THE WOODEN BELL OF RIPON

Near the railway station at Ripon is a quaint block of old almshouses, with an ancient chapel dedicated to St. Mary Magdalen, of grey stone, backed by a grove of elms. The little chapel contains some curious wood carving, the original stone altar, and a large oak chest in which reposes a solitary curiosity — a wooden bell, painted grey-green. The chapel is fortunately unrestored, left in its picturesque antiquity to moulder away. Any one who had seen the chapel of Barden Tower some years ago, and what it has become under the hand of the restorer, will know what it is to be grateful that a venerable relic of antiquity has not been furbished up to suit modern taste. That St. Mary Magdalen's would have fallen into bad hands had it been given over to restoration may be judged by the hideous new chapel which the authorities have recently erected close to the almshouses.

By that wooden bell in the oak chest hangs a tale.

In the time of our grandfathers, Dr. W——, was Dean of Ripon, a divine of the old portwine drinking school.

Now St. Mary Magdalen's chapel was no longer used. By the ancient endowment there was to be a resident chaplain and daily service in the little church, which the inmates of the almshouses were expected to attend. But the chaplaincy and its emoluments were usually held by one of the canons of the Minster. The stipend went into his pocket; the duties were neglected. If the old almsfolk wished to pray to God daily, they might totter three quarters of a mile up to the Minster.

Dean W——, took on himself the chaplaincy; that is, he appropriated to the stocking of his cellar the money bequeathed to the almonership of the Magdalen Hospital.

But his cellar fell low. The Dean wanted money; his credit with the wine merchants was as low as his cellar. How was money to be raised?

One day he had the bell of the Magdalen Chapel removed from the gable in which it had hung for many centuries, and had hung silent for many years.

The bell was supposed to have gone to the founders; and the money paid for it to the wine merchant; anyhow, soon after, a hamper of fine old crusted port arrived at the Deanery.

But Ripon people, though longsuffering, could not quite endure the "robbing of churches." Murmurs were heard; the Dean was remonstrated with. He puffed out, turning as red as a turkey cock —

"Well, well! the bell shall go back again."

And sure enough next week the bell was seen once more hanging in the gable of St. Mary Magdalen's chapel as of yore.

The Ripon people were content. The bell was never rung, but to that they were accustomed. Who cared whether the old goodies in the hospital were ministered to or not? It was no affair of theirs if the founder's wishes were set at nought, and the walls of the Magdalen never sounded with the voice of prayer.

But next spring, as on many a former one, the swallows built their nests among the eaves, and found a place about the altar of God's deserted house, as they had done in the days of the Psalmist. When nesting time came, some boys began climbing about the roofs in quest of eggs.

One of them, seeing a rope dangling from the bell, caught it and began to pull, when, to his amazement, the bell uttered no sound. He crept under it. There was no clapper; and what was more, it hardly looked hollow. His curiosity was excited, and he climbed up to it, and discovered that the bell was only a piece of deal turned, and painted the colour of bell metal!

The story sounded further than ever had the old bell; and for very shame the Dean was obliged to take it down, and hide it in the chest of the Magdalen chapel.

Autumn came round. The Dean had notable espalliers in his garden. His trees were too attractive to the urchins of Ripon to escape visits. This highly incensed the Dean; and one night, hearing the boys at his apple trees, he rushed, stick in hand, upon them. One he caught by the scruff of his neck. The others fled over the wall.

"Oh, you young ruffian! you audacious young scoundrel!" roared the Dean; "where do you think thieves will go to hereafter? What do you think will happen to them here?"

"Please, sir! please, sir! — "

"Hold your wicked tongue, you rascal!" thundered the Dean, whistling his cudgel round his head, "I shall thrash you unmercifully now, and lock you up in the black hole tonight, and take you to the magistrate tomorrow, and have you sent to prison. And then, if you go on with your stealing, sir! you will go — there!" And the Dean progged with his stick in the direction of the centre of the globe.

Then he shook the boy furiously — "one, two," bang came the stick down.

"Please, mercy, Mr. Dean; spare me!"

"Spare you, sir! No — three."

"But, please, Mr. Dean, *my father made the wooden bell for you*."

"Go along, you rascal," gasped the Dean, relaxing his hold, and rushing back into his house.

