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My End is My Beginning

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I was, I fancy, much too young at three to retain any clear impression of my first dip in our flooded river - nor do I remember making the momentous decision to go fishing with my father, but where he went there I usually went also. The Heber Beck which usually sang and sparkled its way past the old 17th century farmhouse of Dreibeck was now, however, a turbulent mighty force, swollen by recent heavy rain and fed by scores of peaty streams from the wild stretches of moorland beyond. Its thundering roar could be heard in every room of the old farmhouse, and from the road which skirted the farm buildings, the half-mile belt of sliding water could be seen, burnished peaty brown in colour and looking rather like a broad metallic ribbon running down the valley with boiling white patches here and there showing where it came in contact with the submerged rocks which stood up as giant boulders high above the waters of the stream in normal times.

I had watched my father take down his long fishing rod from its hooks on the wall of the porch, pull on his long waders and throw his pannier over his shoulders, and in my inarticulate language had ~~egged~~^{begged} to join the expedition, only to be told curtly to stay behind. I had toddled disconsolately across the road after him, and clutched at the bars of the small gate leading into the tiny paddock down which he was purposefully striding towards the loud humming roar which drew me irresistibly nearer to investigate.

At my slight pressure the gate opened and I trotted hopefully down to the gap in the bottom stone wall through which father had just disappeared. This normally gave access to a broad high shelf of creamy limestone rock, washed smooth by countless floods and, above this, was a roughly circular shallow lake of water, some of which found its way through crevices underneath this apron of stone and escaped as a tiny stream running alongside a miniature cliff, whilst the greater part of it formed a shallow stream flowing down the far side and over the stone shelf itself.

My father had stepped off the rock, now covered by a foot or more of dark flood water, and was standing in deeper water facing up-stream and quietly fishing. I walked boldly into the shallower water already in the gap and, in spite of the cold, marched deeper and deeper into the river, turning luckily upstream in my father's direction and where the rock slope gently down from the edge. I was too engrossed in reaching one parent to notice, even had I been old enough, to understand that by now my mother had reached the low stone wall at the bottom of the paddock where she waited in deep anguish to see me disappear under the floods.

My father apparently unaware that I had followed him, quietly continued his fishing, but was just as quietly moving backwards towards me. By now I was only a yard or so away and the water had almost reached my shoulders. The current here was broken by a second hump of rock above, and the ~~the~~ water, although deep, was calm. With a deft movement I was gripped firmly by my dress and plunged twice under the flood water and then held aloft spluttering and choking, after which I was carried out of the river and handed over to my mother with the words 'Some frog-spawn, Mrs. Froggatt, out of Heber Beck itself!' And so the Heber washed away the name of Isobel Froggatt and left me with the soubriquet of Frogspawn, which I was to keep for many a long day.

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I was barely five when I had my second watery adventure in the flooded Heber, in an even more spectacular manner, and only a short distance down-stream from the scene of my earlier immersion. I and my three companions, all older than I, each clutching a fistful of white feathers, liberally supplied by our ten ducks, half-dozen snow white geese, or the few white hens in a nondescript collection of fowls, would foregather on the wooden bridge perched on three stone-built pillars high above the Heber to play our inconclusive game of spotting our floating feathers longest. The bridge was only two planks in width, and its outwardly sloping sides consisted of four stout railings and one solid firm handrail on top. I was still young enough to find difficulty

in climbing up the railings of the bridge and clinging to the handrail in order to join in the game we played there. This game was originally played about 1860 by children spitting into the water, but I don't think it could have been very successful and certainly not enjoyed by the small boy who fell in.

I think blown up highly coloured balloons fastened with lengths of string to which small branchy twiglets were fastened would act very well and show up easily against the dark brown peaty water.

The Heber was in full spate, the dark flood water actually reaching to within a couple of feet of the bottom of the bridge. The turbid water glided smoothly below broken only by the stone pillar in the centre which caused the whole frail structure to vibrate in a curious and alarming way. The line of stepping stones a short distance below the bridge was well below the water which, on one side, washed into the walled-in cart road down which the farm horses came to drink, and on the far side of the beck rose half way up the gate beyond which the road again showed as it climbed up the heather clad slope of Smearbank.

Spaced at intervals along the bridge we would each drop a feather over the railings facing upstream then turn round, climb up the railings on the opposite side and wait for our feathers to emerge. Sometimes they went astray, but on that day mine was the first to appear and I gave the usual warning cry, "I see mine", and presently, "I see mine yet", but as I leaned far over the railings in an attempt to follow my diminishing white missile in that dark background of water I overbalanced and fell, to be quickly submerged and carried swiftly and silently away. Luckily for me, I was on the far side of the bridge and the current bore me effortlessly, almost tenderly along, rolling me over and over as if amused by my intrusion, and then as if suddenly becoming enraged at my temerity, flung me violently against the gate across the ford. Dazed and bewildered I clung feebly to the bars of the gate and presently I climbed over, waded out of the water and was violently sick, either from fright, or because I had swallowed so much of the evil tasting peaty water

of the Heber.

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I was ten, when, by an act of crass stupidity, I almost flung my life away in the Cottar, a moorland stream similar to the Heber which it joined at Dreibeck. I had tagged along with Jim Croft, who had worked for Bob Froggart of Dreibeck for a dozen years at least, and we proceeded to fish the Cottar, Jim with his heavier rod with its wriggling load of reddish worms and I with my clumsy hazel sapling, black twine, and terminal bright red rose hip. As the master's daughter I took my place brazenly a few yards ahead, and dangled my useless bait with much ceremony if little skill in the rushing volume of water.

Jim's tolerant amusement soon changed to angry resentment as I impishly kept an even distance between us, until in exasperation he burst out, "Hi, Frogspawn, you've niver 'ad a dip in the Cootar 'ave you?" the threat was sufficient. I felt sure that if I were dipped in the swollen Cottar the weight of my wet clothes would drag me back and I should be lost. But I would fish in spite of the warning, if not here, then on the other side of the beck.

I walked nonchalantly upstream to where the usual dry stone wall marked the end of the field and where a water-gate had been erected to prevent stock from straying. This was a very stout affair made from the trunks of two thirty-foot fir trees, their tapering ends overlapping and chained together in the middle of the river, and their thickened ends built into the upper parts of the walls on either bank. Two strong wooden rails resembling very wide ladders were slung end to end with iron chains from the tree trunks, but at the moment the terrific pressure of water against these made them swing outward, the rusty chains gave off a weird screech, and then as the pressure was momentarily released the rails would settle back into position in the water, and the chains would rattle ominously as they slackened, only to become taut as the water heaved forward again. The dry trunks of the trees groaned or emitted sharp cracks as the weight of the floods thrust against the rails repeatedly.

I climbed onto the wall, straddled the trunk and began the perilous crossing, but almost immediately the Cottar seized and carried off my fishing tackle. Once on the trunk it was impossible to retreat. I could only move forward slowly and painfully, placing my hands close together on the tree trunk, and lifting my body a few inches forward in spasmodic jerks. My hands became sore and a rusty nail tore a deep gash in my left palm. Then my dress was caught over the end of the second trunk and I suddenly went cold with fear. For a moment my eyes dropped to the swirling waters and I grew dizzy and almost lost my balance. I fixed my gaze resolutely on the far bank, and jerked my body backwards. My dress was freed but as I again moved painfully on, the slenderer trunks bent downwards with my weight, and I was forced to tuck my legs up out of the water. Once my right foot was caught by the current, and I was almost swept away. But at last my ordeal was over, and I dragged myself over the wall on the far bank, my whole body trembling violently with the tremendous strain, and my head throbbing painfully as I realised how senselessly I had risked my life.

This sobering experience left me with a wholesome respect for the flooding of the two becks, which could happen with miraculous speed. The peaty moorland seemed to have the power of absorbing huge quantities of water, and if, before heavy rain, it had reached saturation point, the two becks would get the benefit of the weighty downpour, and rise quickly, or perhaps the genie of the mountain would gleefully lend a hand, and spew out the whole water content, and the becks would swell visibly and their resentful thundering roar would fill the whole valley, and even the animals fled to higher ground.

Safe in the solidly built farmhouse I loved to listen to its sullen roar, or I would stand on the road and watch the rush of water down the Heber Beck. Very occasionally in my braver moments I would stand on the sturdy one-arched stone bridge spanning the Cottar, and fix my eyes on one spot in the gliding water below, and presently my bridge and I would go bounding joyously forward and like a captain on his ship, I rode the fierce elements unafraid.

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But during the summer months I lived by or in the two becks. The Cottar was my favourite haunt, for at very low water I could walk a mile upstream as far as the waterfall known as Brant Scar, and travel most of the way by striding from stone to stone in the beck itself. I spent long hours there in my five-roomed house formed by limestone shelves of varying heights, but I loved best to make my way along the rock face of a small gorge of the Cottar nearer home, clinging precariously to pieces of jutting stone and exposed roots of trees - washed bare by frequent floods, with a mere foothold above the stream. On my slow journey I would peep into any bird's nest I had discovered, a pied or yellow wagtail's, a robin's, or a wren's, and once the big mossy ball nest of the dipper.

My ultimate goal was a smooth flat shelf of pale limestone, roofed above but open in front. Here I could kneel, but was unable to stand upright, but I preferred lying on the shelf with the water flowing past a few inches below me. The stream here flowed down a series of miniature limestone steps, and the result was the most tuneful music imaginable, changeful and melodious. As the water reached the last of the fairy steps it burst into hundreds of tiny iridescent bubbles, the largest ones showing a queer distorted image of me in my cave, where my face, close to the edge showed disproportionately large, so that I might have been a gnome wriggled out of a crevice in the rock.

Often unsuspecting trout would swim by, or splash flapping up my stairway. Sometimes as they cruised in the deeper waters in front of my hiding place they would heel over and present their creamy lemon undersides dotted with vivid scarlet spots. Once an eel came near, but his quick eye noticed me and he turned back, and once a king-fisher, in a quick flash of blue darted upstream - and in June, dragon flies would drift past, as iridescent and charming as my water bubbles.

I would shiver with apprehension when it was time to leave my cave, for I had the most dangerous bit of rock face to negotiate. The foothold was

just sufficient to take my toes, and I had to cling to mere pieces of stone with my fingers. I had a very short distance to go, certainly, the length of my stairway, and then I must face the whirlpool. This appeared to be a perfect circular basin worn out of the limestone over countless years, and was about fifteen feet in diameter and ten feet in depth. The water was crystal clear, and the basin was the home of a number of trout which always seemed to disappear under a huge smooth ball of stone in the exact centre, but if I looked carefully I could see them pressed closely against the stone. It looked too solid for even the worst flood to move but the water had done its work with the most perfect symmetry. The water moved with a sluggish circular movement, showing some slight suction at the centre, and I was always glad when I had left it behind and could cross the beck on the scattered boulders above. A slip before reaching my cave meant a nasty fall and a wetting, but a slip above meant a horrid death by drowning for the smooth sides showed never a crack.

But I repeatedly ran this risk, leaving my companions to their innocuous game of catching bull-heads in the Heber, and imprisoning them in small isolated basins of water, until liberated by the next flood.

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Another of my secret hide-outs was about half-a-mile beyond where the Heber and Cottar becks joined and became the river Cottar. Here again one side of the river was made up of huge split-level slabs of limestone, with the river flowing down a deeper channel on the far side, and then forming a calm oval lake by-passed by the main current. Here a giant sycamore tree had been cut down, and its large flat surface stood up well out into the lagoon. Round its circumference a thick screen of young sprouts, like saplings, had grown up, and if I parted these I stepped into a small circular room where I kept a tiny, rather rough, milking stool Jim Croft had made for me. Or I would sit on the floor of my room with my legs dangling over the water through a small opening I had made by cutting down a few of the saplings on that side.

This was my haunt during May and June waiting for my family of young kingfishers to appear. For three successive years the parent birds had returned to their burrow in the river bank within a couple of yards of my hide-out. First activity would be the male bird bringing small fish or minnows for his sitting mate. He never fished near home, thus avoiding giving away its location, but usually up river, and would occasionally appear with a small fish in his beak, its head on one side and tail on the other. He would perch on a slender branch of a tree across the river and kill the fish by banging it repeatedly on the branch. Then he would carry it into the burrow for his mate, or if for his own consumption he would manoeuvre it so that he could swallow it head first in a series of spasmodic gulps. When both parents began bringing food I knew their eggs had hatched. Soon I would see the young kingfishers at the mouth of the burrow being fed on a suitable diet, probably flies and water beetles too small to recognise. Finally all seven, for each year there were seven, would come out and sit in a row along a slender horizontal root under my room. From the first they had the bright coloured plumage of their parents, and they would instinctively kill their small dead fish by banging them on the root.

