-post. Another moment proved his conjecture to be correct. There, like a pale, thin ghost, stood the finger-post, stretching out its battered arms to right and left. Lifting himself in the stirrup, the traveler read on the one arm, 'To Todmore and Foxley;' on the other, 'To Holdon and Bicklemere.' The latter was the road he had been told to take, and he turned his horse into what had become little better than a track, but still, especially to military eyes, clear enough to be safe.

In another half hour the traveler caught sight of a light glimmering through the darkness, and presently, bending forward, he could discern the outlines of a low, straggling building, which stood a little back from the road, and seemed to be completely isolated. But, late as it was, 11 o'clock, there were evidently people astir, for as the traveler came in front of the building he saw a ruddy blaze of light in the parlor window and heard a sound of gruff voices from within. A covered wagon, from which the horses had been taken out, standing near the roadside, afforded a clue to the welcome sounds, which at least promised a fire. The traveler rode up to the door, and, springing to the ground, rapped with his riding whip. Almost immediately the door was opened, and a tall, powerful Yorkshireman, with a lantern in his hand, presented himself.

'I suppose,' said the stranger, shaking the snow from his cloak, 'one can have a supper and a night's lodging here?'

'Where else, sir?' returned the burly landlord. 'Walk in, sir. Joss, see to the gentleman's horse.'

A clumpish looking lad made his appearance, but the traveler insisted on going round himself to the stable and seeing that his horse was well housed and groomed and supplied with provender before he attended to himself.

Mine host was waiting at the door when he returned

'Fond of your horse, sir?' said he, smiling.

'I am a soldier, friend, and always take care of my horse first of all'

'A soldier? Ah, indeed, sir. Come in. Your supper will soon be ready. Awful night, isn't it? Did you come from Overburn?'

'Yes, from the station. I am on my way to Hildon, and I was directed to this place for a night's lodging.'

'Couldn't come to a better, sir, though I say it.' As he spoke, he opened the door into the chief, or, as it appeared, only public room of the inn, which was floored with tiles, and roughly furnished, but a huge fire blazed on the hearth, and in the chimney corner sat a red faced carter in a coarse smock frock.

This individual drew his pipe from his mouth, and stared hard at the new comer, but did not offer to rise, and the stranger, who, soldier-like, was evidently accustomed to make himself at home under any circumstances, threw off his cloak and hat, and advanced to the fire with a courteous, half-careless, 'Good-evening, friend. A fine night for travelers, eh?'

To which remark the carter responded by a grunt, and continued to stare. The new arrival was certainly not of the class to which the guests at The Chimes were accustomed. He was a tall, dashing, aristocratic looking man, whose air, speech and clothes bespoke the Londoner; a very handsome man, too, with a noble cast of features, and that blending of power and gentleness of expression which wins alike the trust and respect of men and women. Although his hair and mustache were of a sunny tint, his complexion was deeply bronzed, nor had the delicately-made hands he held for a moment before the blaze escaped the effect of tropical suns. On the third finger of one of these hands flashed a rare diamond of great price and beauty, which it did not seem to occur to the young man he would have done wise to remove.

'How far is it to Hildon?' he asked, making another attempt at conversation.

'Matter o' twelve mile.'

'Along this road?'

'Nos, cross cut. Eben 'll show yer th' road.'

'Eben,' probably an abbreviation of 'Ebenezer,' was evidently mine host, who at that moment returned, announcing that his niece would bring in the supper directly, and he seated himself before the fire with a jolly smile on his round, good-natured face.

'You were bold, sir,' he began, 'to attempt Haverly Wold on such a night as this.'

'I hadn't much choice, mine host. I am on my way to Hildon, and I am due sometime to-morrow. When I reached Overburn I found the train could get no further; the line was blocked, and likely to remain so till heaven knows when, but they told me I could ride across the moor, so I had out my horse and resolved to try the experiment.'

'Ah, sir, I see—young lady up at Hildon, eh?'