In 1877 the Dean of Ripon (Dr. Freemantle) wrote to me relative to this matter: — "My attention has been directed to an anecdote told by you in your book called 'Yorkshire Oddities' of the late Dean W——. I have made it my business to ascertain the correctness of the story, as it has excited a good deal of feeling in the minds of some of the old residents here. We have found a bell which was sent from the Deanery at least 40 years ago, and which has been in the crypt of the Cathedral ever since. It is exactly the same size as the wooden bell, which we have recovered from a heap of cinders." So Dean W—— did not sell the bell after all!

OLD JOHN MEALY-FACE

Old John M——, a character in his way, and a celebrity in his very little circle, was born in the parish of Topcliffe, near Thirsk, on February 20th, 1784.

He was thrice married. His first and second wives I did not know; the third he married March 29th, 1838. She was afflicted with paralysis of her legs during a great part of her later life. She was a charming old woman — religious, amiable, and a general favourite with her neighbours.

Old John had sharp features, an eagle nose, and a prominent chin. He wore drab corduroy breeches and blue stockings. He shaved all the hair off his face. The nickname he bore in the village, where he resided on his small farm, was "Mealy-Face". He obtained it by this means: John was a close-fisted old man, who stinted himself, and his wife above all, in every possible way, for he dearly loved money. He did not allow his wife enough food, and she, poor thing, was wont, when he was out for the day at market or at fair, to bake herself a loaf from which she could cut a hunch when hungry.

Her husband found this out, and was very wroth. When he went to market he pressed his face down in the flour at the top of the bin, and on his return put his face back in the depressions, to make sure that the flour had not been disturbed.

The old man was not without dry humour. The story is told of him that a clergyman called on him one day to say he was about to leave his present sphere of work "the Lord having called him to work in another vineyard."

"Then" said Old Mealy-Face "I lay you get a better wage."

"Yes" answered the clergyman "it is a better living by a hundred a year."

"Heh! I thowt seah (so)" said John, dryly; "else the Lord mud ha' called while (till) he'd been hoarse, and ye'd niver ha' heeard."

An excursionist met him on Whitson Scar, on the Hambledons. The traveller had come there from Thirsk, hoping to see the glorious view stretching to Pendle Hill, in Lancashire. But a fog came on and obscured the scene. The gentleman coming upon John, who had been to Helmsley on some business or other, accosted him in an offhand manner:

"Hey, gaffer! there's a fine view from here, ain't there, on fine days?"

"Aye, sur, it might be worse."

"One can see a long way, I'm told."

"I reckon one may if one's got eyes."

"Now tell me, gaffer, can one see as far as America, do you think?"

"One can see a deel furder," answered John

"You don't mean to say so?"

"Eh, but I do. One can see t' moon from Whitston on a moonshiny neet."

Old John had a famous pear tree in his garden. Two years running his pears were stolen, and no doubt were sold in Thirsk market, without John being a penny the richer. The old man grimly awaited the thief as the fruit ripened in the following autumn, sitting nightly in his window, gun in hand.

One dark night, just before market day, he heard some one at his tree. He took careful aim at the spot whence the sound proceeded, fired, and a scream told him his bullet had taken effect. In fact, he had hit the thief in the thigh; but the ball had fortunately penetrated the flesh, and broken no bone.

The pear stealer was caught, and on the first opportunity brought before the magistrates at Thirsk. The presiding magistrate — I think it was Sir John Galway, but am not certain — deemed it advisable to caution John M—— against too free a use of his gun.

"You know, my good friend, that a gun loaded with a bullet might have killed the man who stole your pears."

"Ah, it might, and it would, but t' gun snecked (kicked) as I were blazin' wi' it."

"If the gun had not 'snecked', as you call it, the bullet would probably have gone into the poor fellow's heart and killed him dead."

"I'll tak' care it deean't sneck again" said Old John, who had no scruples against shooting a pear stealer.

Whilst in the parish of Topcliffe I am constrained to relate an anecdote illustrative of Yorkshire shrewdness, though unconnected with Mealy-Face.

An old woman — Molly Jakes, we will call her — died, or was thought to have died, and was buried by the parish. A few days after the funeral the vicar was talking to the sexton, when the latter said, drawing the back of his hand across his nose, "Ye thowt old Molly Jakes were deead, sur?"

"Dead, dead! Bless my soul! of course she was."

"Well, mebbe she is neah (now)."

"What do you mean? Speak, for heaven's sake!"

