

## "COME LIVE WITH ME AND BE MY LOVE."

AN ENGLISH PASTORAL.

By ROBERT BUCHANAN,

Author of "God and the Man," "The Shadow of the Sword," &amp;c.

## CHAPTER XI.

## FATHER AND SON.

Which are you wooing, my son, my son?  
The brown maid or the white?  
The brown has gold, but the white has none,  
Take heed your choice be right!  
For if you choose the penniless thing,  
Foul shall your fortune be!  
I'll dower ye both with a heppen string,  
To hang both her and thee!—*The Miller's Thumb.*

Meanwhile, George Kingsley, after lingering miserably about the place in hopes of catching a glimpse of Bridget, until he dared linger no longer, reluctantly walked home to the Warren Farm.

He picked his way through the familiar weeds of the yard, entered the door, hung his hat on a rough iron rail driven into the panelling for that purpose, and found himself in the dingy room in which he and his father took their meals together. The old man was bending, pen in hand, over a battered table set in the light of the window, and either was, or feigned to be, too deeply engaged in perusing the papers littered before him to turn or look up at the sound of his son's footstep on the uncarpeted floor.

"Fifteen thousand seven hundred and fifty-six seventeen and ninepence ha'penny!" the funds," the old man muttered relishingly. Eighteen hundred out on loan at good interest. Farm and plant. I ain't took stock of 'em lately—say another five thousand, and it's more than that. If that young vule knew what he was jeopardisin'!"

George moved, and the Gaffer turned at the sound, with a grunt of alarm, clutching the papers in a disorderly armful.

"What d'ye want, you?" he panted at the dim figure, with a scowl. "Oh, 'tis 'ee, Jarge! What a fright 'ee give me, to be sure. You're late."

"I've been for a walk," answered George, moodily, sitting at the other table, littered with the remnants of the old man's breakfast, a few scraps of rusty bacon-rind, and an empty tin can which had contained buttermilk.

"Eat your victuals, lad," said the Gaffer, turning the papers into a drawer and transferring the key to his pocket. "I've got summat to say to 'ee."

"I don't want any, thank you," answered George.

"So much saved is so much gained," said the affectionate parent. "Jarge, lad," he went on, with as near an approach to a caressing, wheedling manner as his vulpine features and harsh voice would admit of. "Don't 'ee be a vule, now don't 'ee! Listen to reason. I've been takin' count o' things. Catherine Thorpe's come into money—a lump o' money. Ten thousand pounds! It's enough t' make a God-fearin' man turn atheist to see the luck o' some folks. Ten thousand pounds for a bottle of elderberry wine, and it's took me fifty years' saving an' scraping, down early and up late, to make the double of it. And I be a twenty-thousander. It's all yours, Jarge, in the course o' nature, if so be as you've got the sense to take it. The lass is as fond o' you as a cow is of her calf. I've sounded her, and I know."

George made a movement of impatience. "Now, now!" said the old man, wheedlingly, "listen, Jarge, listen! I be middling tough, and perhaps you thinks I be going to last for ever. All the Kingsleys is long lived," he added apologetically, "it's in the breed. Jarge, I've been thinkin'!"

His little red eyes twinkled with the very consciousness of gain, and he stammered with eagerness, his tone changing from its wheedling note to a threatening one and back again. "Don't be a vule. Don't throw thirty thousand pound into the gutter. Ye won't ha' so very long to

wait for my brass. Twenty years—fifteen, maybe—ten, perhaps, 'll see me under the sod!" He peered eagerly into his son's face to mark the effect of this pleasing prophecy. "And the wench's money 'll be yours, right away, when ye marry her. Ye'll leave the church door with ten thousand pound, not to speak o' the farm, as 'd be a good property with a man to look after it. Damn 'ee!" he cried, his anger at the young man's obstinate perversity breaking to the surface in spite of his endeavours to repress it. "What is it as ye wants? My money? Not while I be livin', my lad!"

"But I'll tell 'ee what I'll do," he added, falling back into the coaxing tone. He mopped his forehead and gasped, greed tugging at his very heart-strings. "I'll sign a deed of partnership—me to keep what I've got, and you to share and share alike wi' me in the vuture, and to have all when I die. Will that suit 'ee? Will that suit 'ee, Jarge?"