'Nay,' said the other, laughing, 'I haven't yet found that young lady.'

'Haven't you? Well, it's not for want of good looks to take the women's fancy. It's the Manor people you're going to see, I take it?'

'It is.'

'Well, sir, I hope you'll have a merry Christmas. It isn't very merry Christmases we get here, for there isn't a house within eight or nine miles either way, and so you may imagine it's dull.'

'Dull! I could not live such a life. How does your niece like it.'

'Well, not much, I suppose; but she's not my niece, you know, sir, though I call her so. She's a lady—true as true, sir. Her father was an artist—name of Brandon—come here with her one such night as this, and she was just a baby His had been a runaway match, he told me; his wife was a great lady, and that was all I knew. He died quite sudden in the night and left the little one; so what could I do? I couldn't find out who she belonged to, so I just kept her here; hist! sir, here she is.'

After hearing this romantic story the young man naturally turned to look with considerable curiosity on the damsel who now entered, bearing a tray, and his start of wonder and admiration must be forgiven him. He beheld a girl of about seventeen, tall and slender, clothed in a scarlet petticoat, with a blue handkerchief fastened picturesquely across her bosom A quantity of dark hair clustered over a small, nobly-poised head; her face was a pure oval; her complexion clear as opal and as pale; her features delicately cut, her eyes large, dark, lustrous, and shaded by very long lashes. Altogether the girl was remarkably beautiful, and looked about as unfitted for the coarse, mean life to which she was doomed as it was possible to imagine. To judge superficially by her face she seemed to have acquired a sullen, proud indifference to her fate. She scarcely looked up as she came in; she set down the tray and began laying the supper as if the room was empty save for herself, and when her task was done she said quietly, 'Supper is ready, sir,' and went and sat down apart, drawing some work from her pocket and plying her needle quickly and silently. Her voice was sweet and low—the voice of a lady but without brightness; it sounded as her face looked—as though laughter were unknown and happiness no more than a word. The young officer could hardly take his eyes off the girl, who never raised her own, or took any part in what followed.

'Raika's a queer 'un,' said the host, jerking his thumb toward her, 'but a good girl, sir—never complains—queer name, too, isn't it? That was the name on her clothes plain enough, so we kept it.'

'It is a foreign name,' said the young man, carelessly, not wishing to talk about the girl before her face. 'Do you like cigars, Mr. ——, I beg your pardon?'

'Oh, Shelton's my name, sir. Ebenezer Shelton; but bless you! they all call me Eben. Cigar, sir? Thanky—well, I'll try one, though I don't remember I ever smoked one before.'

It was a very dainty case the officer pushed toward him, and bore engraved on it the name and status of its owner, 'Captain Grahame Errington,—th Hussars.'

'That your name, sir?' said mine host, reading the superscription.

'That is my name.'

'Captain Errington? All right. Thanky, sir, much oblige.'

'Eben,' said the saturnine carter, 'wasn't it to night last year that traveler from York fell over into the tarn?'

'No, no,' said mine host, settling himself in the chimney corner as he spoke, and his burley form almost disappeared in the gloom, 'that was on Chris mas Eve. A dreadful thing, Captain Errington He had come her for the night—that gentleman—and the next day he would go on. Well, I went with him to put him in the right way, as far as a finger post, yonder, that showed him; and he must have taken the wrong one after all, for his body was found nearly a month later in Hanersley Tarn—he'd fallen in; you see, you can't tell the tarn is there till you fall into it, not in snow time; the ground all looks so fair There's more than one has lost his life there.'

'I must beware of it,' said Captain Errington, laughing.

'Oh! sir, you couldn't mistake if you were careful. I'll show you the way all right.'

'You are too kind.' The young man rose from the table, and Raika rose too and went to fetch him a candle.

'What time will you be called, sir?' she said, returning and giving him the lamp.

'I am a soldier, Raika,' said he, smiling; 'I always wake early, thanks.'