"Nay, sur, it's nowt! Only I thowt efter I'd thrown the mould in as I heeard her movin' and grum'ling under t' greand (ground)."

"You dug her up at once, of course, man?"

"Nay" said the sexton "I know two o' that" casting a knowing look at the parson. "T' parish paid one burying: who was to pay me for digging her up and putting her in ageean, if she died once maire? Besides" said the sexton, drawing his hand back again across his nose, "Old Molly cost t' parish hef-a-croon a week when she war wick (alive). Noo she's felted (hidden) under t' greeand, she costs nowt. If I'd dug her up and she lived ever seah (so) long, what would ha' t' ratepayers 'a said teah (to) me?"

John M——, once, when I was in his house, told me a curious tale about himself. He was riding one night to Thirsk, when he suddenly saw passing him a radiant boy on a white horse. There was no sound of footfall as he drew nigh. Old John was first aware of the approach of the mysterious rider by seeing the shadow of himself and his horse flung before him on the high road. Thinking there might be a carriage with lamps, he was not alarmed till by the shortening of the shadow he knew that the light must be near him, and then he was surprised to hear no sound. He thereupon turned in his saddle, and at the same moment the radiant boy passed him. He was a child of about eleven, with a bright, fresh face.

"Had he any clothes on, and, if so, what were they like?" I asked. But John was unable to tell me. His astonishment was so great that he took no notice of particulars.

The boy rode on till he came to a gate which led into a field. He stooped as if to open the gate, rode through, and all was instantly dark.

"I'm an owd customer" said John when he presented himself to be married the third time; "soa, vicar, I hope ye'll do t' job cheap. Strike off two thirds, as it's the third wife."

John Mealy-Face died at the age of eighty-four, and was buried at Topcliffe on November 5th, 1868.

THE BOGGART OF HELLEN-POT, A TALE OF THE YORKSHIRE MOORS

I took the opportunity last autumn, just before the breakup of the weather, of shaking off the dust of shoddy mills, and getting a whiff of air, unadulterated with smoke, in a run among the Yorkshire moors for the better part of a week. I spent the first night at Bolton, and slept soundly, after a ramble through the beautiful Wharfedale, and an examination of the Strid, where the river gushes through a rift in the rock so narrow that it is supposed possible to stride across it, though I never heard of any man venturesome enough to make the attempt. A friend accompanied me, a Mr. Keene, and on the following day we ascended the valley of the Wharfe to Arncliffe, visiting on the way the picturesque ruin called Barden Tower, and the magnificent hanging crags at Kilnsea.

At Arncliffe, a quaint moor village, my companion fell lame, and was unable to accompany me next day on a mapless ramble in search of whatsoever was picturesque and wild. It was a glorious day, the sky pure and blue, the air elastic, the heather and fern twinkling with dew. It was really very hard for poor Keene to spend ten hours alone in a dismal little country inn, without either a book or a newspaper, whilst I was brushing through the heather, scrambling limestone scaurs, and exploring ravines, inhaling at every breath life and health and ozone. But it served him right. What was the fellow thinking of when he put on a pair of new boots for his walking expedition? He looked wistfully after me out of the parlour window, and called to me to be back for a dinner-tea at seven, adding that he hoped his feet would be better in the afternoon, and then he would stroll to meet me.

Leaving Arncliffe, and noticing a bright, fretful little stream, dashing through a broken and beautiful cleft in the hills, I took a sheep track above it, and determined on following its course. In a few minutes I seemed to have left civilisation behind me entirely. The great expanse of moorland which opened before, the utter absence of all signs of cultivation, the wild rocky pile of the Hard Flask on one side and of Fountains Fell on the other, gave the scene a savage grandeur which one hardly expects to find in England. The little beck moaned far away below me out of sight, the wind soughed pleasantly among the heather, and the curlew, which I constantly started, rose with a melancholy pipe and flew away to the grey scaurs on the side of Fountains Fell.

