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"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 copskips, 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 sunk 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 theer! thee 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 deppytation to [illegible] her to jine 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 raillery 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 Slippy 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 Slippy Jane made a discovery. Spying in Jessie's temporary absence in the warehouse, among the newcomer's personal belonging, 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 pay-day, 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 Haeseltine.

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 cowered on her up-turned skip, and hid her face in her hands.

"That's what that telegraphs 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: "And 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, lasses! 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 ascendency the most flippant and empty faces 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 eort, 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 canbandles stopped.

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

The listeners were forgetting to eat.

"She won a scholarship for singing, an' wur goin' to London fur t' larn to be a perfessional."

One or two looked a little supercilious.

"And her folks wanted her to breik 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 agean 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 hexpensive 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 be 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.

WOLF HUNTING IN INDIANA.

Farmers Capture Five Within an Hour's Ride of Chicago.

Five wolves captured and some still free within rifle shot of where stupendous manufacturing interests are being rapidly developed serves to emphasize the theory that, after all, civilization is, as yet, only a step removed from savagery. In the Calumet district of Indiana, scarcely more than an hour's ride from Chicago, the natives are boasting of recent wolf exploits and hoping for more to come.

For some time tracks that old timers declare were those of wolves had been seen. Scoffers pronounced it impossible, but more tracks were seen. Strange noises were heard at night; chickens disappeared; even a sheep or two and small calves were killed and partly devoured.

Finally George Hamper, in charge of a clubhouse and the surrounding farm, killed a full grown wolf and, skinning it carefully, had the skin stuffed and mounted. Hunters, of course, envied Hamper's good fortune. However, this was not the only opportunity afforded. The depredations continued.

Wolves were often seen in the gray of early morning seizing chickens and devouring such carcasses of animals as had not been buried.

No one secured another successful shot and apparently the wolf pack was thriving and waxing larger and bolder. Several farmers along the river set traps, only to find them empty morning after morning.

Hamper determined upon trying his fortune as a trapper. He hauled refuse, throwing it into considerable piles in such positions as to form a hollow square, in the centre of which was a dead horse. Between each two piles he set a strong trap so that to get at the meat the wolves must pass over the traps or leap over the piles.

Everything ready, Hamper and his men were anxious for the morning. It came, but no wolf was cowering in a trap. The next day, however, as they were husking corn one of the men declared that he saw something moving among the refuse piles.

It proved to be a full grown wolf, and a male. How to secure him alive without encountering danger puzzled them a little; but one of the men cut a forked stick and held it upon his neck with sufficient force to pin him to the ground and to prevent him turning his head to bite.

Next a strap was slipped over his body and moved forward until it could be buckled about his neck. A chain fastened to the strap provided a means by which he could be tied.

Throwing blankets over the animal, the men took the wolf to a building at the club where he was chained very much like one of his cousins, the watch dogs.

Since then three more wolves have succumbed to the prowess of Hamper, who is still awaiting a material reward in the form of bounty offered for wolf scalps.—Chicago Daily News.

Joy in One's Work.

It may be proved with much certainty that God intends no man to live in this world without working; but it seems to me no less evident that He intends every man to be happy in his work. It is written, "In the sweat of thy brow," but it was never written—"in the breaking of thine heart"—"thou shalt eat bread." I find that no small misery is caused by over-worked and unhappy people, in the dark views which they necessarily take up themselves and force upon others of work itself. I believe the fact of their being unhappy is in itself a violation of divine law and a sign of some kind of folly or sin in their way of life. Now, in order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed: They must be fit for it; they must not do too much of it; and they must have a sense of success in it.—Ruskin.

Moving.

He read the letter twice and then said:

"This is one of the most moving pieces of literature I ever saw."

"Is it an appeal for aid?" asked his wife.

"No. It's a note from the landlord saying he has raised the rent."

CUSTOMS OF NAVAJOS.

WIVES ARE BOUGHT AND THE MOTHER-IN-LAW RULES.

Old Husbands for Young Girls—The Marriage Ceremony Simple—Superstitions Prevent the Navajos From Digging Graves — Funeral Feasts and Customs.

The Navajo is somewhat polygamous in tendency, but as he has to pay roundly for each wife only the most wealthy of the tribe can afford the luxury of several wives.

When a young wife has grown old and ugly, the husband often discards her, taking unto himself a younger and prettier one. Thus he takes his wives tandem, instead of abreast as the Mormons did.

The Navajo secures his wife by purchase and the Navajo maiden never lacks offers of marriage. She is not at liberty to choose for herself, but is a sort of standing invitation, which her mother holds out, for informal proposals.

The Navajo mother-in-law is the greatest on earth, for the daughter belongs to her mother until married, when the bridegroom also becomes the property of his mother-in-law, with whom he is required to live. As he is also required never to look her in the face, existence becomes a complicated problem.

The young girl seldom gets a young husband and the young man seldom gets a young wife. Property among the Navajos is mostly possessed by the old men, so they are, as a rule, able to offer a larger price for the girl than is the young man who has not yet had time to accumulate his fortune. It requires several ponies and a good flock of sheep to buy a young and buxom Navajo maiden.

"I recently witnessed an old squaw leading a young girl about 10 years old, in the school grounds at the Navajo agency," says a writer in the Indian School Journal. "As she approached the agent's office she fell upon her face by the sidewalk and immediately set up a loud, mournful wailing.

"'Some of her people must be dead,' I said to the agent.

"'No,' he replied. 'I know the old lady well. You see that little girl sitting there on the sidewalk beside her? Well, that girl is about ten years old. A short time ago her mother sold her to an old man for his wife.