'Very well, sir. Good night.'

'Good night, Raika.'

She looked up for a moment, but her eyes fell and a light color crossed her cheek as she met Captain Errington's gaze. No doubt she had been admired often and boldly enough, but had probably never encountered admiration so blended with reverence and pity; nor is it likely that she had ever before been spoken to by anyone belonging to the class to which her birthright entitled her, and her heart beat with a new and bewildering sensation as she turned away and sought her own little chamber. Perhaps that poor heart, struggling ever like a caged bird, would have beaten faster yet had she known that the handsome officer's thoughts were so entirely absorbed by her that he did not sleep for hours, and quite forgot to wonder how Ebenezer Shelton made a living out of inn keeping in the midst of a Yorkshire wold, where his taking could hardly amount to £20 a year.

CHAPTER II.

RAIKA.

Daylight brought no change in the weather, the snow fell fast and thick when Captain Errington descended to the public room.

Raika was there alone, moving silently about. She lifted her heavy lashed eyes as the guest came in, and bade him simply 'Good morning, sir,' but the young man, following perhaps an impulse which thought might have checked, held out his hand.

'You are my equal,' he said, smiling, though there was a pained look in his eyes.

An expression of utter wonder came into hers, and the blood rushed hotly over cheek and brow and dyed even her white neck.

'Your equal!' she said. 'No, I am not. I am an inn servant.'

'An inn servant by accident, a lady by birth, and, I am sure, in all else. You will not, then,' said the young man gently, 'give me your hand?'

'Yes,' under her breath, 'if you wish it.'

She laid in his a small white hand, so smooth and delicate that it seemed impossible it could do hard work; and the touch of that hand thrilled to the young man's very heart. If he had followed the prompting of the moment he would have raised it to his lips; but thought came this time quick enough to save him from what might have been misinterpreted. He dropped the hand and turned away in silence. Raika went on setting the table, but she made one or two mistakes and had to rectify them. Presently Errington observed:

'Raika, you surely do not do the hard work of this house?'

She shook her head. 'No; Jos, the ostler, does that. I am not very strong. Eben won't let me do hard work.'

'Your tone, Raika, implies that you would like to do it.'

'So I would—and have done with it.'

'With what?'

'With living, to be sure; 'tis no use to me, is it?'

'Hush! Raika; it is terrible to hear you speak so; you are young; you have all your life before you.'

'It won't be a long one, I'll take care of that,' said she, sullenly.

She had to pass near Errington as she spoke. He laid a quick hand on her arm and turned her round to him.

'Raika, do they ill treat you here?'

What a fierce flash from the black eyes!

'No; Eben is kind enough in his fashion, and the rest let me alone. I would like to see one of them so much as dare to touch me as you are doing!'

'You don't mind me, Raika?'

'You're a gentleman, and you only mean to be kind, I am sure; which is a pity, for it can't do me any good, and will make things seem worse.'

'Oh, Raika, do not speak so.' He turned aside with a desponding gesture. 'Oh, if I could only help you.'

The girl shrank back with a sudden passionate sob. 'I don't want help!' she muttered in a choked voice. 'No, no, don't touch me—don't speak to me!' and she turned and rushed out of the room.

Grahame Errington sank down and covered his eyes for a moment.

'By heaven!' he said to himself, 'am I courting fate, or has fate overtaken me? The girl bewilders—dazzles me—and she is a lady, gently born, not even—though her surroundings are so rough and harsh. I must save her from this life. But how?'

The entrance of his host aroused him, and greeting Eben Shelton courteously, the young man asked if he and his niece would join him at breakfast.

'Thank ye, sir, much obliged.'

Raika was summoned and came in without any signs of unusual agitation on her countenance, and she sat down in silence.

'You don't think of going out this morning, sir?' said Eben, glancing out of the window and his eyes traveling back rested a minute on the rose diamond.

'Well, I hardly know——' last evening he would have answered differently, but now he had seen Raika!