"Can't you understand, father," said George, with a weary impatience, "that it is quite useless for you to talk to me about money in this matter? My mind is made up. I'll

"No!" interrupted George, with a mockery which tasted bitter in his own mouth. "I don't mean that. I mean the portion that falleth unto me. My mother left me a hundred pounds a year ten years ago."

The Gaffer dropped from the patriarchal to the financial with a suddenness which might have seemed more than a little ludicrous to a third person, had any been present.

"And what about your keep, and your clothes, ye hulkin' good-for-naught?" he asked indignantly.

"Take what they cost you," said George, "and give me the rest. I'm going to London, and then I'm going to marry Bridget."

"Damn her, the whey-faced slut!" cried the Gaffer.

"Stop!" cried George. "Say what you will of me, but you sha'n't abuse her."

The old man broke into a torrent of interjections, and spat insults and curses on the name of his son's sweetheart. George left the room, fearful lest his anger should make him forget himself. The unvenerable old man was his father, and violence to him was impossible. The Gaffer followed him to the yard, heaping curse on

curse.

"Go and rot! You're no son of mine!" he screamed hoarsely, as George's figure disappeared into the roadway. He stood at his threshold, mumbling insult and anathema between his toothless gums for five minutes after. More even than his son he hated the innocent girl who was the cause of their quarrel, and vowed revenge against her. What form that revenge could take was not clear to him, but so good a later would find a way.

George went towards the farm, his heart at first full of rage against the harsh and sordid old man, whose parting curses still rang in his ears. It was hardly his fault that he had never had much affection for his father, who neither gave nor demanded it. What education, what half-seen glimpses he had of the large world outside the mean little circle in which Gaffer Kingsley was content to pass his life, and to which he would have condemned his son, the boy owed entirely to his mother. He would have been employed in scaring crows or cutting turnips instead of at school, if the old man could have had his way; but the mother, yielding in all else, had been resolute in that, and had insisted on spending some portion of her patrimony in educating her son. Luckily for George, she had lived to save him from his father's sordid tyranny until he had stood on the verge of early manhood, and he had never lost the advantages thus gained. The Gaffer, while openly and noisily condemning his "book-learning" and "finicking pursuits," had grown to have a sort of sullen respect for them, for there is nothing a man of his sort so fears as superior knowledge.

George dismissed his angry thoughts of his father as he walked on, and turned his eyes to the future.

"We must face the world together," he said cheerily. "The little girl won't fail me, God bless her! She's a brave little woman. I've a hundred a year,

a pair of hands, and a head on my shoulders, not quite empty, thank God and the dear old mother! Things aren't so bad after all. I must persuade Bridget to marry me at once. What's the use of keeping apart now we know each other's minds? . . . By Jove, there she is! Hi! Bridget! Bridget, my darling! Why, she's running away from me!"