Then one day my father returned from a fishing excursion with a dead kingfisher. He had left his fishing rod for a little while anchored with a stone by my lagoon, and returned to find a kingfisher dancing about on the end of his line. It had swallowed the hook so deeply that he had to kill it, and later used the feathers for making fishing flies. But next year my kingfishers did not return, so I assumed that my father had killed one of the parents.

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I had made a bad start in life, and during a spell of whooping cough in infancy, my father had repeatedly given me up as dead. Once when he was nursing me, and chatting to his game-keeper friend Abram Kayley from Peat Ghyll, he suddenly remarked, "Prithee, Abram, dust 'a think t'^{bairn's} beir's worth fetching up.

It's nobut a puny miserable thing, and did ta 'ivver see owt as ugly in thi life?" Here mother for once indignant, seized me and remarked that I was a beautiful child.

Once on my own legs, however, I grew strong and healthy, but although my exploits on land never equalled my exploits on water for sheer danger, they were diverse as well as numerous. I walked in my sleep, always making for the warm hearth in the big kitchen; I fell out of an oak tree and sprained my wrist; I upset a large jug of boiling water and scalded both feet; I fell off a high wall and a jagged stone cut my left leg to the bone, leaving a deep crescent hollow; I fell between two beams in a loft into a small building housing the farm dogs; I went up to a strange bull which had come to look me over and pulled him for a dozen yards or so by the ring in his nose; what saved me I do not know.

These were all minor accidents. Once during hay-time I took a horse and sledge under a beech tree and stood up on the saddle to get some nuts, and when I was at full stretch with my head amongst the branches the horse moved off and only my frantic but firm clutch of the branch for a few minutes saved me from falling between the bars of the moving sledge and possibly breaking both arms and legs. The same horse once picked me up by his teeth and flung me several yards away, perhaps in retaliation for rubbing my hand along his back when riding him, just to make him kick for he refused to carry a double load. In another field I was thrown from the seat of the double horse machine, a pastime which was forbidden anyway. The long cutting bar ran into a small hillock, and I was flung a good yard in front of the knife blades. This pulled the horses to a stanstill or I should have been cut to pieces.

Often Jim Croft's three children and I would ride a tame cow the length of a narrow pasture on our way home from school at Cottarholme, a small hamlet a mile away. How we came to choose that particular cow, and how we induced it to carry four I do not remember, but it was the origin of my getting onto the back of a young bullock whilst it was lying down. With an angry snort the bullock was instantly on its feet and the first of its frantic buckings sent me flying, my head just grazing a smooth exposed rock, and I lay unconscious for

some little while.

And so my earliest childhood slipped away, and I came to no harm.

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From the highest point on Smearbank, which rose gradually from the Heber directly opposite Dreibeck, the whole upper valleys of the Heber and Cottar lay exposed, and below their junction a mile or more of the slightly wider valley of the Cottar proper. Dreibeck itself was built within the arms of the 'Y' formed by the two becks. At this distance these appeared as a couple of twisting threads of quicksilver making their way down the hillsides, until the Cottar swallowed the Heber at Dreibeck, and presently this broader thread was lost behind a shoulder of the fell to the east.

Faithfully hugging the river, the white ribbon of road showed up even more clearly, but as it approached Dreibeck, it was deflected onto higher ground, until at a point where it seemed to peer down on the two becks it finally made up its mind, and it too, split and made an agonised contortion of the letter 'Y', one arm running downhill again, to follow the Heber, past Dreibeck to Peat Ghyll and beyond, and the other twisting over an escarpment blocking its way, returning to follow the Cottar for a little while, and then on and over the moors to Norgarth, the market town ten miles away.

The land which had been farmed by Froggatts of Dreibeck for generations could be seen from here in its entirety, a long stretch of moorland along the Heber's southern side, and a similar stretch of rough pasture and intake meadow bounded by the two becks, with a third piece beyond the Cottar, partly pasture and partly moorland. Over this area of ground roamed eleven hundred shaggy mountain sheep; they had known it from birth and seldom went astray. Yet Eli the old shepherd knew them all and often even the relationship between animals unaware of any such ties. "Aye well," he would say in the spring, "Er mother alus 'ad twins, and 'er's nobbut doing t'same."

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The two houses at Dreibeck were always known as Froggatt's and Croft's, and ours was a beautiful long low house with mullioned windows, rather spoilt perhaps, by an assortment of sprawling buildings attached to it on the right. These ended above a flight of steps with a room containing a fire-place, and known as the 'Old School'. This was where dances and various functions were held, and it was here that my father had received a scanty education, whilst my mother had attended an excellent private school in Norgarth. She wrote all his letters and forged his signature.

The main doorway of our house, which led directly into the living room, consisted of a dignified stone archway with the date 1673 above, and the initials below this were, curiously enough, my own, F and I.F., for, I always thought of them as Frogspawn and Isobel Froggatt. There was a second way in through a long porch between the house and the buildings, leading into the back kitchen with a second staircase, little more than a ladder up to a room above where the two farmhands slept.

We had two extra large rooms known as the front parlour and the old parlour, the latter opening out of an inner hall beyond the parlour proper. The staircase was very beautiful with fine mahogany banisters, and a lovely rail of the same wood in front of the very tall window which continued down into an underground cellar, reached by a steep flight of stone steps from the inner hall. It was into its crepuscular depths that I was thrust on the rare occasions when I roused my father's anger. It was here that the barrels of beer and cider were kept, and where, during one of my periods of incarceration, I discovered an unexpected mug, so I proceeded to consume my usual tippie, not the one small mugful I was allowed, but mug after mug of cider. Presently, I was singing and shouting at the top of my voice, which of course brought my father down. By that time I was too fuddled to speak, and was sitting on the floor with my head resting against the barrel, and I remember no more except waking up in bed. This tall staircase window, and a small one inserted into the front door held a number of fascinating bull's eye panels, whilst all the glass held a faint tinge

of very pale green. Behind the living kitchen and the parlour as far as the inner wall of the old parlour ran an extremely long stone flagged dairy, whilst above this ran an equally long room with a sloping ceiling with a doorway four feet above the ground leading into the orchard at the back. Here the Irishmen slept in hay-time, able to come and go without entering the house proper, and here the Croft children and I spent endless hours during the winter months.

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Dreibeck had originally been three separate farms, but finally Bob Froggatt farmed them all, so that instead of meadows and pastures being haphazardly mixed and worked by three different men, it was now in a ring fence stretching roughly two miles from north to south, and a mile and a half from east to west, and probably having a circumference of between three and four miles. Although it included many acres of moorland it carried a flock of eleven hundred lambing ewes.

Our household consisted of myself and my parents, two farmhands who might stay one or a few years at Dreibeck, and Lizzie who had worked for my mother for a number of years. Jim Croft and his family lived in the second farmhouse, and the third had fallen in. My mother's father had been the last man to live in it

For lambing time we were joined by a local vagabond, who slept in a hay loft with his own "lil'e dawg". He was always clean, and went about singing 'Bonnie Mary of Argyle' in a loud raucous voice, but he was quiet and good with sheep. He always went away better dressed than he came, and would go on a drinking spree when he left us. He would turn up periodically and cadge some article of clothing and a few shillings from my father. Hay-time would bring 'Owd Anty' from the nearest market town, and two brothers from Ireland, so with them and other casual labour we were a busy household.

My tall handsome father with his jolly laugh and frequent jokes was the figure round which the household revolved. His strength was prodigious, and it was only in the most unusual circumstances that he ever flew into a rage.

Once however, as he and mother were returning from Norgarth, the market town ten miles beyond Cottarholme in the trap, they picked up the dale's ne'er-do-well whilst crossing the moor. Once ⁱⁿ the back of the trap, Dick, in a drunken maudlin fashion began to tell vulgar tales of people they knew, interspersed with the frequent remark, "an' ther niver war a good Froggatt neither". Finally, my father stopped the mare, jumped out of the trap and pulled Dick out onto the road and shook him as a terrier might a rat, and flung him down into the ditch. It was only my mother's quiet intercession which earned Dick a reprieve and he was allowed to climb back into the trap to continue his journey in silence as far as the fork of the roads at Dreibeck. Here, standing in the middle of the road Dick had the last word and that not a thank you. As the trap moved off he called out, "Nay, ther niver was a good Froggat, an' I'll tell ee sommat else Bob Froggatt, that Frogspawn o' yourn weant mak owd bones, nor yit dee in 'er bed. Frogspawn! Bah! Imp of Satan! Devil's spawn more like. Aye, Devilspawn ah calls 'er". And I have now passed my allotted span of three score years and ten.

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Before haytime my father always visited a horse fair in a small market town a few miles beyond Norgarth, where gipsies and farmers congregated to sell their strings of horses and ponies. Here he bought an extra horse for the hay harvest, and usually sold it later. The only one he had kept was his own mare, Polly, which like Charlie who refused to carry a double load, was a good worker but had one idiosyncrasy. As soon as she felt a rider in the saddle she would spin round and round in half-a-dozen narrow circles. If the rider was then still in the saddle she would move off quietly, but if on the ground, she would nuzzle him playfully as if to help him up again.

One year he also bought me a pony and a small new hunting saddle and bridle. The pony was such a dark chestnut colour as to be almost black, with a curious zig-zag white mark down but not quite in the centre of her face.

She had rather small ears, and rather a broad face, but I fancied very intelligent eyes. As soon as she saw me she dropped first one ear and then the other, and Jim Croft remarked "Hi, Frogspawn, 'ers lop-lugged". I insisted on calling her Napoleon because of her resemblance to his picture in my history book at school, when father remarked that Napoleon was no lady - we compromised on Nap, and Nap she became.

Father said she had only been ridden by boys and might not accept a girl, so we must find out before I rode her. So next afternoon he fastened a long slender rope to her bridle bit, and I mounted, but no sooner did Nap feel my dress, for I had no riding breeches and rode astride, over her back, than she went crazy. Round and round we tore in a wide circle round my father, and with every downward jerk of her head and upward heave of her body, my dress was pulled further and further under the saddle, and I was pulled backward and downward until I was literally flat on my back. Father yelled for me to get down quickly, and I tried to yell back that I was as firmly anchored as Mustapha roped to his wild stallion. Father gradually pulled Nap to him, gentled her, undid the saddle girth and freed me. Gradually Nap and I became great pals, and she would come galloping to me from nearly a mile away, when I blew an imitation curlew call on my whistle.

One wet day young James Croft broke his arm when he had Nap down on the smooth limestone road. Three hours later the doctor who came over from Norgarth on his tall hunter, bustled into Dreibeck kitchen exclaiming, "Where's that limb Frogspawn? I've told her many a time she'll kill either herself or her pony. She rides like the wind". I was crying bitterly because father had put seven stitches with a fine packing needle into a deep gaping hole in Nap's chest. Father told Dr. Wade crisply he had come to the wrong house, but he only remarked, "You'll need me yet Frogspawn, but I'll be over soon and we'll go fishing". Dr. Wade fished fly and only needed a brown water and a fine day to enjoy himself. Whether he took me for company or as a complement to father who gave him permission to fish the Heber and Cottar I do not know. But I do know

they were dull days for me, for his repeated hisses kept me his silent shadow, and our best catch so far was two very small fish, whereas my father often came home with a score of lovely trout.

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Only two of our cats were allowed in the house, whilst the rest lived in the barns. Tommy, the fettered cat was very old, but came and went as he wished. He would jump onto a chair by the outer door, stand on his hind legs, balance himself with one front paw on the wall, and with the other pat the latch until the door swung open. To return, he would tap gently on the small window behind my father's chair until someone pushed up the lower sash.

The young cat 'Jim Crow' was a magnificent animal, jet black with a white triangular bib on his chest and two white front paws. One winter during a heavy fall of snow, a row of very deep holes had been left by someone walking along the road, and then the snow crust had frozen over. At one of these deep holes I noticed Jim Crow act the malicious, almost human, ogre to a small mouse. He would drop the mouse into the hole and turn his back on it, with, I fancied, a wide triumph^{al} grin on his face. Presently, probably after many attempts, the mouse would jump out, and instantly cat ogre would swing round, seize the mouse and return it to his deep private dungeon. After watching many repetitions of this curious sport, I tried laboriously but not very successfully to teach Jim Crow a few simple tricks.