Being of the geological persuasion, I usually carry about with me a hammer and a small sack or pouch, which I sling round my neck, for the conveyance of specimens. I revelled in these limestone hills, spending hour after hour chipping off fragments of rock, and breaking them up to extract the fossils. I hardly knew whither I rambled, but I certainly got into Silverdale, for I lunched on my bread and cheese with Pen-y-ghent towering above me on the west, and beyond it rose the glorious pile of Ingleborough. I ascended Pen-y-ghent, the height of which is 2270 feet, and watched the sunset from the top. Then I followed the precedent of the illustrious King of France who, having marched to the top of a hill, marched down again. But I was quite out in my geography. Now, with the map before me, I see that my ideas as to the direction in which Arncliffe lay were

entirely wrong. My walk during the day had been of such a zigzag nature that I had lost my compass points, and had made no landmarks. The consequence naturally was, that I descended Pen-y-ghent on the wrong side, and then instinctively perceiving I was in the wrong, I did a foolish thing — I struck off from my line of course at right angles. It would have been better for me to have retraced my steps up the mountainside, and taken bearings again whilst there was still a little light; but instead of doing so, I involved myself more and more in confusion, and at last, as it became dark, I was utterly ignorant of where I was, and which was the direction in which my face was turned.

Under such circumstances a man is tempted to allow himself to be that which in a brighter hour he would repudiate — a fool. I remember mentally expressing my conviction that I was an idiot, and indignantly asking myself how I could have thought of setting out on a walk in an unknown country without map or compass? My exasperation with self was by no means allayed when I tripped over a stone and fell my length in a sludgy patch of swamp. At the same time I became conscious of a growing pain in my vitals, and was sensible of a vacuum in that region of the body which is situated beneath the lower buttons of the waistcoat; and a vacuum is what nature is well known to abhor. There was a dinner-tea spread for me in the inn at Arncliffe: chickens and ham I knew had been promised; trout I naturally anticipated would prove part of the fare in a famous fishing district; veal cutlets perhaps, and mashed potatoes. Heavens! And I not there. I know I groaned at the thought, for the sound as it issued from my lips startled me. As I walked on with drooping head, those veal cutlets and mashed potatoes rose up before me tauntingly. I am a man of resolution, and finding that the vision only aggravated matters, I beat the veal cutlets down; yet, when they vanished, a new phantom rose to distress me. During the day I had examined on the slopes of Coska, Fountains, and Pen-y-ghent several of those curious pots which are peculiar to the Yorkshire limestone moors. These pots, as they are called, are natural wells, hideous circular gaping holes opening perpendicularly into the bowels of the mountain. In rainy weather the tiny rills which descend the fells precipitate themselves into these black gulfs and disappear. Far down at the bottom of the mountain the streams bubble out again from low browed caverns. Some of these pots are many hundred feet deep; some are supposed by the vulgar to be unfathomable, for certainly their bottoms have not been sounded yet, and a stone dropped falls and falls, each rebound becoming fainter, but the ear catches no final splash.

Now, the number of these frightful holes I had stumbled upon during the day made me fear lest in the darkness I should come upon one, and tumble down it without hope of ever coming up alive, or indeed of my bones receiving Christian burial. It was now in vain for me to endeavour to revive the dream of veal cutlets in order to obliterate the hideous image of these pots; the pots maintained the day, and haunted me till — till I suddenly became conscious of some one walking rapidly after me, endeavouring apparently to overtake me. The conviction came upon me with relief, and I stood still, eagerly awaiting the individual, expecting at length to be put in the right direction. The stars gave light enough for me to discern the figure as that of a man, but I could scarcely discover more. His walk was strange, a wriggle and duck accompanying each

step, the reason being, as I ascertained on his coming alongside of me, that he was a cripple in both legs.

"Good evening, friend" said I; "I'm a stranger lost on the moor: can you direct me towards Arncliffe?"

"On, on with me" was the answer, and the hand was waved as though pointing forward.

"Dark night this" I said.

"Darker below" he muttered, as though to himself; "darker, darker, darker."

"Shall we have a bit of moon, think you, presently?"

He made no answer, and I turned to look at him.

There was something in the way he walked which made me uneasy. When he took a step with his right foot he worked his body round facing me, and then his head jogged on to his left shoulder and reclined upon it. When he stepped out with his left foot his body revolved so that his back was presented to me, and the head was jerked on to the right shoulder. I noticed that he never held his head upright; sometimes it dropped on his breast, and once I saw it drop backwards. The impression forced itself on me that just thus would a man walk who had his neck and legs broken, if by any means the possibility were afforded him to attempt a promenade.

"How far to Arncliffe?" I asked, but he vouchsafed no answer. I tried another question or two, but could obtain no reply. I lost my temper, and laid my hand on his shoulder to draw his attention to what I was inquiring, but with a wriggle he glided from under my hand, and hobbled on before me.