'It wouldn't be safe, sir; you can't see your way when the snow falls like that. The finger-post is a good mile away, and you'd never find it without someone showed you the way, and I wouldn't trust Jos to do that; if he took you straight he'd be like tell you wrong when you got there. Maybe you think I'm speaking in my own interest, sir; but your own sense 'll tell you that a York moor in a snowstorm isn't altogether easy traveling.'

'No, I don't; misjudge you,' said Errington, smiling, although there was something about the jolly, round face of Eben Shelton he did not quite like. 'And certainly it would never do to take you out in a snowstorm'

'Lor, sir, it isn't that—t at wouldn't signify—it's the danger. You don't know these parts, I see, sir.'

'I never was in Yorkshire in my life before.'

'Oh! indeed. I thought maybe you belonged to the Hildon Manor people.'

'No; I met the eldest son in town this season, and he asked me to spend Christmas with them. I don't know the rest of the family at all.'

Raika glanced furtively at Eben, but remained silent.

'Of course, sir,' continued mine host, 'I knew you were south country—but still you might have been related to the Manor people. Maybe it'll clear up by the evening—not much before, I think.'

'Which way from the finger-post lies this awful tarn?' asked Errington.

'Well, sir,' the innkeeper laughed and scratched his head, 'it's difficult to tell you, because it all depends how you come up to the post. For there's a right and a wrong way, you see—now, then, Raika, what are you after there?'

The girl had risen up abruptly, without any ceremony, and gone to the door.

'I thought I heard Binnie outside, that's all,' she said. 'There's no harm done.'

'No harm but rudeness,' said Shelton, angrily, 'leaping up like a young buck to look after the lurcher! What'll Captain Errington think of Yorkshire manners?'

'Pray,' said the young man hastily, 'do not imagine that I am offended. Raika is right—there is no harm done, and you know, Mr. Shelton, ladies command all these things.'

'Ladies, sir! Well, she's born a lady, sure enough, but she's not a lady now—don't put that notion into her head.'

The girl came back to the table with a burning color on her usually pale face, and Captain Errington, partly for her sake, partly for his own turned quickly to the innkeeper and said:

'You were telling me about——'

'The tarn—yes, sir. Well, if you come to the finger-post the right way, as I said, then the road to the tarn turns off to the right. Your way is a bridle-path to the left, and that widens out into a good road some two miles further on.'

'But the road to the right passes by the tarn, does it not?'

'Yes, sir; but just on the crown of the bank, and in the winter time, with the snow covering everything, you can't see where the bank begins, and it's a sheer descent into the tarn, sixty feet below you—the first you'd know would be going down like a stone dropped into a well.'

'Thanks,' said Errington, laughing, 'and there I might lie for months, like the poor fellow you were talking of last night.'

'Aye, sir,' said Eben, rising, 'that was a terrible affair! By the way, Raika, where's Martin? That's the carter, sir.'

'He is snoring in the kitchen,' replied Raika, proceeding to clear away the breakfast things.

Mine host sat down by the fire and lighted a long pipe and Captain Errington leaned against the chimney piece and entered into conversation with him, a conversation in which Raika, while she was in the room, never once joined, and she presently went out, leaving the door not wide open, but just ajar, and all the while Grahame Errington talked to his host his thoughts were with the girl who seemed to have resigned herself to her harsh fate with a kind of grim apathy, awful to behold in one with youth, beauty and gentle birth, all that should make her life bright and glorious. Why did she keep away? If she would not talk it was a pleasure—strong enough to make every pulse throb—only to look at her. Did she distrust him? Perhaps he could hardly wonder if she did, although she had professed to believe his kindness had in it no sinister element. Anyhow, he answered Eben almost at random for some little time, but at last, with an effort roused himself. The innkeeper was a shrewd man, and might suspect that Raika's beauty had made an impression on the dashing guest, and such suspicions would probably recoil on the girl's head.