Then father said I must see his Aunt Dinah's famous troupe of cats. So one market day I was taken and left at the small hamlet of Crayke on the outskirts of Norgarth, whilst father transacted business there. Dinah lived in a long low house known as "Wynd House" because it was at the end of an alley known as a wynd. Behind was a large walled garden with two big lawns. Dinah called six names through the open window and presently six beautiful Persian cats, an uncommon smokey grey in colour, appeared. They had come, she told me, through the cat door in the adjoining wash-house. This, I found, was a small panel at ground level hinged to swing in either direction. Their names, Dinah told me,

came from the bible, and they worked in pairs, Adam and Eve, (Eve was inclined to steal from Adams' plate) Jacob and Esau, (twin brothers) and Samson and Delilah, (Samson the largest and most handsome cat, and Delilah, not always trustworthy).

Dinah was very tiny and as dainty as a wren, with bright twinkling eyes, and like the wren, possessed a clear liquid voice of remarkable power. The cats sat in pairs on a long low form and watched Dinah pour out six basins of either milk or porridge. Then she sang a cunning little song of her own composition whilst the cats purred in unison, the while they balanced, stretched, bowed and pirouetted on their form. They came to first breakfast in pairs as their names were called, although Dinah said she never used the same sequence.

After breakfast they always did one of their acts of which they had quite a repertoire. "How do they know which to do?" I asked, "They watch and listen", said Dinah, "and today they will dance a 'Meeting Six' and a 'Shepherd's Hay' for you", and as she took up her mouth organ the cats arranged themselves in a double row of three. After the first note of music, two corner cats tripped up, bowed to each other and retreated, then the second corners, and finally the middle pairs. Then the top facing pair Adam and Eve touched right and left paws lightly and almost tripped down the centre, whilst the others held their paws aloft and moved up. Then it was the turn of Jacob and Esau and finally of Samson and Delilah. This was followed by a simple weaving figure of eight movements by the three cats on each side. They went through this movement performance three times until Dinah put down her mouth organ.

An interval of what appeared to be a waltz accompanied by loud purring followed, but as Dinah picked up her fiddle the cats again formed a double row of three, and as the music struck up they began the intricate weaving in and out of a Shepherd's Hay in a sort of hopping walk, and on the final note they appeared to leap into the air, clap their front paws together and give vent to an ear-piercing waul. At the third repeat of this, Delilah suddenly reached across and gave Samson a raking blow down his shoulder,

A second breakfast of meat or fish followed and today, Dinah added a little to five dishes as the cats watched and waited, but took back a little from Delilah's. Delilah snarled viciously but seeing a small whip suddenly appear in Dinah's hand she subsided.

"What do you do with all Eve's kittens?", I asked, thinking Delilah was perhaps a gentle-man, but Dinah only laughed and said "No kittens. All my cats are she-males". How I wished all ours were she-males, for I no longer took the gruesome pleasure I had once felt in watching a litter of blind kittens walking on the bottom of Heber Beck for a little while!

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One of my most vivid early memories is of the moor fire, which consumed a large area of Cottar Moss, an area of moorland extending from the beck at Cottarholme to a gentleman's residence called Flinersghyll near Heber Beck. We children had a special grandstand at the tall windows of the school at Cottarholme, built on a slight eminence. Luckily Cottarholme and Cottar Hall half-a-mileaway were across the beck from the fire. How it started was a mystery, but June had been a month of brilliant sunshine, and the moor was tinder dry. Perhaps the sun's rays had picked out a small piece of glass.

The initial tiny smoke cloud hovered undetected close to the earth, hiding and protecting the tiny red spark flickering feebly underneath, as a hen grouse might brood lovingly over her eggs, waiting patiently for the first faint movement of life. Then along sauntered a gay insouciant summer breeze, its play-ground the moor, its mood mischievous, and inquisitively it blew aside the tiny smoke-screen. As it curled round the ruby thing it had uncovered the seed expanded and gleamed and sparkled. The wind breathed gently, and was rewarded by a leaping tongue of living fire, rosy centred and edged with scintillating greens and blues. The swollen seed split into at least a score of identical glowing seeds, and scattered them nearby with a series of angry cupitations, which delighted the frolicsome wind. Gleefully it chuckled and whistled up its

sleeping playmates, which leapt from their hiding places. They bedecked themselves with the sparkling baubles, they clutched the red seeds in their grasping fingers; they hurled the searing burning gems from them; they built a living wall of flames across the moor.

Above the leaping flames nebulous monster smoke snakes reared their ugly heads, their fangs dripping flame, their long under-bellies outlined in glowing colours from the fire. They turned and twisted and twined; they curved and coiled and curvetted; they swerved and swelled and subsided; they hissed and spat; they fought and struggled and devoured each other. And the winds blew and inflamed them anew, and gave them fresh impetus. They writhed and whirled and wriggled; they squirmed and swooped and swept onward; they pounced on their prey, the hordes of moorland creatures unable to escape their darting biting fangs.

We watched the quick gathering of a score of stout labourers, many riding their lathered horses bare-back. They faced the line of fire and with their broad manure shovels tried to beat out the sparks which were the advance troops of the enemy, but slowly the smoke and heat pushed back the grimy blackened men, ever nearer to the point where the fire could work most damage, a long narrow wood, mostly fir and larch on either side of a narrowed rock confined Cottar, and on its fringe the beautiful 16th century mansion of Cottar Hall.

Just when all seemed lost the playful winds repented of their mad frolic, and veered suddenly and completely round. The vicious flames, halted in their stride, threw up their hydra-headed plumes and hesitated. The winds freshened, and turned back on its own desolate track, the flames hissed and spluttered and finally died out.

*

My father's sheep dog, Mustard, a rough shaggy, upstanding creature of a curious yellowish brown colour, had learnt Tommy's trick of opening doors, but he used the door of the scullery at the back of the house and would creep stealthily under father's chair. Then one day, mother, working in the scullery seized him

on entry, and pushing the door closed with her foot said angrily, "Why can't you shut the door like that? Go out, and come back when you can". Five minutes later he was back, shut the door at the second attempt by springing against it with his front feet, and gave mother a wolfish grin and a tail's up salute on his way to claim the freedom of Dreibeck kitchen.

Charlie, the old horse, was equally clever at opening the field gate beyond the Cottar stone bridge. This had a long poker - like sneck with quite a wide space between gate and wall, and Charlie found he could put his foot behind the sneck and press, at the same time pushing the gate open with his nose. The short horizontal sneck on the door of the building where he slept during the winter months he lifted either with his sensitive lower lip or with his teeth. Thus he came and went according to the weather, for his rack of hay and warm bed.

Father always said that Mustard was the best cow and sheep dog he had ever seen. He could gather a hundred acre pasture and bring in every sheep whilst father remained by the gate; he could follow and hold any sheep father tapped on the back with his stick, even in a flock of a hundred or more sheep, often going over the backs of a few closely packed animals to do so, after which he would gently seize a mouthful of wool on the selected animal's neck, just behind its ear and hold it until father gripped its horns; he could find sheep deeply buried under snow drifts by sniffing at the holes father made with a long pole, and acting similarly to a setter if any sheep were underneath. Only once was the count of a big flock three short, and the carcasses of these were found in a hollow under an overhanging rock when the thaw came. For a few days during one lambing time Mustard went with my father into the orchard and watched him hold an unwilling mother ewe whilst its lamb sucked, after which he went alone at the lamb's daily feeding times, stood in front of the sheep and prevented her from moving until the lamb had fed.

My father said he would face any bull if he had Mustard with him, for sooner or later the dog would have a firm grip on the bull's tail where he could

cling indefinitely. His only silly act was occasionally rounding up a group of hens or ducks, and keeping them in a tight bunch for half-an-hour or more, but the old gander prevented the geese being included in this act.

*

The middle of April would bring our extra help, Old Nick, for the busy lambing season, a twenty-four hour day being usual at the beginning of the century, in a large flock. Jim Croft and one of the regulars living with the family would work the day shift, whilst Nick and crabbed old Eli, who had lived at Dreibeck longer than any other hired man, would work the night one. My father spent most of his time attending to sick animals, or skinning dead lambs to provide an extra coat for another he wished to mother on to a bereaved sheep, which usually after sniffing it over, accepted the substitute. I looked after the few orphans as pets, and once Jim Croft brought me one with a very tiny but perfect fifth leg growing out of its side. This useless miniature leg never grew any bigger.

Old Nick was a tall heavily built fellow, weighing a good sixteen stones or more, and every second or third year was given one of the boss's cast off suits, a couple of shirts, and a few pairs of stockings. He never shaved, but his thick black beard only seemed to add character to his twinkling eyes and weather tanned features. He was a good and chearful worker, but would only do short spells followed by drinking bouts. He had a loud raucus laugh, and his gruff voice souded rather husky. Both arms were tattooed from wrist to elbow. He always brought his own 'li'le dawg' which he had begged or bought for a few shillings, and which was seldom of any use. He was usually singing 'Bonnie Mary of Argyle' at the top of his lungs in a loud strident voice, or giving his clear, high whistle and shouting, "Dawg, Hi dawg".

He said his name was Nicholas Poore, but I always suspected it was fictitious. "Put 'e' on the end, Isobel", he would say to me, for he was one of the few people who called me Isobel. "E for 'is Eminence, for it's the only letter that sticks. L.S. and D don't stay in my pockets. Poor oud Nicholas! Nicholas Poore!" Sometimes he would turn up driving cattle or sheep which my

father had bought at a fair, stay a day or two and then disappear. At other times my father would announce on his return from Norgarth that he had seen Nick, hard up as usual, and had given him half-a-sovereign on condition that he came and did a few weeks' dry walling. He never failed to come once he had accepted money, although he would cheerfully differentiate between a gift of money, for he was not above begging the price of a few drinks, and a godpenny - money taken as a sign that a bargain to work had been struck.

*

The second man came early in July for haytime and would put in a month's strenuous work in the fields. He was tall and well built, but the chief thing I remember about him was that his eyes were odd in colour, one brown flecked and the other a curious light green. His arms were literally covered with tattoo marks, and in addition he had a curved pattern across the upper part of his chest, which from a short distance gave the curious impression that he was wearing a broad emerald and turquoise necklace. A couple of sailing ships under full canvas below this made me wonder if he had been to sea. One arm carried an elongated multi-coloured mermaid from shoulder to wrist, whilst an equally long snake coiled round here and there. As he worked, stripped to the waist on hot days, I was fascinated by the apparent movement of all these things, the snake, for instance would contract and extend as Anty used his arm muscles to the full.

His name was Anthony Hölme, but he was never called anything but Ant or Anty. He was usually humorously good tempered, but was apt to fly into a sudden violent temper and cause everything and anybody nearby to watch their P's and Q's. If he happened to be at the barn forking hay inside, and the sledge went beyond the forking hole he would give the horse a vicious stab with the prongs of his hay-fork, and I, or a young Croft, had to circle round and draw into position a second time. If he had already half untied the rope holding the load in position, the hay would probably fall off during this circular movement, and he had to carry it forkful by forkful for some distance before tossing it through the hole. Then we had to keep out of his way for a time.

Usually, however, we were on good terms, and as I saw more of him than anyone else this was just as well. I was his raker-off for one of the double-horse machines, which meant I had to follow the machine, giving the swath an extra pull so that there was a clear space between it and the standing grass, for the thickened end of the cutting bar to run in. It was hard work for a girl, as I was out in the field before six in the morning and was only supposed to ride on the machine when the knife was raised and securely fastened and the machine out of gear. Anty, however, often exchanged places with me; he raked off whilst I rode, for the horses knew their work and paced evenly along the grass edge. If a mouse nest was picked up on one of the teeth through which the long knife ran, so that it left a baulk, a long thin line of uncut grass, not tolerated by Bob Froggatt, Anty's bellow rang out from behind, and the horses stopped. The year I was pitched off the machine I was relegated to be raker-off for the rest of the season.

Sometimes he sent me across the moor to Cottarholme for "a nounce o' shag or thick twist an' a pen'oth o' sweets". He always chewed his tobacco which he kept in a hinged double-saucer tin box.