I had no resource but to follow him. He kept ahead of me, and seemed determined not to enter into conversation; yet I offered him half a crown if he would give me the information I desired to obtain. I was puzzled with my strange companion, and felt somewhat uneasy. I felt that he was a bit "uncanny," both in his appearance and in his manner.

Presently we came near water, as I judged by the sound, which was that of a beck murmuring among stones. On went my conductor, following the watercourse, and so rapidly that I had difficulty in keeping up with him. When he leaped on a stone or scrambled up a turf-hummock, so as to stand against the horizon, where a feeble light still lingered, I could distinguish the horrible contortions of his body, and the sight invariably heightened my uneasiness.

Suddenly I missed him!

I called — but there was no reply! I stood still and listened, but heard nothing save the bubbling of the stream, and, far, far away, the to-whoo of an owl.

Noiselessly a bat fluttered past me, coming instantaneously out of the blackness of the night, and vanishing back into it as instantaneously.

“I say, you fellow!” hallooed I to the vanishing guide.

“You fellow!” answered the scaurs of Pen-y-ghent, in a lower key.

“To-whoo” faintly called the owl.

“What do you mean by deserting me like this?” I roared.

“Like this” muttered the echo. “To-whoo” responded the owl.

“I must follow the beck” I said; “that will lead me to the river, and the river will guide me to some habitation of living man.”

“Living man” growled the echo. “To-whoo” sang the owl.

I stumbled over the water worn stones, and splashed into water. My ankles were scarified, my shins bruised; I narrowly escaped breaking my bones as I fell again and again. I did not dare leave the stream, lest I should lose my way.

Then a nightjar began to hiss from among the rocks, and the stream to dash along more wildly. The banks rose higher, and I seemed to be walking through a railway cutting. I looked up, and saw the rugged outline of rock and furze on the eastern bank, and on top of a huge block stood a distorted human figure. It was that of my strange companion.

Down the slope he came with wriggle and jump; he came straight towards me, spread out his arms — in a moment they were clasped round me, and I was lifted from my feet. I was so astonished that I made no resistance at first, and it was only after he had taken a dozen steps with me, and I heard the splash of the beck falling into what must be a pot, and saw the black yawning hole open before me, and felt the man bending as though about to leap down it with me in his arms, that I tore my right arm loose, and caught at a young rowan tree which leaned over the gulf.

At the same moment there flashed before my eyes the light of a lanthorn, the flame small and yellow, yet sufficient to illumine the face of the bearer—a young woman, the countenance wondrously beautiful, but full of woe unutterable.

The lanthorn passed across the open mouth of the pot. The moment it became visible the arms which held me were unclasped, and I saw the man sink down the abyss, with the light reflected from his upturned face. He went down it, not with a whizz as a falling stone, but slowly as a man might sink in water. Thus I was well able to observe his blanched face and wide dilated eyes fixed with horror on the lanthorn flame.

Having recovered my feet, naturally my first impulse was to run up the bank, and get as far as possible from the ugly well into which I might have been precipitated. My next was to look round for the young woman who bore the light. I could see the lanthorn at some little distance, but I could not distinguish the bearer.

I called to her; she lifted the light till her hand came within its radiance. The small white hand beckoned me to follow.

I ran to catch her up, but the faster I pursued, the swifter glided the flame before me. Evidently the bearer did not desire to be overtaken. When I stopped, she stopped; when I advanced, she moved onwards; always keeping the same distance ahead of me. So we must have proceeded for a couple of miles, when suddenly the light went out, and at the same instant I became conscious of a small farmhouse lying before me.

In less time than it takes me to write this I had entered the enclosure which surrounded it, and had rapped hastily at the door. A gaunt moorland farmer opened it, and looked at me with surprise.

“Can you let me have shelter for a little while, and then a guide to Arncliffe?” I asked. “I have lost my way, and have met with a strange adventure, which has somewhat shaken my nerves.”

“Sit here; come here; sit thee down there” he said, pointing to the ingle corner with the stem of his pipe, and then closing and bolting the door, he stalked over to the opposite corner and sat down on a rocking chair. He eyed me musingly, and smoked steadily without making any remark. After having puffed away for ten minutes, he shouted at the top of his voice:

“Gi’e him a glass of ale, lass.”