'I suppose you carry pistols, sir?' was the first remark of mine host that he really fully comprehended.

'Pistols!' The young man's blue eyes opened wide. 'Are the people here given to shooting their neighbors? Besides, you forget that when I started I did not intend to ride across the moor.'

'True, sir; no, of course you didn't. Well, I don't suppose you'll meet with any harm between here and Hildon, especially such weather as this: but there *are* sometimes queer characters about.'

Errington glanced out of the window. It was still snowing fast.

'My friends will think I am lost,' he said, with a half sigh. 'I must manage to push on to-night.'

'It'll be clear by then, sir—quite clear, at least not snowing,' said mine host, filling a fresh pipe—'and I'll put you in a way for Hildon.'

'Many thanks.' He turned to the door, and as he reached it he thought he heard a light step without. Had Raika been listening? but what for? besides he could not connect such meanness with her, and there was certainly no one in the passage.

'I am just going,' he explained to Eben, 'to see my horse. He's my sweetheart, you know.'

'Your only one?—ah sir! I know better.'

'My only one, indeed,' said the other laughing with an odd feeling that to-day the answer was not quite true. Bah! this girl was ignorant; he really knew nothing of her; but she was a mere child in years—she could be educated; he could not be mistaken in believing that a noble soul, a keen and wide intelligence, resided in the slight form clothed in homespun; he had money, but how then could he, a young man in higher social position, use that money so as to benefit this young girl without doing her irredeemable mischief in the world's eyes? Well, he could find out where her father was, who her friends were; but meanwhile he must leave her here! He could not reconcile himself to that idea, and yet could see no escape from it.

He turned toward the stables and, as he drew near, saw that the door was open, and then his heart gave a sudden bound. There stood Raika, feeding his horse with carrots, and tenderly caressing him the while.

She looked up with a violent start as she heard the young officer approach and colored painfully, but said deprecatingly:

'I was only feeding him, I am fond of horses.'

'So it seems. Don't run away,' laying a detaining hand on her arm, for she was about to quit the stable. 'What are you afraid of, Raika?'

'Nothing,' she stood still and looked down, but she was drawing her breath quickly and there was a kind of frightened look in her eyes for a moment, but it passed.

'Nothing,' repeated Errington, gazing steadily on the beautiful, friendless creature, and sorely tempted to take her in his arms there and then, 'I hope it really is nothing. I don't want you to be afraid of me.'

'I am not; but there's no use in your talking to me—it can't do me a bit of good—'

'Stay, Raika! it may do you some good. I may be able to help you if you can tell me anything about your parents.'

'I don't know any more than you heard last night.

A troubled shade fell on Errington's brow.

'Still,' he said, after a pause, 'even that is some clue—I know your father's name and profession—I can discover, no doubt, who he is, and find out your relations.'

Was the girl touched by the kindness? Was her woman's heart unstirred by the thought? 'Why should he take so much interest in me?' It was hard to tell. She showed no sign of either gratitude or pleasure; she drew back, and turned her face aside a little, saying, in a kind of dogged manner—

'It would not matter anything to me; there is no use in any one putting themselves out about me—not the least. I dare say you mean to be kind to me—I am sure you do; but it can't help me.'

Errington set his teeth and was silent. It seemed to him that the girl mistrusted him, and though he did not blame her for the thought it pained him deeply, conscious as he was of no feeling that arraigned his honor. He said no more, but he was resolved, nevertheless to seek out Raika's relatives. She looked at him as he turned away, and opened her lips to speak, but closed them resolutely, and without a word went out of the stable and back to the kitchen, where she set about the work of preparing dinner in a mechanical kind of a way. The snow still kept falling, and the girl watched it now and then with an expression of satisfaction. She was revolving something in her mind. What was it?

When she went to lay the cloth Captain Errington was sitting reading, or rather pretending to read, a local paper of about a month's date. Eben Shelton was smoking near the fire.