*

Father collected the two Irishmen, Tim and Michael Gorrel, each year at the Norgarth hirings. They were jolly, good tempered men, and their pleasant Irish brogue seemed to lighten the heavy work. They earned good wages but had to do most of the scything and heavy lifting. Their first question on seeing my father was, "Any beer, Boss?", and he would assure them he had provided the usual barrel per man, six barrels plus one barrel of cider for Dreibeck. This was carried out into the field in stone gallon bottles, often slung over the iron uprights strapped round the horses' collars to which traces were fixed over heavy iron hooks.

They never stayed longer than their month, after which they went harvesting. One very rainy season they actually left Dreibeck before even a sledgeful of hay had been gathered into a barn. "Sure it's sorry we are to leave you Mr. Froggatt", they beamed as they said good-bye.

Cottardale always held its fifth of November bonfire at Dreibeck, on an acre of perfectly level ground, known as Borrogarth, beginning at the stone bridge over the Cottar and sweeping away in a huge crescent of smooth turf, the two becks meeting where the bulge was at its widest point. Tribute was exacted from every farm, usually in the form of empty tar or grease barrels, unwanted furniture or old beams. Failure to contribute meant that no member of such a family might attend the plot fire, or the following Saturday night supper and dance, the Dreibeck Ball, which concluded the celebrations.

One year a special effort was made. Dreibeck contributed six barrels, a couple of broken gates and an old beam. By the fifth every farm had made a generous gift, including a few not ^{quite} ~~quite~~ empty tar barrels surreptitiously added to the store! On the fifth Cottardale gathered tardily on Borrogarth, and not in full force in spite of the perfect evening. A lemon sliver of moon in a star-spangled turquoise sky gave just sufficient light to cast an eerie magic over the scene. Only half-a-dozen men had turned out but began ostentatiously to collect the material stored away. Barrel succeeded barrel, to be stacked in four columns by Jim Croft standing on a tall empty tub, which would later serve as a seat for various musicians.

It was traditional for the Froggatts of Dreibeck to carry the home-made token sheep's wool steeped in oil and tar, wired to a long iron rod, and light the bonfire. Bob Froggatt left Dreibeck at six o'clock, torch well ablaze, and as he stepped onto Borrogarth turf, the company began singing 'The Song of the Torch', which he had composed some years previously. This year of the big fire which burnt steadily for three days, he was preceded by a dozen men, each carrying a long fir tree, branches still attached, which they had stolen from a line of dead fir trees cut in Cottar Hall Wood, and put along the boundary wall to keep out straying sheep. During the winter months the mansion was empty ^{except} for a caretaker and his wife. The marauders escaped scot free, but a line of barbed wire replaced the trees. The stolen trees were arranged in an upright position round the central pile, with the guy impaled on the tip of one. When alight it looked

like a burning wig-wam, with the chieftain aloft, for, with his long coarse black hair made from a horse's tail and his gaudily painted face, Cottardale might have been witnessing a dead Indian's funeral pyre. Bowersyke, the farm responsible for that year's Guy had produced a strikingly appropriate effigy.

*

Never had Borrogarth been the scene of such a magnificent and spectacular fire, the flames leaping far above the tall trees, and showering a continuous fountain of coloured sparks and spray in a wide circle around its central mast. Probably the combined tar and resin were responsible for the complete range of all the colours of the spectrum, whilst the vicinity was deluged with the acrid ~~smell~~ ^{smell} of burning tar, tinged with the odourous fragrance of the blazing fir trees. Our fairy-hued fountain repeated itself in the still water of Borropot, the long pool below the bridge and its reflection surrounded by that of the moon and a million stars was even more fascinating than the real fire.

The leaping multi-coloured flames lit up the whole of Borrogarth, and picked out each individual stone of the archway forming the old stone bridge. It flickered on the churning runnel of water hemmed in by the creamy limestone shelves and rocks which carried the foundations of the bridge on either bank, and in the opposite direction it showed the dim silhouette of the high wooden bridge across the Heber, and the wide boulder strewn beds of both becks with the silver gleam and flash of water round the stones, as Cottar and Heber hurried down the last gentle slope to merge in the deeper more impressive pool formed by their juncture.

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The first part of the evening was usually allotted to the children, who danced round the fire or played games nearby. My father, who like many of his Cottardale relations played the fiddle, clarinet, mouth organ or concertina, often played for these. After this everybody joined in some of the beautiful old country dances, Sir Roger de Coverley, Sir Cassian's Circle, Buttered Peas, Huntsman's Chorus or Meeting Six followed by two or three spirited Morris dances by the Cottardale youths, for which Jim Croft had the privilege of playing on his

tin whistle, at which he was very expert. The quick moving stilted figures of the morris dancers looked strangely grotesque in the flickering light of the leaping flames, thrown against the dark background of Smearbank, with the starry ceiling above. The set and turn and the shepherd's hay seemed more appropriate to such a setting than the more stilted ballroom dancing, although polkas and quadrilles, difficult on grass, invariably followed. Reels and clog dances were reserved for the Saturday revels, as these needed a wooden floor to bring out their quick staccato rhythmical tapping.

Borrogarth was now a scene of bustle and gaiety. The company was widely scattered, laughter rang out and jokes were bandied about, and the fun was at its height. In less than five minutes we were plunged into the most human tragedy Cottardale had ever witnessed. Many of the children were running round the huge bonfire, engaged in their own immature games when a short length of blazing fir tree came crashing down from aloft. It fell a yard or so in front of Jane Croft, covering her with flying sparks and burning embers. Almost immediately she was outlined in flame. Her agonised screams as she turned and fled towards Borropot effectively quelled all signs of merriment. Figures stiffened in positions of horrified incredulity. Jim Croft was the first to move. Even before we heard the splash as Jane flung herself into the water, Jim's long legs were racing across the turf, and his thrashing entry into the Cottar followed in a matter of seconds. Willing hands guided him up the overhanging bank, which was apt to slice away with the slightest pressure and he turned sadly towards home with his unconscious burden in his arms. A messenger on our swiftest horse set out immediately on the twelve mile ride to Norgarth to bring medical help, but Jane died an hour before the doctor reached her, and the following spring Jim Croft and his family left Dreibeck for a farm in the next valley. It was the last time the morris dancers leapt to his piping.

We were all sorry to see Jim Croft and his family go. He had been Bob Froggatt's right hand man for many years and old Eli had been at Dreibeck almost as long. Both knew practically every sheep, and Jim's two boys, James

and Dick were encouraged to see the flock as individuals. My father could take out ten sheep from a large flock with their lambs milling about in the farmyard and ask his two shepherds to bring out their progeny. The lambs were soon produced, but sometimes there would be slight disagreement about a particular sheep's lamb. "Dang!", old Eli would say, "t'lamb belonging that yaw es one lug nearly all black", but he would continue, "that lamb belongs to that yaw, and that 'en 'es twins". And so they were eventually all produced, but most often the sheep were left to find their own offspring.

The two shepherds were as different in character as in appearance. Jim was tall with the long slender limbs of the athlete, and his swinging stride devoured miles of the roughest fell country easily and quickly. His hair was dark, and his black eyes glinted with a dry humour. His patience was unbounded, and he was usually to be seen with two dogs, an old hand, and a young one in training. When one of the sows produced a litter of eighteen, he told me slyly, "Ey, Frogspawn, 'er's nubbut gitten nicely agate yit. 'Er'll 'ev some more, you'll see". I was tremendously disappointed when there were only two more puny piglets which died, instead of the expected score. Being too many for the mother to feed all together, nine were put in a barrel, and nine left with mama, and every four hours they were changed over. Then one day father decided to put nine with a black sow which was his best mother. Her own smaller litter was taken away and put in the barrel, and the nine alien children put in her stall. Mechanically and systematically she ate the lot, and when her own litter was returned she quickly ate them too.

Old Eli was short and fat, with sandy hair, hard cold blue eyes, and a waspish tongue. Just occasionally he would go on a drinking spree and stay away a week or ten days. My father always forgave him because he was good with sheep.

Once he brought a flock to within five miles of home, and then stayed in a pub drinking. Sam, his experienced black and white sheep dog brought the

sheep, first along three miles of enclosed road, and then along a mile of unfenced road to be stopped by the first gate. This was opened by a neighbouring farmer who recognised the big dog circling behind and who helped Sam turn the sheep onto the homeward bound road, for at this point there were two diversions to other farms. The last half-mile again ran between stone walls, but at last the sheep and their drover had reached the gate within sight of Dreibeck. Here Sam left his charges and came for help. Eli returned a week later, and when father asked angrily where he had been his reply was "I teeled Sam to fetch t'yaws 'oome, and I thout he'd done it. I'll mak t'skin an har flee off 'im like t'bark fra a ezzel twig". Father said if he touched the dog he left Dreibeck, and so once again he stayed.

*

Old Eli was often an embarrassment in the house, for he shared all our meals, and joined in the conversation, even when visitors were present, although special company had meals in the front parlour. His table manners were not as crude as Ben's, who, when he first came pushed his knife and fork away saying, "nay, missus, ye needn't gi me them things, fur ah maistly ands my vittles. 'Ands wer med afur knives and forks, an saves weshing up". Mother said he must get used to them, and use her proper name.

Once she gave them each a grayling for breakfast in place of trout for a treat. "Aye", Elis said, "Ah'll try owt yance". He made a big fuss, however, saying he couldn't swallow it, and Liz said, "Es ta itten t'scales?" "If them's scales", said Eli, "ther as big as dragon scales, an' they's stuck in mi gullet". "An' thou's a girt gomeless elephant", retorted Liz emphatically, seeing that his plate contained nothing but the backbone, head and tail of his fish.

Once when a young relative of mother's and her husband came to see us, they had walked the five miles from the village carrying their young baby in a wicker contraption with strap handles made by a very clever basket maker who lived there. When Eli saw them he said, "Wat's shoo gitten in er lile basket? A baby! Wat's it lapped up so fur? Es it gitten t'mezzles er summat?"

Everytime we had a thunderstorm Eli would remark, "Wen ah leevd wi Milly Ned Jock near Norgarth we ed sich a storm et t'en' ouse wer wshed a mile dune t'beck wi' all t'ens in it". I always thought Milly Ned Jock was a funny name for a man, and it was a longtime before I realized it represented three generations.

Once an unknown tramp stayed a night in the barn, and was later proved to be a smallpox contact case. When Dr. Wade came to inoculate us, old Eli was furious. "Ah weeant be nocil⁽¹⁾taed", he swore. "Ah nivver ails nowt, an if that fella cums ageean ah'll eng him ower a beam". "Very well", said the doctor, "You'll have to go into quarantine, and you won't like that, my man". "Quarreltine", mouthed old Eli who could act dumb, "Ah's t'yan et es t'quarrel wi yan fella". Later he threw a stout rope, with a noose at one end of it, over a beam in a building, and for months afterwards he scrutinized every tramp who stopped at Dreibeck.

Father finally dismissed him for turning his mare, Polly, out into the pasture with an ordinary halter on, instead of her special head-piece, for she was difficult to catch, and the dangling insecure rope became entangled in a loose shoe and the mare was drowned with her nose in a few inches of water in Heber Beck. I often wondered if he went back "to leeve wi Milly Ned Jock", but I never saw him again.

*

During the summer months I loved to find and imprison some young bird or animal I hoped to tame, especially a young owl or hedgehog, but the parent owls invariably liberated their offspring by forcing holes in my wire fronted box, and the young hedgehogs either climbed over or crawled under my wire enclosure. Once I found a half-grown hedgehog, or at least Sam did, for he loved finding one, and attempting to eat it. He would stay with it, barking furiously, and poking at it with his nose, which soon became pricked and bleeding. I rescued the hedgehog, and put it in my wire enclosure, only to find later that it had pushed

half-way under the wire fence. When it saw me it tried to retreat, but the wire caught in its prickles and held it. This is the only time I have heard a hedgehog scream, and I was petrified. Even the scream of a rabbit caught by a weasel at dusk, when sounds are intensified, is not as terrifying. I at once liberated the poor unhappy creature. My ideal pet was a hedgehog which made its nest in the orchard and came each evening for its saucer of milk. It was quite tame but remained free. One year I had Peter and Paul, a couple of young owls, for many weeks, but they remained savage and difficult to feed, so I set them free. One later came down an unused chimney and laid an egg.