“A’m boune to, lad” replied a voice from the back-kitchen: and looking over my shoulder, I noticed that there was a woman in the little leanto back room, “fettling up” by the light of a rush candle.

“Thou’rt none boune to Arncliffe to-neet?” said the man, slowly withdrawing his pipe from his mouth.

“I am, if you will direct me,” I replied, “for I have a friend there who is expecting me, and who will be sorely put out at my non-appearance earlier.”

“Humph!”

He smoked for ten minutes more, and then said:

“And what brought thee this road?”

"I will tell you," I replied; and then proceeded to relate what had happened to me. As soon as I mentioned the strange companion I had met with —

"It's t' Boggart, lass!" called the farmer to his wife, "he's gotten agait misleading folk again."

When I spoke of the flash of light before which the man had quailed, and which had revealed the face of a woman, pale and sad, bending over it —

"Weel done, Peggy!" roared the farmer; "'tis no but Peggy wi' t' lanthorn, lass" — again to his wife.

"She's a good 'un," responded the lady from the kitchen.

"Who are the Boggart and Peggy?" I asked; "they seem to be intimate acquaintances of yours."

The great Yorkshireman did not answer, but whiffed away, with his dreamy eyes fixed on the fire.

"So t' Boggart thowt to ha' hugged thee down Pothoile!" Then he laughed. "I reckon," mused he again, "I reckon he were a bit flayed to see Peggy come anent him that road!"

"I wish" said I "that you would tell me all about him and her."

"So I will, lad, bi'm bye, if thou'rt boune to Arncliffe to-neet." He looked up at me. "We can gi' thee a bed if thou likes: it's no but a poor one, but it's none so bad—eh, lass?" The last two words were shouted to his wife.

"Ay, ay" she replied from the kitchen.

"Thank you very kindly," said I; "if it were not for my friend at Arncliffe, I would accept your offer with alacrity; but as it happens, I *must* return there tonight."

"Gi'e us a leet, lass!" called the man, knocking the ashes from his pipe, rising, and taking down a lanthorn.

The good woman lighted the candle for him, and the great Yorkshireman shut the lanthorn door, took up his cap, and said to me —

"Now, if thou'rt boune to come, come on."

I rose and followed him. He led the way, and as we walked towards Arncliffe he told me the following tale: —

"Some hundred years ago there lived a young woman in a cottage near Kettlewell. A strange man came into the neighbourhood, gained her affections,

and married her. They settled at the little farm in which my guide now resided. They had not lived a twelvemonth together before the constables entered the house one evening, and took the man up on the charge of bigamy. He had a wife and family living at Bolton, in Lancashire. As they were carrying him off, he broke from them and fled over the moors, and was never retaken. By some it was supposed that he had escaped to America, but by others that he had fallen into one of the pots and had perished. His poor second wife, heartbroken, wandered all that night searching for him, and was found dead on the side of Pen-y-ghent next morning. And they say" added my guide, in a low voice, "that she seeks him still; and when she's gotten him she'll tak' him before the throne of God to be sentenced for having ruined her happiness, and been the cause of her death. That's why he's so flayed (afraid) of meeting wi' she, and sma' blame to him."

"So you think the wretched man perished in one of the pots?"

"I reckon he did. And he'll never have rest till his bones are laid i' t' churchyard, and that'll never be."

"Farmer," said I, after a pause, "have you plenty of rope about your house?"

He grunted an assent.

"Then I will descend the pot tomorrow."

I am sorry to state here that my companion was so completely thrown off his balance by this announcement that he swore.

"Shall you have time to assist me?" I asked.

"I'm none particular thronged" he replied.

"Some additional help will be needed" I continued; "if you have a workman or two disposed to earn a day's wage by being useful to me, bid them be ready with all that is requisite at the mouth of the pot tomorrow."

"Ay! if we can addle us a bit brass that road" responded the farmer, "we're t' chaps for thee. But I reckon thou'rt no but making gam' of me."

"I am not, indeed" I replied; "get plenty of rope ready, and a stout pole laid across the mouth of the hole, and I will go down tomorrow."

I was as good as my word. Keene accompanied me next day to the little farm, and there we found half a dozen men with ropes and windlass ready to assist in the exploit.

As the sun was shining, I felt no fear whatever, and I laughed and chatted whilst a belt was strapped round my waist, another under my arms, and the

cord passed beneath them. Before descending I took up my geological bag and slung it round my neck; I also picked up my hammer.