'Eben,' said the girl, 'I suspect you will have to tap a new cask. I fancy the last one has run out.'

'Nonsense, girl it can't be yet,' returned Shelton in a surprised tone.

'Well, I will see.'

She went along the passage, and, opening a low door, descended a steep flight of stairs, so dark that only habit could enable her to know where she was going. When she had reached the bottom she took a lantern from a peg in the wall, lighted it with a match she carried and entered the cellar, a wide, dreary-looking place.

Her subsequent proceedings were strange. She went to a cask already tapped, and placing beneath it a bucket that stood near, set the tap running till the bucket was full and the cask empty. Then she carried the bucket to a sink in the flooring, emptied all the beer down it, rolled the bucket into a dark corner and searched about till she found a good-sized piece of wood. With this in her hand she ascended the steps again, leaving the lantern behind her, and the wood, too, it seemed, for it was not in her hand when she reached the passage.

Straight she went to the keeping-room.

'The cask is empty,' she said. 'You'll have to tap a fresh one. Martin drank a lot last night, you know.'

'Well, well,' said mine host, rising, 'if the cask's out, it is; so here goes'

He went out of the room, and his heavy step passed along the passage. Raika held her breath for an instant, but went on in her swift, silent, indifferent manner.

Suddenly there was a loud crash—a hoarse cry. Errington and Raika sprang to the door together.

'It's Eben!' cried the latter, breathlessly. 'He's fallen somehow down the steps. Hold! sir; you can't see I'll fetch a light.'

The door at the top of the stairs was open; from the darkness below came a heavy groan. In an instant Raika had brought a light, and she and Captain Errington descended the stairs. There at the bottom lay the bulky form of Eben Shelton, one foot doubled under him. He was groaning and swearing vigorously, but, with Errington's help, succeeded in rising and hobbling slowly up the steps.

'How did it happen, Eben?' asked Raika, anxiously. Did you slip?'

'There was something on the steps—something you left, you white-faced hussy,' he answered, angrily.

'I left nothing,' returned the girl 'You must have slipped.' But as she spoke (she was following her two companions holding up the light) she noiselessly threw out of sight a piece of wood that lay at the foot of the stairs.

'I dare say it is nothing very bad,' said Errington, quickly, wishing to spare the girl any abuse. 'You were fortunate to escape so well.'

'Aye, I might ha' broken my neck. Thank you, sir, for helping me.'

He hobbled into the keeping-room, and there sat down, and examination showed that his foot was pretty badly sprained. Raika brought vinegar and swathed in rags the swollen ankle, and the innkeeper, with many a wry face, submitted to his fate and sat with his foot upon a chair.

'One bad thing is, sir,' said he during dinner, 'that I shan't be able to show you the way; but you needn't be hindered for that—Raika knows it.'

'Raika!' repeated Captain Errington, 'travel a mile through the snow and after dark—for me. I should not think of it.'

'Lor, sir, 'tis all right. She's not one of your town bred ladies. She's been out on the moor at night many a time.'

'I could not allow it!' said the young man, firmly. Raika interposed

'You will not find your way alone, sir. You had best let me go. If you went alone I should follow, for I should fancy you were over the tarn bank.'

'Then I must yield.' And no more was said on the subject.

CHAPTER III.

"TURN TO THE RIGHT."

About 6 o'clock the snow ceased and the moon rose and shown down pale and clear on the vast expanse of snow. Jos was ordered to bring round the chestnut, and while he was gone Captain Errington paid his reckoning, drawing forth a well-stocked purse. Raika turned away, and an odd look of triumph lighted up her black eyes as she went to the kitchen.

She came back enveloped in a long frieze cloak, with a hood that would draw over the head, but was thrown back. She paused near the door. Errington held out his hand to the host

'Good-bye, sir,' said that person, heartily. 'A safe journey to you, sir, and a merry Christmas; you'll remember this Christmas Eve, sir, no doubt—a funny one, eh? There's Raika all ready, mind, child, *the bridle path to the left!*'

'I know it, Eben. I should know Haverley Wold, if any one does.'