Once, however, I had a pet toad for many months. He lived in a hole in the wall, which enclosed on three sides the space my father used for compost for his garden. I found him first, his bottom pushed into a small circular hole he had fashioned in the middle of the compost heap, when I carried out fruit pulp from mother's jelly making from cloudberries my father and I gathered in buckets on the moors. Here he would sit placidly awaiting flies which would swarm over the fruit. Out came his long tongue with accurate frequency - one fly less. He must have lived a gourmand's life that year and grew heavy and lazy, but I never saw him swallow a wasp.

He appeared whenever I took ^{form of} put any/fruit pulp or apple parings and called out 'Timmy Toad! Timmy Toad!' but would never appear if I took a visitor to see him, or if he happened to be already entrenched in his small hollow, he would quickly leap away and disappear. He would allow me to pick him up, and one day, out of curiosity to see what would happen, I put him outside the wooden door across the front of his compost heap, but next day he was back in his hollow and to show his displeasure he hopped away and refused to appear.

Pharaoh, the homing pigeon, however, stayed with me for life - his life. He appeared one morning on the window sill with a broken wing, wearing a couple of rings carrying numbers and letters on one leg. His wing healed very very slowly, and father said he would be no further use for long distance flying, and so I was allowed to keep him.

He never joined the doves in their loft, but associated himself with the hens, and lived a batchelor's life on a shelf in an open shed. I begged a lovely white fan-tail pigeon for company for him from Abram Kayley and put it on his shelf, but next morning found it pecked to death with its white feathers scattered about the floor. No wonder the score of doves father kept for clay pigeon shoots gave him a wide berth. I never saw one trespass in his shed, and Pharaoh ate his meals alone in a large barrel containing corn for the poultry, or in lordly state on the window sill.

If one of his hens died, Pharaoh covered it with a huge pile of longish sticks, which he spent days in collecting for that purpose. He would always join a hen with her brood of chickens in a coop, and strut and coo as if he were the proud father and only leave her for his night's rest on the shelf. But one day an irate mother hen into whose coop he had ventured plucked out most of his feathers, and a poor miserable fellow he looked. Poor old Pharaoh. At long last I found him dead in the corn barrel, and buried him decently in the orchard behind the farmhouse.

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The tramps appeared annually with the first warm days of spring. They begged or worked their way from house to house, and had their regular night's lodgings mapped out in advance. Dreibeck was only one of such places, midway between two work-houses. However late they knocked on his door Bob Froggatt would provide a meal of milk and a couple of thick cheese sandwiches, put on his boots, light his paraffin lantern, and go to 'bed them down'. He always escorted them to an isolated hay barn, confiscated any matches until the morning, and laid down a bed of dry hay on the floor. Each year the same faces would appear regularly.

They seldom gave any trouble, Mustard saw to that, and some of them we got to know quite well. They would turn up three or four times during the summer. We had names for most of them; Ginger the redhead; Hedgehog the sharp,

tongued one; Badger the one who begged for a list of things one by one, leering evilly as he did so; Wellington the one with the huge hooked nose; Spider, the tall gangling one, who threw his arms and legs about as he walked. Ginger and Wellington would both stop and work for a day or two at Dreibeck.

Then there was Sir Marmaduke Sartorius, but at that time I knew neither the word sartorial nor the word sartorius, and obviously the rustic wit who had coined the name did not know he had chosen that of the longest if not the most important muscle of the thigh to bestow on a man he deemed a very well dressed tramp. Or did he know that the sartorius muscle was known as the tailor's muscle from his habit of sitting cross-legged at his work, for I now remember that as a sailor in his younger days he had travelled the world, and his own nickname was 'The Professor'. Rumour said Sir Marmaduke was a public schoolboy, and a university man who could put M.A. at the end of his name, who had been turned adrift by his family. Certainly he was never known to work, yet was never without money, and he always smoked a good tobacco in a beautiful pipe, and paid for everything except milk and boiling water. The first time I saw him was when he knocked on our door at Dreibeck very late one evening in early spring. When I opened the door, a small alert white terrier dog ran in, and from the tinkling sound I heard, I thought it was a belated traveller wanting a light for his gig lamps. Consequently I invited him in. His reply, given with a delightful chuckle in a very cultured voice, was that he begged the young lady to excuse him, as he merely desired boiling water to brew his tea, and a little milk. Apparently he lay concealed in one of the out barns that night, cut off the tails of every cow, and then he was away over the moors into the next valley, for Dreibeck was the last house at which he called. I don't believe this was an act of sheer maliciousness, but merely a 'cocking of the snoot' at the two policemen, who were on his tail the following day, for the beautiful white terrier was a valuable dog which he had stolen, for Sir Marmaduke was also reputed to know the inside of a prison.

Then there were the family tramps like Sally and Neddy, Bengy and Becky, and Mr. and Mrs. Lofthouse and their uncouth offspring. Sally and Neddy were both little over five feet, both dark and oily looking. Neddy sharpened knives and scissors, and looked rather like a tall monkey pushing his grinding machine. His face was covered with shaggy black hair, out of which peered dull lack-lustre eyes, a short sharp nose, and on the rare occasions when he opened his mouth it was to show two rows of blackened stumps of teeth. I never heard him speak; it was always Sally who came to the door to ask for knives to sharpen, or umbrellas to mend. She was cleaner than Neddy and wore long dark clothes reaching almost to the ground, and black wool mits. She sold umbrellas, and the usual small items of haberdashery, and was always cheerful. "That bone you 'ave in your 'and, mun, is ivory", she would boast, hoping to sell an old umbrella. Neddy always remained at a distance with his machine. They came for years until in a drunken brawl Neddy tried to drown Sally in the beck. She died in the workhouse as a direct result of the wetting she had sustained, and Neddy disappeared. Certainly he would not have been able to defend himself; evolution had passed him by.

Bengy and Becky were both tall, uncouth, unkempt individuals, and were often on the roads but seldom together. Bengy would shuffle along some distance in front, or slink a similar distance behind Becky and would shamble along with bear's gait muttering and grumbling to himself. Becky always pushed the old battered perambulator which held their few belongings plus a few saleable items. They were always accompanied by a huge well fed black cat, which probably caught many a rabbit. It never walked, and could be seen either in the pram, or on the hood, or by way of a change on Becky's shoulder. It would spit and snarl, and could growl almost like a dog. Becky mumbled to herself occasionally, but more often she would be talking to her cat, or grumbling about Bengy. "He doesn't push t'pram", or some ugly invective which she would mutter over and over to her cat, or hurl at a chance passer-by. The Lofthouse family came at rare intervals, which was an advantage. They were dirty, impertinent and rapacious.

Whilst Mrs. Lofthouse called at the farmhouse the man and the two youths would be stealing anything they fancied! Cottardale felt safer when they had gone!

*

In the dim interior of our porch, long stone seats ran the length of both walls, and above these were two long lines of pegs, one used for outdoor clothing, whilst on the second line lay my father's three fishing rods, always assembled ready for immediate use. At the far end a shallow flight of three stone steps, half worn away in the middle by the feet of preceding generations of Froggatts, led into the back kitchen. It was in the lowest of these steps that I discovered a long thin line of dull red, with globules of a similar tint splashed along each side. Here I would kneel and patiently but vainly attempt to wash them away, until one day the maid's curiosity led her to ask what I was doing. I explained that I was cleaning away the bloodstains left on the stone when my grandfather fell there and died, only living long enough to murmur, "Poor Bessy", for he was leaving my grandmother with a large family of young children to bring up. "It's nobbut iron-ore, Frogspawn", said Lizzie, "an' folks do say that your grandfather was drunk and fell backwards, an' 'it is 'ead on't stone seat".

I had no idea what iron-ore was but my mental picture of the romantic figure of my grandfather was rudely dispelled. I had pictured him riding home on his spirited chestnut mare from some distant sheep fair, his pockets bulging with golden sovereigns, and his pistol handy. I had fancied him set upon by footpads and wounded. The mare had carried him home, but he was so weary and weak from loss of blood that he had stumbled in the porch, fallen and struck his head against the step. The splash of blood I had regarded as a reproach on the dignity of Dreibeck.

*

Soon afterwards, my father himself showed me the old pistol and lead bullets that both he and his father had carried though never used when on horseback,

and the curious old swordstick with its weighted head and concealed knife, which they carried in the trap if they were to cross the moors late at night. The swordstick filled me with deep nausea but I was fascinated by the pistol, and thrilled by the idea of being a gentleman before the turn of the century, and riding my beautiful little mare Napoleon.

So it was not long before I secretly abstracted the pistol and two of the bullets which I found difficult to force into chambers in my weapon, whistled up my pony and rode off. I chose the hard green Roman road from Flintersghyll across our biggest pasture of three hundred acres, and whipped Napoleon into a wild gallop. I had even more trouble with the trigger than the bullets, but finally managed to squeeze it. The pistol must have been encrusted with rust, for when I finally did manage to pull the trigger, the bullet backfired with a tremendous noise, and sparks and actual flames spit in my face and showered over my mount. Nap showed active repugnance to our new game, whilst I lay on my back with the pistol some yards away, and felt a similar aversion.

*

My father and Abram Kayley were good friends of long standing, and to me, Uncle Abram, as I always called him, was the outstanding personality of my childhood. He was taller than my father, and perhaps because of his extreme thinness his arms and legs seemed unusually long. His high forehead sloped backwards, and his hair was so light in colour, and so silky in texture, that his head might have been covered with greyish silvery feathers. His bright beady eyes were unnaturally small, and set wide apart, and his nose, though not large was a sharp and very pronounced beak. On his first appearance in Cottardale as a young man, and in compliance with local custom, he was most appropriately dubbed Curlew, probably a combination of three factors, his appearance, his name, which curlews seem to say distinctly at one season of the year, and his outstanding ability to imitate the cries of any moorland bird, or the sounds made by the various farm animals.

He good humourably accepted this, and ever after in his own inimitable fashion his clear flute-like curlew's call rang out as he approached any neighbouring house. It was his signature tune, and might ring out with startling clarity in the middle of the night to tell of his passing. At Dreibeck, he would give three clear curlew cries for my father, and two baby curlew calls for "that little imp Frogspawn".

After any meal he shared with us, he would fascinate mother and me by giving us any bird's call, or animal sound, we cared to ask for, and end up with the true account, in sound only, of a fight between the farmer's collie dog at Peat Ghyll and his own game bantam-cock. The course of the fight could be followed in detail, from the time the bantam caught its first glimpse of the dog, and began its angry cluckings, to its final triumphant crows of victory, and the dog's pantings and whimperings during the fight, or a sharp howl of pain when the cock scored a point, to the finale when the howls of the dog died away in the distance. Later I was to see an actual fight between them, whilst Uncle Abram laughed till tears ran down his cheeks, and urged them to greater efforts, calling at intervals "Egg 'em on Frogspawn, - egg 'em on".

Later, he was to add, at my request, another sound recital to his repertoire, based on my own account of a fight between a seagull and a mother jackdaw, for a portion of a 'sheep's cleaning', really the after-birth or placenta, on which it was feeding its young. I derived even more pleasure from this, but good manners made me listen to the bantam and dog story first. Then I would say, "Now my story Uncle Abram", and to my delight/traucous staccato jackdaw sounds, punctuated by the high mournful wails and mewlings of the gull, or the faint plaintive cries of the hungry young bird would issue from Uncle Abram's lips. Then came an absolute medley of sounds as the second parent jackdaw joined in, with even deeper and harsher cries, and Uncle Abram almost seemed to make two different sounds at the same time, so quickly did they follow each other. This, too, ended with the diminishing wails of the gull as it flew away. Uncle Abram always said this was the most difficult piece of mimicry he had ever done, and

it made him quite parched. His grumblings always ended in father sending me for a couple of mugs of beer or cider, and these were the only occasions on which I found pleasure in going down into the cellar.

*

The work on a very big sheep farm when I was a child was very arduous and exacting. Just before winter a certain number of the oldest sheep or draft 'yaws' and the 'geld yaws', a term used for ewes which had failed to produce lambs that season, and so were not considered worth keeping, were sold off, and their place taken by a similar number of year old lambs, or gimmers. Then about half the flock of older sheep, ^{or matriarchs} ~~or matriarchs~~, and some younger ewes which might benefit from the better weather, and extra hay and turnips, were sent to winter on lower land. They had to walk there, and walk back in the spring just before lambing time. There was always the odd few which faltered by the wayside, and were left at some farm and later collected by my father in the trap. It was a slow business, for the pace was that of the slowest animals, and although the flock was divided with Jim Croft and Mustard in the middle, and old Eli and Sam behind, it occasionally came to a standstill. Then Mustard and Sam were indispensable for either would walk over the backs of the sheep and unblock the line. Luckily they met with little traffic, probably the odd trap or cart, and the farmer would stop, or if possible turn through a field gate until they passed.