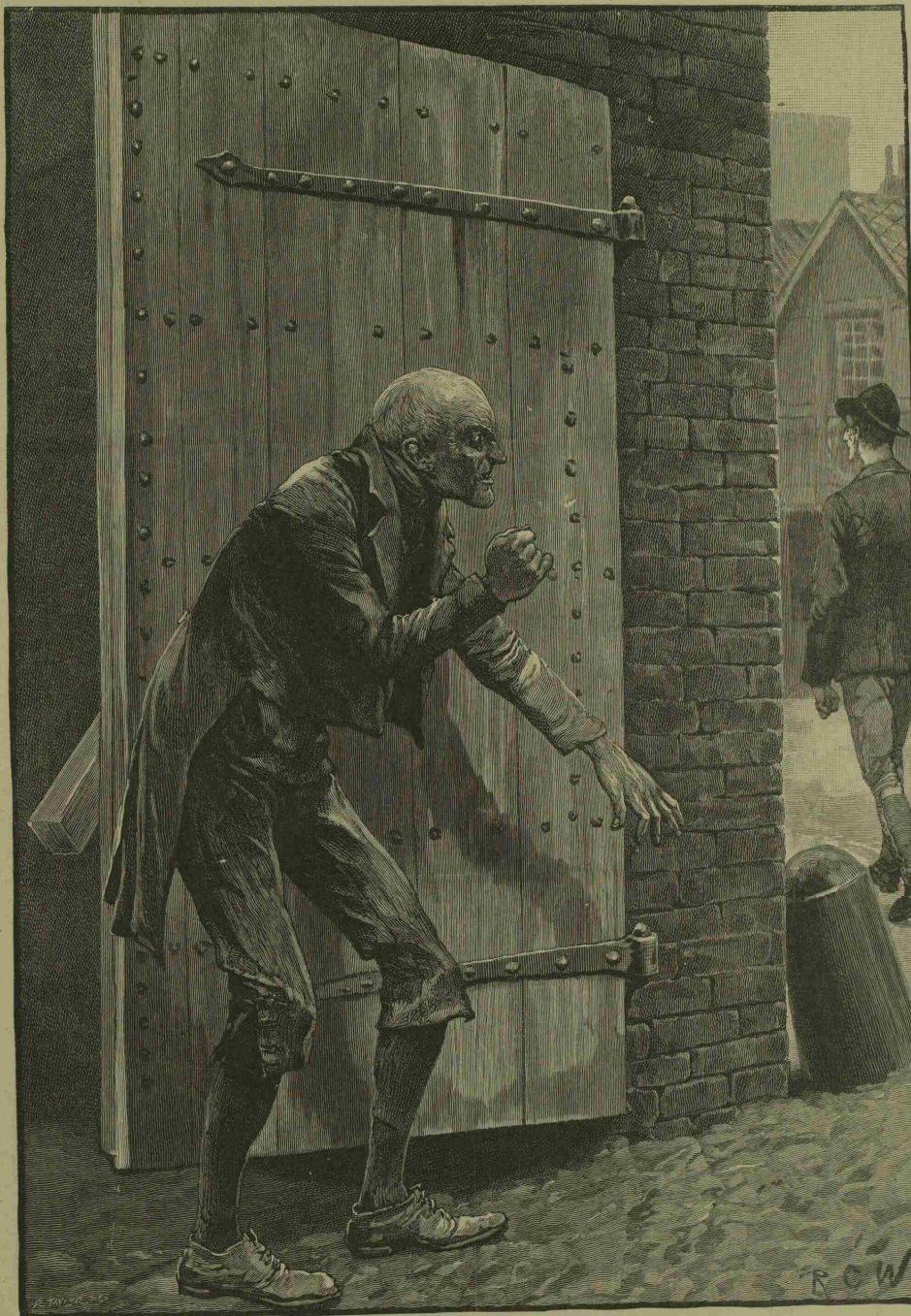
He had caught sight of his sweetheart's slight figure in the fields, a hundred yards away from the road, walking slowly with bent head. At the sound of his voice her pace had quickened. With an unformed fear in his mind, he leaped through a gap in the hedge and ran in pursuit of her.

"Bridget, it's I. It's George. Won't you stop and speak to me? Why, you're crying!" he said, as he came level with her. "What is it, dear?"

He took her by the waist, and tried to draw her hands from her face, but she resisted, and swung from his grasp.

"Bridget! Are you offended with me? What have I done? Speak, dear. Tell me what troubles you."

She was sobbing as if her heart would break, and, as he



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marry Bridget if she'll have me, though we haven't more to begin the world with than the clothes we stand in at the altar."

"Ye can't do it, Jarge," wailed the old man. "It's agin nature. Ye can't do it! What! Ye will!" he half screamed, as his son rose and walked towards the door. "Don't ye provoke me to curse 'ee. I be your father, and the curse 'll stick to 'ee."

Rage and cupidity so inspired him that he stood straight, looking more than his real height in the full glow of paternal piety and virtue.

"Father!" cried George, turning on him in an anger which for the moment was as hot as the old man's own. "A pretty father you've been to me, truly!"

"But I be your father!" cried the old savage, standing on the vantage ground of his paternity.

"Then, father," said George, growing cool as suddenly as he had become heated, "give me my due and let me go."

"Your due!" screamed the Gaffer, "Ay, that I will. May God!"