She passed out, Errington followed, and they stood without in the snow. Errington bestowed a handsome largesse on Jos, and passed his arm through his horse's bridle.

'Come,' he said.

'Are you not going to mount, sir?'

'While you walk? That would be strange courtesy, Raika.'

'Very well, sir. This way, please.'

It was very cold—freezing hard—but the girl did not cover her head. She walked on by her companion, still in silence, treading lightly and fearlessly over the frozen ground; and Errington did not speak. Perhaps his heart was too full just now for words. Once or twice Raika looked back, and the young man fancied—it might only be fancy—that she breathed more freely when the inn was out of sight. Suddenly she raised her hand. 'Do you see that post, yonder, sir? Yes? That's the finger-post.'

The place where they must part! He made no answer, and the girl glanced at him furtively; then walked on a little ahead of him, and had reached the finger-post when he came up. Finger-post it was called by courtesy, for only one broken arm remained, and on that there was no direction. The girl's face seemed almost as white as snow around her. She put her hand—it trembled now—on the young man's arm.

'Do you see that track, sir,' she said, pointing with her other hand, 'going to the left?'

'Quite plainly.'

'And you see that other—a better road—to the right?'

'Yes.'

'That is your road, sir,' said Raika, steadily, 'to the right.'

'To the right,' repeated Errington. Eben Shelton said especially the bridle-path to the left.'

Raika looked full in the speaker's face.

'Eben Shelton said that,' she said, 'because the bridle-path to the left leads right on to the tarn.'

'Raika!' He could say no more—the horror of the idea that her startling words presented checked all power of speech.

'Believe which of us two you like,' continued the girl, resolutely. 'Trust him or me as you will. I know him; you do not. He murdered that man they were talking of last night; and if he had come with you to-night he would have murdered you and robbed you. I couldn't stop it last time—I didn't suspect it; but I found it out afterward, and I knew he had made up his mind what to do when he saw your diamond, and I made up my mind to prevent him. Didn't he find out last night that you were not related to the Hildon Manor people? That was because if you had been the business might have been more risky. Didn't he find out to-day that you did not carry pistols? I knew he would be asking questions and I listened and heard him. I lied about the cask; I poured all the beer away and put a piece of wood on the stairs that he might fall down. I didn't care whether he broke his neck or not; but he sprained his ankle; that is all I really cared about; and he thought I would send you the wrong way! I am too wise to let him see my hand. If you fell down into that tarn you would be buried in the snow. He would come the next day and rob you—there is a way down for those that know it—and leave your body there for kites and ravens. If you are wise, sir, take this road to the right.'

Standing a few feet from her companion, and speaking in a clear, calm, deliberate manner, Raika told this terrible tale; and as she finished pointed again to the right, as though her information had nothing especially out of the way, and her own future concern in the matter was of no sort of consequence. Errington had heard her without interruption, amazed less by the black villainy disclosed than by the part she had played and her manner of relating the truth, for to doubt her never for a moment occurred to the young man. But as she ceased he made one step to her side and grasped her arm.

'Raika,' he said, bending down, 'brave, noble woman! you have saved my life. Can you ask if I believe you? But at what risk to yourself have you done this! What do you intend to do?'

The girl glanced round at the wide dreary moorland, and tried to shrink away.

'I?' she said, 'never mind that, sir. I'm not going back to The Chimes—that's all; he'd kill me when he found out I'd played him false.'

'What, then, did you intend to do, Raika? Did you think that after what you have told me I should mount my horse and ride away and leave you?'

Raika's eyes wavered. 'I can get over the moor to Bicklemere,' she said in a low tone.

'Raika,' said the young officer, sternly, 'you know that you would be frozen to death before you could reach Bicklemere; it is twenty miles away.'

'What then?' said the gir