One spring the flock returned in very poor condition, and a score or more were left at various farms along the route, the first two at the farm where they stayed a night for the journey took a couple of days. Father collected the odd ones farthest away in the trap, and those nearer home were brought back in carts lined with rushes for bedding. That year we had a hospital out in the orchard where the sheep, some covered with sacks, were given basins of warm milk, whilst the weakest were housed in the various buildings, and fed by means of a horn with warm milk containing a little whiskey. Many died and the lambing season that year was disastrous.

The sheep wintered at home also needed careful attention. If a storm seemed imminent they were brought nearer home, where they could be fed if necessary, but at least once during the winter some were buried under drifting snow, and had to be dug out. Their warmth gave them a small cavity, for there were usually a few together, and they could live for about fifteen days. After eating up the grass and moss in their small igloos they might even try a little wool. Mustard was the only dog at Dreibeck able to find these poor buried sheep. If the warmth of their breath had not had sufficient time to make a small hole in the snow father would make holes here and there along the sides of the stone walls, where the deep drifts were, with a long pole and ask Mustard if any sheep were underneath. Mustard always gave him the correct answer, and the sooner the sheep were rescued the better.

I rather liked lambing time for James Croft and I were expected to hurry home from school and join the men at gathering in the sheep from our biggest pasture to a croft near home, where they could be overlooked during the night. Few dogs would face an irate mother sheep defending her lamb, and capable of butting an enemy a yard away, so the first flock of six hundred ewes joined by a further three hundred, and finally two hundred as its numbers dwindled took more gathering than usual. We were the legs of the shepherds, and the carriers of slimy new born lambs, but whilst the men were counting the flock through the gate for home, I would visit my castle, a huge block of limestone rock reached by a series of uneven badly spaced steps situated at the edge of a large area of limestone outcrop. I would see and talk to my children, especially chosen triangular shapes of stone and I would peer down into my dungeon, an exceptionally deep fissure to see that none of my prisoners dropped down into its depths had escaped. I would hurl the word 'boogers' at them which I didn't consider a 'real swear' although if my father heard me the penalty was an hour in the cellar. "Are ye hungry down there ye miserable boogers?" I would say in a deep harsh voice, and, "No food for boogers today", and out would come my tea sandwiches hidden an hour previously, to be retrieved later. I shared them with my babies, a feature of all my hiding places. Looking back I do not think my castle was a secret, for

old Eli would give me a sour look at the gate and ask me to do some little job, but Jim Croft as long as he was at Dreibeck would veto this, "Away wi' ye Frogspawn and git yer tea", and I would hear him explaining that the bairn hadn't had time to have any tea, and in any case liked to eat it on the rock.

*

I also liked helping to mark the lambs, for I was one of the catchers, and had my own small but ordinary crook, just big enough to fit round the lamb's neck. The men used any walking sticks with curved handles, whilst my father had a very beautiful shepherd's crook made for him by a friend. I believe it was a very long and difficult job for the horn of the crook had to be boiled until it was soft enough to be lengthened and manipulated into shape. Father's curled round at the end, the tapered tip passing through a smooth hole a few inches and behind and protruding beyond it.

Once a lamb was caught, I had to hold it firmly by its legs, two in each hand, and present it with its bottom towards my father to have its tail cut off. For this he used a cut-throat razor with its blade wired firmly into a horizontal position in its handle and specially sharpened for the tailing. He said this quick method caused least pain to the lamb, and the tailing was for purposes of hygiene when it grew up. Sometimes he might grip a recalcitrant lamb firmly between his knees for this operation, but he always gripped the cut stump firmly with his fingers for a minute or so, as he thought this helped to stop the bleeding. Then I would hold my lamb out for another man to imprint a circular tar mark on its left flank and finally to a third man who used a pair of ear clippers to cut out a small piece of its left ear. All the farmers had different marks for their flocks, and as all the sheep on high farms were horned sheep, they were all horn-burned with their owner's initials. This lamb marking was always done out in the pastures. The dogs would keep the sheep and lambs bunched together by a gate, and as each lamb was marked it was put through until all were marked. Then the sheep would be driven through the gate back to their lamb:

I was never present when my father gelded or castrated the wether lambs -

the males - nor did I touch the dish of 'lamb stones' which he so much enjoyed, but I found 'lamb tail' pie delicious, although mother said it took too much preparation. I believe this gelding was a rather gruesome operation, with a specially shaped long handled iron tool heated in a brazier. I think this method was later superseded by a very simple operation, where the instrument used simply separated the genitals, which were left in the sac to atrophy and finally by a simple rubber ring put on when the lambs are still very young.

*

Just before shearing the flock was washed in order that the wool should be clean before being sold to the mills. This to me, was the most interesting and noisiest operation on the farm. The pool before my secret cave was dammed, and my hiding place disappeared under water. Across the beck, and slightly below my cave the shelves of rock ended in a deep drop into the beck and here two small sheep folds had been built running parallel but about a yard away from the water. A small gateway opened onto the beck with another leading into the second fold, which again opened on a very big yard to hold quite a large number of sheep.

To dam the beck, wide wooden planks were put across, one above the other, resting behind a bulge in the rock on the fold side and behind a strong iron bar driven between rocks on the far side. Behind this barrier quite a large lake formed. The folds were filled with bleating noisy milling sheep, the dogs barked and the men shouted "Yip! Yip! Yip! Yah! Yah! Yah! Here Mustard! Here Sam! Shush! Shush! Yip! Yip! Yip! Yah! Yah! Yah!" A couple of men, dressed in oilskins and high waders, entered the water which came up to their waists, and two stood in the gateway, to take the sheep as they were caught and brought to them. Mustard took his share here, and the two Croft boys could hold a sheep but I was often on my back as the rock floor grew ever more slippery for sheep are dirty animals.

The two men in the gateway would hold a sheep upright between them and drop it straight down into the water, which meant a short struggle for it to right

itself thus giving the two men in the beck time to seize it. Then they would give it a good wash under its belly, dirty from lying down, and round its hind quarters, and let it swim across and shake itself dry. When the folds and yard were empty, they were filled up again from sheep waiting in a small pasture behind the yard. The men in the water earned their liberal portions of hot whiskey when they came out.

*

Sheep shearing or clipping came next, and as usual for busy times we were helped out by a cousin of my father's always known as Solly. It was probably meant for Solemn, for he was the jolliest of men with a perpetual smile on his face, and always laughing, a curious hiss of a laugh with no sound, and Cottardale would nickname a very thin man Stouty, or a very tall fat man Tiny, and so on.

When we were preparing for clipping I helped him collect what sheep stocks we had. These were wide bars of wood attached to a strong frame shaped like a flat bellying cone on legs, with a protruding solid piece at the back where the clipper sat astride with the sheep on its back on the bars in front of him. Each valley had a different name for these. "Ye know at, Frogspawn", said Solly, "Ah'se fair boogered wi' all these silly names, but there's Bob's stool or stock, an' ther's Jim's cratch, and ther's Oud Eli's sheep-'oss, and 'ere's my crutch, an' ye says Ben, t'new man, just sits 'is sheep on its ass on't grund so that's all reight". "I said nowt o't'soort. You know I nivver sweer, ye oud booger, Solly" I retorted in a language he would understand, but just then father's head came round the corner, and I was absent for the next hour. Had we failed to find sufficient stocks Solly would have said, "Ah dout we's boogered Frogspawn", for we were often boogered, and it was from Solly that I had learned my genteel swear-word.

Once shearing began with the wool parted down the belly of the sheep, I loved to see the fleece slide away in a thick creamy marked slice on either side until finally the sheep was pulled off the stock, cratch, crutch or 'oss, or up off its ass, marked and sent to join its companions. Ben also folded his fleeces wrong for Bob Froggat, for he rolled from the tail and finally tucked the darker

neck wool inside in some ungainly fashion, where-as my father folded neck and tail a little inside first and rolled from side to side into a neat round pillow pulling out two small pieces of wool at each end and tying them together. I ran with the tar pot if a sheep received a cut, and helped the young Crofts to carry away the rolled fleeces.

Then came dipping, and this was about the only time we ever saw our policeman stationed a few miles away. He brought the dipping papers to be filled in, with the date for dipping, for he was supposed to visit the farm on that date. "After Brother Jack", wrote one farmer, for he used the same dipper. I only remember one exciting thing about dipping, for one year Jane Croft fell in, and had to be pulled out, spluttering and choking.

This was supposed to be a deterrent against fly, and the sheep had to be 'looked' or visited every few days. Once I helped father to doctor a sheep struck in one eye. I poured a weak solution of Jaye's fluid into the eye, whilst father held the wriggling bleating animal, and using a feather brushed away the maggots as they appeared. It was a nasty job, and the sheep lost its eye but lived.

The old-fashioned 'sauving' parting the wool in long lines down the sheep and smearing a thin line of home-made salve along each was a long tedious business in which I took no part. It was to help the rain to run off the sheep during the winter, and was carried out in the autumn.

*

During the summer months I would sometimes see a poor sheep in the orchard, turning round and round in very narrow circles, always in the same direction. Then it might feed for a little while, and then would begin once more its poor futile turnings and I would know it was what my father called 'sturdy' a disease caused by a small watery cyst or tumour forming in its brain.

Father must have brought it in to perform an operation to remove the cyst, or it might have been brought by another farmer, for Bob Froggatt was the

only man for many miles around with the skill and necessary instruments to do this. He would wait until he found that a small area of bone in some part of its head had become very soft. Then he would take out his instruments and heat a particular one in the fire, and bore a small circular hole through this soft bone of the sheep's head. He always used to say, "Perhaps I shall be lucky this time", for it was not always successful. Then he would wait until a tiny blob of the tumour began to push through the hole he had made, and with a tiny pair of forceps plus infinite patience he would gently extract it. Then the sheep would have a bandage put on its head, and I always thought how handy the horns were for this.

*

I had a lot of fun going ferretting with father or Solly. Father kept a couple of ferrets, and I made a pet of one, which instead of driving rabbits out of the limestone outcrops would return to me, run up my dress, and curl round my neck. Father always muzzled them both very neatly with cat-gut before we went shooting, and was very cross when I spoilt one.

But rabbiting with Solly was more fun, and the air was thick with boogers, under-ground and above. He would turn up with his own ferret, and a supply of nets, and we would find a level piece of ground riddled with connecting rabbit burrows. Over each hole we would spread a net, and fasten it down with a peg. Then into one burrow under a net we would put the ferret and stand back. Sometimes we could hear the rabbit thudding along the tunnel towards a net, and Solly would whisper, "Ere's one lile booger coming Frogspawn", but if it turned back or took another tunnel he would yell, "Nay we's boogered". Then out one would jump, and away went the net, alive and summersaulting and twisting, and me after it, with Solly shouting, "Git it Frogspawn. Don't let it git away, ye lile booger", for sometimes it escaped the net, but was mostly too entangled in it.

Solly always invited me home afterwards for next Sunday dinner, "an' our Liz'll mak' a rabbit pie, an' ah'll git 'er to mak' us a' open tart". I rode the two miles on Nap, for Solly had a small farm and a stable. He lived with

his father, mother, sister Liz and a small orphan nephew. Aunt Maggie had had a severe stroke, but always welcomed me with a smile, and the only sounds she could make which sounded like cos wiah wiah - cos wiah, and showed me with her hands how fast I grew.

Liz would often look fondly at her nephew, and her frequent ejaculations of "Bless t'lille Baba", were amusing. Often she would threaten, "Ah see t'botty witching ull 'ev to gan off", but no punishment followed. On one visit during dinner I saw Solly upset his tea, and turning to t'lille Baba next to him said, "Now wat's 'e doing?" T'lille Baba yelled, Liz threatened T'botty witching, an Uncle Bill said "War's yowling mat?" for l'lille Baba always ran to a mat in a corner to cry. Solly pushed me off home early that day, being afraid I might give him away. "Thanks Frogspawn", he said outside, and I grinned back "Honour among thieves and boogers Solly". His last words were, "Good-bye, Frogspawn, an now booger off wi' ye".