"'He is 70 years old and stone blind. The matter was reported to me, and I ordered her to bring the little girl to the agency and put her in school, and that is what she is here for, but she does not want to give the girl up and that is why she is wailing.

"'She hopes to get my sympathy, but I will not stand for it. That girl must go to school, where she belongs.'

"So saying, he called a policeman and ordered the girl taken to school and turned over to the matron.

The Navajo wedding ceremony is thus described by A. M. Stephen:

"On the night set for the wedding both families and their friends meet at the hut of the bride's family. Here there is much feasting and singing and the bride's family makes return presents to the bridegroom's people, but not, of course, to the same amount.

"The women of the bride's family prepare corn meal porridge, which is poured into the wedding basket. The bride's uncle then sprinkles a circular ring and cross of the sacred blue pollen of the larkspur upon the porridge, near the outer edge and in the centre.

"The bride has hitherto been lying beside her mother, concealed under a blanket, on the woman's side of the hogan (hut). After calling to her to come to him, her uncle seats her on the west side of the hut, and the bridegroom sits down before her, with his face toward hers and the basket of porridge set between them.

"A gourd of water is then given to the bride, who pours some of it on the bridegroom's hands while he washes them, and he then performs a like office for her. With the first two fingers of the right hand he then takes a pinch of porridge just where the line of pollen touches the circle of the east side. He eats this one pinch, and the bride dips with her finger from the same place.

"He then takes in succession a pinch from the other places where the lines touch the circle and a final pinch from the centre; the bride's fingers following his. The basket of porridge is then passed over to the younger guests, who speedily devour it with merry clamor, a custom analogous to dividing the bride's cake at a wedding. The elder relatives of the couple now give them much good and weighty advice, and the marriage is complete."

The Navajos do not bury their dead. At least they do not inter them. The Navajo's superstition prevents him from even so much as touching a dead body.

So before life has entirely left the body it is wrapped in a new blanket and carried to some convenient secluded spot, where it is deposited on top of the ground, together with all the personal effects of the deceased; trinkets, etc., are carefully deposited beside the body. When there are no longer any signs of life in the body, stones are piled up around and over it, in order, they say, to keep the coyotes from carrying it off.

If the deceased be a grown person his favorite saddle pony is led up to the grave, where it is knocked in the head with an axe. Here it lies, with bridle, saddle and blanket, ready for the journey to the spirit world.

The Navajos never dig a grave themselves, though they like very much to have the white people bury their dead, and if they are anywhere near where white people live they will ask them, in case they have a death in the family, to take charge of the body and bury it. If by chance one of their number dies in the house before they have time to remove him they immediately set fire to the hogan and burn it up, with its contents, thus cremating the body.

Believing that an evil spirit enters a body at death, and that if they come in contact with the dead this evil spirit will enter into their bodies, they are afraid to touch a corpse or even the house in which the person died.

Upon the death of the head of a Navajo family all of his possessions go to his relatives—brothers, sisters, etc.,—instead of descending to his wife and children. This custom is, perhaps, the most harmful in effect of any practised these days by the Navajo.

It often leaves the wife and children destitute, especially where the husband owned the flocks as well as the cattle and the ponies. However, the Navajo women usually own the flocks, in which case the mother and children have some means of scanty support at least.

SEEKS TO GROW OUR TOBACCO.

Japan Imports American Product Now But Plans to Raise It at Home.

Under authority of the tobacco monopoly bureau of Japan, which is operated as an adjunct of the Department of Finance, T. Abe of Tokio called at the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., with credentials from Viscount Aoki, the Japanese Ambassador, to ascertain exactly the amount of tobacco raised in Virginia and North and South Carolina, a part of which is sent to Japan, as well as the method of production.

Mr. Abe made no secret of the fact that the Japanese government desired all information possible regarding the culture of this particular grade of tobacco in order that Japanese farmers may successfully grow it, and thus do away with the necessity of importing American-grown tobacco. Several attempts have been made to cultivate the American product in Japan, but failure inevitably resulted because the tobacco produced lacked the aroma characteristic of the American product. Such information as the department had was given to Japan's representative, who later left for Connecticut to inspect the Government experimental station in that State.

The Government has become alarmed over the effect on American tobacco exports due to Governmental monopolies abroad, having in mind the conditions existing in France, Italy, Spain, Austria, and Japan, and to meet these conditions and to prevent, so far as possible, a curtailment of American exports of tobacco, there was incorporated in the Agricultural Appropriation bill recently an amendment providing for an investigation in countries where the business of buying and selling tobacco is conducted by the Government.

Letters of Excuse.

A school teacher has a collection of quaint excuses brought in to her by her pupils. She teaches on the East Side of New York, and her wards, who are of very humble birth indeed, hand her excuses written on paper boxes, magazine covers, and even wall paper.

One note said: "Excuse my son Gorg for been absent on previs occasion for he had no shews."

Another said: "Please excuse Jacob for not to have because it was a hat buying, and came till late."

A third, written on a piece of wall paper, said: "Dear and honored administrateur, wish yourself of excusing ma daughter because that she absented herself. Wish yourself to accept mine felicitacions.—Llane Piere."—New York Press.

A Hop and a Jump.

"It seems he met her at a hop, promptly proposed and now they're to be married."

"Strange that he should take that step at a hop."

"She took it at a jump."—Courier-Journal.

The great Lick telescope reveals stars so far distant that it would require 30,000 of them placed together to be visible to the naked eye.