"You may be sure I shall find some magnificent stalactites down there" said I.

"Are you ready?" asked Keene.

I sat on the edge of the gulf under the mountain ash to which I had clung for life the night before. I directed my eyes downwards, and saw the little stream lose itself in spray after a leap or two. How awfully black the abyss seemed! "Now, then!" I slipped down, and the windlass was slowly unwound. Click, click, click! I heard each sound of the crank as it descended. The air about me was cold and damp. Beautiful ferns and mosses flourished on every ledge; presently, however, I got beyond the fern zone. I was in darkness. The spray of the falling stream was so finely comminuted that it was more like mist than spray. The walls of the pot were green with lichen, and now I was below the region of mosses. Here, on a little patch of moist *Marchanta polymorpha*, I found a poor butterfly, the common meadow brown. It had probably fluttered some way down the chasm in the giddiness of the moment, its wings had been clogged with spray, and it had been carried lower and lower till at last it had alighted, dripping and chilled, without hope of seeing sunlight again, on a small ledge covered with lichen. I rescued the poor insect, and put it inside my hat. I began to swing like a pendulum, and at one time had some difficulty in preventing myself from striking the rocky sides.

I could not see the walls now; I could not hear the click of the windlass. All below was perfectly black; not a sign of a bottom; but white terraces, covered with stalagmite, gleamed up round the well-like ribs, catching a little light from above. With my hammer I broke off a large mass of deposit formed by the droppings of water largely impregnated with lime. It whizzed down, but still I heard no final splash. I shouted — only faintly, as the pressure on my lungs from the belt prevented my using my voice to its full extent — but the whole well seemed alive with echoes. I tried to turn my head and look up at the sky, but I was unable. The darkness and chill began to tell upon me, and an agonising cramp contracted my legs. However I managed to place my feet upon a ledge, and to stand up. Those working the windlass, feeling that the strain was off the rope, let out no more. When the cramp left me, I cast myself off again, and dropped below the ledge. After a while I began to hear a sound of falling water, and in a few minutes passed an opening in the side of the pit, out of which gushed an underground stream, and precipitated itself down the chasm.

Now I became conscious of a broad ledge of rock, extending considerably out into the well, and contracting its size; something lay upon it — fragments of broken stalactites and stalagmites, I fancied — what they were I could not distinguish, especially as at the same moment that I saw them I perceived something black rising towards me. In one second I saw the face of the Boggart

flash up at me full of hideous triumph, and I felt the grip of his arms about my waist. Next moment I lost all consciousness.

When I came to myself I was lying in the sunshine on the slope above the pot — Hellen or Hull-pot is its name — with Keene and the farmer bending anxiously over me.

"I'm all right," said I, in a low voice; and in a couple of minutes I was sufficiently recovered to sit up.

I took off my hat, and away flew the butterfly I had rescued, oblivious of the hours of darkness and misery it had passed through.

"Did you reach the bottom?" asked Keene. I shook my head.

"We let out all the rope we had" said my friend "and then we pulled up again, and found you at the end in a dead faint. I see you have not been idle," he added, lifting my geological bag. "Full of stalactites, I suppose," and as he shook it the contents rattled.

"No" said I "I put nothing into it."

"Then how comes it filled?" he asked. "Why, halloo! what have we here?" and he emptied out of it a heap of human bones and a shattered skull. *How* they got into the sack I shall never know. The remains were very old, and were encrusted with stalagmite. They lie now in Horton churchyard. I believe the Boggart has not been seen since.

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For a considerable time during our walk from Malham Tarn to Settle I had been silent. Keene could endure it no longer, and at last exclaimed, "Really this is intolerable! You have been in a brown study for the last half hour without speaking a word. A penny for your thoughts!"

"To tell you the truth," I replied, "I have been thinking over what might have happened if you had fallen lame at Arncliffe, *if* I had gone on a geological walk without you, and had lost my way on Penigent, and had fallen in with a Boggart, who tried to precipitate me down a pot, and if I had been rescued by an *ignus fatuus*, and had finally descended the pot and brought up the Boggart's bones!"

Mr. Keene stared at me with amazement. I then related to him what I have just related to you, good reader, and I concluded with the observation: "All this, you know, *might* have happened, but unfortunately it *didn't*. You have had my thoughts, so hand me your penny."