*

On my way home from Solly's I passed Dick's house, and I always called out, for he lived across the river and would not hear, "One o' the bad Froggats passing ye ould booger. It's me. Devil's spawn. Lile Frogspawn". He lived with his sister, and as his small farm didn't provide them with a livelihood Deborah was the Cottardale dressmaker. There were always tales going round about Dick. One was that he had returned home drunk one night and next morning grumbled bitterly to Deborah, "Wat fur 'es ta turned t^{r'be} round, Deb. I cudn't git in fur a long time last neet, an'wen I did mi feet war up in t'air an' mi 'ead down in a 'ollow. Will ta turn it back as I likes it better i'reight rooad round?"

Another was how he missed a Sunday, for curiously enough he never worked on the Sabbath, nor would he have a drop of drink. "e would always put on his best suit after breakfast, and sit all day by the fire, but he was never known to attend church. One Sunday he went off in his working clothes, and on the Monday morning got dressed up and came and sat by the fire. When Deborah got out

her machine, Dick burst out, "Nay Deb, ah'd mak' six days do wi'out working on a Sunday".

*

For a week each spring, and again in the autumn, we were visited by Martha Ann who had been maid at Dreibeck in my Grandmother's time, and who was a little older than father. She lived in a cottage at Cottarholme and was the Cottardale knitting machine. Practically every male, adult or child, wore her stockings which had beautiful coloured patterned tops. She would sit by her fire day after day, her knitting needles twinkling in the firelight, and playing their sharp clicking tune, whilst her hands swayed up and down; she seldom looked at her work.

Martha Ann was a huge square woman, with rows of chins, and swathed in rolls of fat. She was a jolly old lady and when she laughed, her whole body quivered. She always dressed in black, and wore dainty black bonnets smothered with rows of narrow white lace. We children took turns carrying water and doing small chores for her during school term. The Cottardale ladies in turn did her heavy housework and their menfolk left her parcels of food on market days, especially after a pig-killing.

When she came to visit Dreibeck one of the manure carts would be washed out, a pegged rug spread over the bottom, and a stout kitchen chair added. It took three men to hoist her into the cart; two could lift her out. First the chair was placed on the ground, its back to the cart and Martha Ann's pleasant face would be wreathed in smiles as she sat down. My father standing in the cart would seize the top cross rail of the chair whilst a neighbour at each side would grasp an arm and a leg of it, and in a second the old lady would be up in her carriage, and would only need to be turned round to be ready to move off. At Dreibeck the process was reversed. Often my father would tease her by pretending to let the chair fall, and Martha Ann would scream, and declare this was her very last visit.

Mother always helped her to bed, but one night father had crawled underneath and every time Martha Ann settled down, he would hunch his back, up went the mattress in the middle, and she would roll to one side or the other. "Prithee Ann", she said peevishly, "wat's t'matter wi't'bed?" Then she saw that my mother was laughing heartily, and she chuckled and exclaimed, "I guess it's that lang rascal Bob. Ah'll knit 'im some stockings 'e can't git on fur this".

Once she told me that she and one of father's aunts had walked over the fells "to see a 'enging at Lancaster Prison. Each carrying a small parcel of oat-cakes". As it is twenty-five miles from Dreibeck to Lancaster as the crow flies, I think they must have taken two days each way for the journey. I fancy this was almost thr last hanging carried out at Lancaster Jail, probably one of the Pendle witches. Martha Ann mentioned a huge excited crowd, and luckily I fancy the two girls were on the outskirts, but Martha saw enough o't enging to be violently sick.

*

Periodically we were visited by walking packmen, who combined business with pleasure, for the open road called them as inevitably as the seasons called the migratory birds. Those with shops left them in the care of their women-folk, shouldered their heavily loaded packs and set out on their long treks. They were our most welcome guests; they showed their merchandise; they shared our meals; they stayed over-night at certain farms, the housewife replenished her stores; the menfolk laughed at their quips and jokes. They brought the gossip of the countryside, like the peddlers of olden times, and many a good story. One had just shared an excellent dinner at a pub with an unknown traveller, who chatted with him for an hour or more, and then thought it time to rejoin his wife waiting for him in a gig outside. The age of chivalry had not yet come to the high moors. Another told of a niggardly fellow wanting an allowance on an unsettled account with him, whilst complaining that a neighbour to whom he had sold three piglets still unpaid for, was asking that the price of one that died should be refunded. At each house fabrics and foibles lay exposed with the same care-free facility.

One of these walking packmen was both short and slight and when he had swung his two huge water-proof covered bundles over his shoulder, one behind, and one in front, his head was almost obliterated, so that he looked rather like a rectangular shining black beetle on the move. How he carried such enormous packs was a mystery, yet his short legs covered the ground quickly, and rain or shine, his cheerful whistle accompanied him from door to door, and even across rough fells from one dale to the next. He was known as "Whistling Jimmy", or "Lile 'alifax". His speciality was what he called 'elephant catchers', for many mothers of that day thought 'biddies' in heads meant healthy children. My father said that a few of the lads attending the Old School in his youth, used to hold 'elephant' races.

*

The period between spring and autumn brought the gypsies in their covered waggons, and it was these who were the real thieves of the countryside. Each caravan was a family unit; the front seat would be occupied by father, mother with baby, and probably another very young child, and the opening at the back would be filled with a number of leering children's faces. Each unit had at least two scraggy horses tied to the back, and always its couple of lurcher dogs. When some distant market town was holding its periodic horse fairs, the road through Cottardale over to Norgarth would see quite a number of caravans, often three or four travelling together. Often they would have a score or more lean horses, attended by a number of agile grinning cowboy gypsies. In about a week, they would return, and what horses they had left they would try to sell to the farmers as they passed through the dale.

Besides the gypsies with their travelling homes, would be the potters with their flat carts. Their horses were usually better and very swift. Often they had beautifully furnished houses of their own in some of the more substantial market towns, and sumptuous stables for their horses. They came round selling hardware, carpets and linoleums, and household furnishings and linens, and were difficult to get rid of. These potters would buy any old iron or fallen wool,

either cast from the sheep as the weather grew warmer, or plucked from any sheep which had died. They were all known by name, and they in turn knew every farmer in more than one valley. Their life was similar to but not as precarious as that of the caravan dwellers.

I was afraid of both potters and gypsies, but more I think of the latter. I was glad if I were riding Nap when I had to pass one of their encampments. A favourite site was a deep sheltered hollow just above Cottarholme where a wood ran down to the road, with a brook running through it, where they could get wood for a fire and water for making tea. Luckily I could see their smoke some way off, and even smell the burning fir wood. I could bring Nap softly to the gate near on the spongy turf, and once I had it open, I could leave it so and gallop past. On one occasion I had some difficulty with it, only to find a gypsie had crept up stealthily, and was holding out an open sack containing a number of small red bodies for me to see. They were probably only those of rabbits, skinned ready for cooking, but to me they might have been the bodies of babies he had killed.

On one occasion a girl of six was missing from Scoutbottom, the Hamlet a mile below Dreibeck. No tramp had been seen, and everybody joined in a search of the vicinity, thinking Jean had simply wandered away. A Cottarholme farmer feeding his stock in an out barn in the late afternoon, fancied he heard a suppressed sobbing and went to investigate. He recognised Jean, although her long hair had been cut off, and her clothes were torn and dirty, and he gave the tramp he discovered in hiding there the thrashing he deserved, and saved Jean from an unscrupulous rogue.

A year or two later I was unpleasantly reminded of this incident. We were gathering in the hay from our large twenty acre meadow near Cottar Hall wood, and I was working one of the horses with a haysledge. I noticed a covered waggon of the type used by a ^{gipsey}~~gypsie~~ family moving slowly along the road separated from us by the deep narrow valley of the Cottar. It had a thin piebald horse in the shafts, and an equally thin bay tied at the back, with a couple of lurcher dogs

roaming the pastures beyond. There was no sign of the gypsies until a tall girl with long plaits suddenly dropped out of the back of the waggon, and threw herself down on the grass of the steep bank by the side of the road. I could see her very clearly across the narrow valley, and as her wild despairing cries of "Mother! Mother! Oh my mother!" rang across the beck, I felt that here was some terrible unexplained tragedy. Almost immediately a slightly built man jumped off the waggon and went back to the girl. I could hear the swish of his long whip, and hear him order the girl back under the canvas. The men in the hayfield laughed and thought it funny, but her agonised cries distressed me for a long time. Had she been abducted from some well-loved home?

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We had our resident gentry from April to September at Cottar Hall and Flintersghyll, otherwise only occupied by caretakers with their alien tongues and outlandish names. Only once had we a couple with one little boy, and he was called Claud Albert, pronounced in the Sussex dialect. The owner of Flintersghyll, Mr.Ormsby-Russell came for short spells of fishing and later for the shooting. As the Heber there was very small and often disappeared underground for long or short stretches, he had the beck dammed to make a large lake with a boathouse, but he often fished through father's land to reach a length of fishing he rented beyond, which father often fished in exchange. When he came to Flintersghyll in his gig with its high stepping mettlesome horse he would borrow me to open the six gates beyond Dreibeck. For this service I received sixpence, and I would pause to admire the topiary of birds round his lawn. These were trimmed by his gardener for he only lived twenty five miles away.

He would often stay and chat seriously with father, fishing and making flies, farming or grouse-shooting topics, and then with an exchange of some funny Cottardale story at which they would roar with laughter, they would separate. Mr.Ormsby-Russell once told how he had supplied his tenant farmer at Peat Ghyll with paint for the outside of his house and buildings, and had discovered him a day or two previously on a very hot day, aloft on his longest ladder, painting

the farm trouging and muffled in a couple of heavy coats. When asked if he didn't find it hot work he replied, "Very 'ot, Sir, But you know, sir, you did say you would like me to put two coats on when I did it". Father's story that day was about a farmer at Scoubottom, who stayed in bed on Sunday mornings, and looked after the youngest child. One day, when she heard it crying his wife looked in to find him holding it by its ankles over the edge of the bed. His explanation was that he was letting it look before it leaped.

The owners of Cottar Hall, a clergyman and his twin sisters from a south coast town, came every spring for a long visit. I had to curtsy to them and to the retired colonel and his family who later came for the shooting there. The two ladies taught the Cottardale children the names of all the wild flowers, for we picked scores of bunches to be sent to the London hospitals.

Once when a missionary brother came to stay, he christened his baby and its ayah in the school, which was also used for church services. Part of the ceremony was in a strange gibberish which we couldn't understand, but we felt in touch with the wide, wide world. They held a missionary sale of work in their huge dining room every June, and the woods were opened to visitors. This was no treat for me, as I trespassed there frequently in search of cones for my private farm amongst the limestone outcrop where well-spaced rocks provided me with fields. The big spruce and fir cones were horses and cows, the pine ones sheep, and the smaller larch ones the lambs, but I had to spend many hours on sheep - washing to keep my animal cones tightly closed.

They rented father's only moor pasture across the Cottar, adjoining their own shooting for many years, until at last father decided to keep it, and was told curtly that grouse-shooting was a sport for gentlemen, not farmers. He let his own grouse-shooting beyond the Heber every year, and it was all these various people I had to thank for my own well-stocked library, and the school one I shared with the other children. When I finally went away to 'High' school I found myself the second best read girl there, but when I had to read aloud, a thing I had never done, my nervous gabble evoked roars of laughter.

The maids brought by the gentry caused much heart fluttering in the dale. The year young Ben spent at Dreibeck I heard intermittent accounts of his love life as I was leading hay, and he and Jim were loading the sledges. Ben complained how Polly, the girl he had taken up in Cottardale "just fur fun, nut keeps", was pestering him to go home with her, "An' tha knows wat that means Jim, an' ah've telt 'er ya can tak a 'oss to t'watter, but ya can't mak 'im drink. An' now ther's a gud luking yan at t'all, an that's t' fish ah meen to set mi net fer". "Leave her be", said Jim, "an' stick tu Polly". "Wat du ah tell t'other yan?" says Ben. "Tha doesn't ev to explain owt if tha seys nowt", retorted Jim. "Ah'm noan 'eving Polly", said Ben. "Shoo seys ah'll bi lucky if ther's nabbu yan in t'oven, an ah says ah've baked nowt, an' ah ween't 'ev another chap's baking onny road".

When I asked Jim later what Ben was supposed to have baked, he said huffily, "A'ergit it Frogspawn", and when I went back to work after our picnic tea, for we took most of our meals in the fields, Ant and Jim were loading sledges and Ben forking at the barn.

*

Just before I left Dreibeck for 'High' school in our largest market town twenty five miles away, Mustard died, and my father was most distressed. He decided to bury his devoted old dog in the orchard under a gnarled old apple tree, where he had built a rough wooden seat. Here he would often sit with Mustard at his feet, his head resting on his front paws gazing up at father, who often composed and wrote out his poems there. This was the only writing he ever did. Mustard had died quietly in his sleep in just that position, and father buried him so, after partly filling the grave with soft hay. I was allowed to go and sit very quietly on the seat, and noticed that father's eyes were not quite dry when he had finished the grave, and came and sat down beside me.

Father's poem of Cottardale describing the amusing incidents that had taken place at the various farms was always sung at our various concerts and was

one of the highlights. We practically knew what was coming, and who would participate. We had two people who always read dialect stories, one a young farmer who was excellent, and an older Cottarholme farmer who mispronounced many words, and usually lost his place. His favourite story, often read by request, was of a yokel, who went shopping to Norgarth, (for the stories were either written by a native of that old market town, or the readers substituted local names) and returned heavily burdened with parcels, but without his horse and cart. On one occasion he had almost finished reading the story before he took off his glasses and announced as usual, "Nay ah think ah'se gitten lost!", and a wag in the audience shouted, "Tha's all reight, John William: tha's gitten thisen 'oome: it's t'nag tha's lost: away back to Norgarth wi thi an fetch t'nag, an' then tha'll bi all reight. John William recieved a greater ovation than usual.

This same farmer who was a school manager used to come into school once each term to sign the register. As soon as we heard his noisy approach, Mr. Jepson, our teacher would break off what he was doing, and go up to his desk for a minute before resuming the lesson he was giving. Here John William would sign his name, whilst we children waited breathlessly for his loud bellow, "War's blotching sheet, Mr Jepson? war's blotching sheet?" A clean unsullied (blotching sheet' was then always produced for him, but I have sometimes wondered whether Mr. Jepson was silently pointing out to us the difference between Cottardale English and King's English, or was merely enjoying himself. On Sundays this same desk was used as a pulpit, whilst doors were opened under the huge window above the platform, and revealed a very beautiful alter. Mr. Jepson took the service, and delivered the sermon, John William read the lessons, and the congregation prayed hopefully that this would be one of the days when some-one would die and be carried up into Aaabrum's boozum.

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During my second year at 'High' school, I returned for a quick visit to Dreibeck for the 1911 coronation. It was quite a journey in those days, by train, then bus, and the last five miles by horse and trap with friends. I found that a huge marquee had been erected on a large piece of flat land just beyond

the Cottar bridge in one of father's pastures. Here a most sumptuous feast was laid out on trestle tables, and everyone was served with home-cured ham, roast beef, roast pork, or salmon and salad. Actually two gigantic meals were served to large crowds, and sandwiches, cakes and coffee served at intervals during the dancing, and still quantities of food remained. Different kinds of nuts, a large bag of each sort were scrambled for, and besides the usual sweets, apples and oranges, there was what I think was called a crown of bananas, an enormous bunch cut from the palm in its entirety. The two magnificent salmon, and an enormous three tiered iced cake said to weigh a hundreweight were the gift of Mr. Ormsby-Russell, who had also lent his boat. Even dammed, Boropot, the pool below the stone bridge was not really large enough for a boat, and as nobody except Mr. Ormsby-Russell and his gamekeeper Adam Kayley, could row, this merely added a picturesque touch to the scenery. My father, Adam Kayley, and the cottar Hall gamekeeper, however, did insist on having their photo taken sitting in the boat, with the lovely stone bridge as a background.

Races of every conceivable kind were indulged in, wrestling, a tug of war, a clay pigeon shoot, and even an easy fell race, over the stone wall into Borogarth, across both becks, up Smearbank and round ~~on~~ ^{one} of the two shooting boxes on the moor, one of the competitors limping in second wearing only one shoe. The maximum number of prizes was awarded and Mr. Ormsby-Russell gave half-a-crown to every child who had not won a prize. He also presented me with a lovely prize, not legally mine.

An evening dance in the marquee lit by numerous farm lanterns followed, and a real but small band from Norgarth, engaged specially for the occasion, played for this as well as during the afternoon. I still retain an indelible mental picture of my old friend, my poor inebriated Solly, repeatedly attempting to scale one of the poles supporting the marquee. Was it, perhaps, the very first attempt to reach the moon, for to Solly, that evening a farm lantern might easily look like the moon, at least that was what he offered to bring me! A sober Solly became a socialite; as a sozzled Solly he became a little gentleman,

good humoured, witty, good-mannered, correct, gay, but a bit of a lad. On such occasions he usually had a merry widow from Crayke for company, and would sit in a corner, lady on his knee, with one or both arms round her waist. Poor Solly, he finally married his merry widow, with her large family, and became Solly the solemn one. I spent an hour in a chair at my friend's house, where I arrived about six the following morning, caught an early bus, and back to school, and a severe attack of tonsillitis, but Solly, as usual, had made my day.

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For a long time I never knew the name of our Cottardale pub just across the river from the church; it was "Just Lottie's", and was kept by a huge woman who must have weighed all of twenty stones. If strangers called her Miss Parkins, she became huffy and would say, "Just Lottie, sir; Just Lottie. Once two gentlemen coming to see father on business called for a meal. "Yes," Just Lottie told them, "We're 'eving duck today", and presently she brought one duck, and told the second one she would bring him his in a few minutes. She was also serving two youths with a huge dish of fried ham, and a dozen eggs and was telling them off because "Ya even't itten aae of it; ya owt to bi ashamed o' yerels girt lads as ya are". She herself would often have one or even two goose eggs boiled for her tea, for she had an excellent way of preserving them for months, and wouldn't keep a gander.

The great event of the Cottardale year was the letting of the 'poor pasture', on New Year's Eve, the rent of which was distributed amongst the elderly poor of the parish. This began with a short service in the church, followed by an auction in the inn. Our very loveable parson, whom one drink could make merry, was the auctioneer, and sat in one room known as 'The House of Lord's', with his two wardens, who at intervals would take bids from the company sitting in another room known as 'The House of Commons'. The auction was open as long as a tall

candle burnt on the bar. Just Lottie, helped by a young but distant relative who lived with her, provided huge dishes of sandwiches and cakes, with coffee in moderation, and her customers consumed quantities of drinks of various kinds; and sang any rollicksome song with a chorus such as Polly-Wolly-Doodle, Little Brown Jug, There is a Tavern, Simon the Cellarer, or sentimental ones which made Just Lottie weep:-

No mother to guide him,
In the grave she lies low,
Cast out in this wide world,
Was poor little Joe.

Or someone would recite 'Over the Hill to the Poor-House' and Lottie would weep copiously until someone would shout, "Give over Lottie!" "Mi beer's just reight wi'out onny watter". It must have been a most entertaining evening with Abram Kayley's mimicry, John William's dialect reading, father's Cottardale song, Bridget's singing, for Lotties' help was always known as 'Birdie' because of her beautiful untrained soprano voice; her boy friend gave excellent recitations of dialect poems.

At midnight 'Auld Lang Syne' would be sung, and someone would let in the new year; but the fun would continue. Finally everyone gathered outside and sang:-

For she's a jolly good seller
" " " " " "
" " " " " "
And so say all of us. (Repeat 3 times)

She keeps a jolly good cellar
" " " " " "
" " " " " "
And so say all of us. (Repeat 3 times)

Poor maudlin (Just Lottie' by this time had to be supported in her doorway. She certainly couldn't fall backwards, and strong arms prevented her from falling forwards, but she insisted on shaking hands with everyone, and woe betide anyone who tried to evade her. "If tha sneaks off, ah weean't serve thee

fur a twelve months Alf", she would shout and curiously enough she never forgot.

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I always enjoyed calling at 'Just Lottie's with father when we were passing the inn for Lottie usually had a grievance, and always wept during the recital. Often it was about Birdie, whose father had been an Irishman whom Lottie said 'just come and went', but I was by then a sophisticated young lady of eleven and knew more about 'ovens' and 'coming and wenting', and 'enging up caps, for hadn't the farm man hung his cap up in Dreibeck kitchen after grandfather died? And hadn't father gone off and worked in a dairy in Liverpool for many years until grandmother was left a widow for the second time, when he returned.

Listening to Lottie using her own fascinating dialect, which brought her custom from far afield, I discovered Birdie was not just jannock, but a good worker, usually biddable, but occasionally stubborn. "Fray ah Bob", sniffed Lottie, "wad ta let 'erwed yon Jock. 'e nobbut thinks they'll git my bit o'brass, that's all e's efter". "See Lottie", said father, "Jock's a fairly decent lad, and he'll look after Birdie, and she needs somebody, and you can't stop 'em anyway, so make t'best of it". "Well, ther are times when she just disappears". said Lottie. "Only t'other day she wer away fur a long time, and dus know wheer she were? Up at t'top of that git sacamore tress in t'croft singing like a bloody nightingale". "Hush, Lottie". said father, "Isobel doesn't hear such words from me, and it's not seemly she should hear 'em fra a woman". "Well wat's t'bairn ^{her} muttering now?" said Lottie. "Ther ~~s~~ may be broody 'ens, but the ain't onny broody nightingales, or if there are they dooant sing, but folks tell me she es a word of er own. An fur why esn't she itten er rabbit pie?" I said I'd had sufficient thank you, but when father told me to eat it up, I said I couldn't and joined Lottie in a flood of tears, for Lottie hadn't cleaned her rabbit properly, and I had found what at first looked like a short string of black beads under my portion of rabbit.

But just then Drama entered 'Just Lottie's' doorway, and she was handed a telegram by our vicar who as usual had cheerfully accepted a thankless task

needing his sympathy. It was from Birdie away in Norgarth, and read, "getting wed to Jock to-day. Bridget". Lottie broke down utterly of course and between sobs told us once again how Jock came to Cottardale and met Birdie. He had hired out to a farmer in the nearby village, and was considered the best farm worker ever seen, and usually took drink in moderation, but just occasionally he got hilariously fighting drunk, and would go back to the farm, throw things about and use filthy language, until in the end the farmer said his wife threatened that either Jock must go, or she would, and said the farmer cheerfully, "Ah've 'ad t'ould woman longer ner Jock, so ah thout ah'd better stick to 'er an' let 'im go". So Jock and Birdie were separated for a time. Lottie left the pub soon after that for a small cottage in the village, and Birdie and Jock disappeared, but eventually they came into Lottie's bit o'brass.

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Epilogue

57- 5/8

Once I grew up I could only visit Cottardale at long intervals. On one such visit, on a glorious summer day, I found family parties everywhere picnicing with radios at full blast, climbing rocks or sitting on stones in the river, paddling in its clear water or playing ball games on the smooth stretches of turf, and this during the week. I could not help contrasting this animated scene with many it evoked during the early years of the century. The odd car would arrive infrequently, only to be foiled by an attempt to climb the short steep Cottardale escarpment beyond the gate which had frustrated but not defeated Sam, the sheep dog, bringing home the flock entrusted to his care, so many years before. The rare adventurous driver would call at Dreibeck to ask if we had a horse willing to tow his car up, and my father would take old Charlie, the only horse not afraid of the new fangled carriage. I found work to do on my private farm just below the gate, for I knew that the car would never climb the steeper hill beyond the old ^{gipsy} ~~gipsy~~ encampment, but return unfailingly within half-an-hour. Now all the gates had been replaced with cattle-grids, and a wide smooth macadamed road flowed over the moor to Norgarth.

I made one call at Cottardale. The door was opened a mere crack to my loud tattoo, and a face peered round the door. Then this was flung wide open, and with a loud clap which startled me, followed by intensive hand rubbing, my host exclaimed, "Gaw, if it ain't t'lil Frogspawn! Cum in, Cum in ye lile booger,

an' ah'll put t'lectric on an' 'ev a gud luk at ya". For light had finally come to Cottardale, and with it mod.cons. and a telephone kiosk. I remembered that hand clap. It is made with close cupped hands, and is difficult to achieve, but I have used it repeatedly and often effectively in some theatre when I desired an encore. Allow three bursts of prolonged applause, and then begin a loud slow clapping, for hands must be manipulated into the correct position before each clap. People round will first look amused, and then join in enthusiastically, until every member in the audience will be clapping unrestrainedly. If the artist is still unresponsive address him as Solly might have done, but under your breath,