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**Yorksher Puddin' A Collection of
the Most Popular Dialect Stories
from the Pen of John Hartley**

John Hartley

Imprint

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"This life, sae far's I understand,
is an enchanted fairy land,
where pleasure is the magic wand, that weilded right,
maks hours like minutes, hand in hand dance by fir' light."
Burns.

Preface

The numerous applications for the productions of Mr. Hartley's pen, the majority of which have been out of print for many years, warrants us in believing that this collection of Yorkshire Stories, will be welcomed to a large circle of his admirers.

Dedication

To my Dear Sister Hannah, to whose love and motherly care I owe more than I can ever repay, I dedicate this little book as a token of sincere affection. John Hartley Christmas 1876.

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Frozen to Death

Or the Cottage on the Hill.

A Christmas Story.

CHAPTER I.

The last strain of the grand old Christmas hymn had just been warbled forth from the throats and hearts of a number of happy folks, who were seated around the blazing log one Christmas eve; and on the face of each one of that family circle the cheering light revealed the look of happiness; the young—happy in the present, and indulging in hopeful anticipations for the future; the old,—equally happy as the young, and revelling in many a darling memory of the past.

"Come, Uncle John!" said a bright-eyed, flaxen-haired beauty, over whose head not more than ten Christmas days had passed,—
"Come, uncle, *do* tell us a story; you know that we always expect one from you."

"Well, my pretty little niece," he replied, "I fear that I have exhausted all my store of ghosts and hobgoblins, and if I tell you a story now, it must be from the cold, stern world of fact, which, I fear, will be less interesting to you than the romantic fictions I have rehearsed on former occasions."

"Oh dear, no! tell us a story, a true story—we shall be all the more delighted to know that we are listening to an account of what has really occurred. Do begin at once, please".

Knocking the ashes from the bowl of his pipe, and having carefully reared it against the hob, he commenced:—

"The factory bells had just ceased ringing, and the whistles had given out their last shrieks, like the expiring yells of some agonized demon, as the old church clock drowsily tolled the hour of six, on one of the most miserable of December mornings. High on a bleak hill stood a little whitewashed cottage, from the door of which issued two children, apparently about ten years of age. As they stepped into the cold morning air they shuddered, and drew their scanty garments closer around them.

"Nah, yo'll ha' to luk sharp! yond's th' last whew!—yo've nobbut fifteen minutes," cried a voice from within.

It was with great difficulty that the little couple succeeded in reaching the high road, for the ground was covered with ice, on which a continual sleet fell, and the wind, in fitful blasts, howled about them, threatening at almost every step to overthrow them. But they had no time to think of these things; slipping and running, giving each other all the aid in their power, they pressed on in the direction of the factory—the fear of being too late over-whelming every other consideration.

"Come on, Susy!" said the little lad, whom we should take to be the older of the two. "Come on, we shall niver be thear i' time; come on! stand up! tha hasn't hurt thi, has ta?" he said, as she fell for the third time upon the slippery pavement.

Tenderly he helped her to rise, but poor Susy had hurt herself, and although she strove to keep back her tears and smother her sobs, Tom saw that she had sustained a severe injury.

"Whisht!" he said, "tha munnot cry; whear ar ta hurt? Come, lain o' me, an' aw'l hug thi basket."

"O, Tom, aw've hurt mi leg—aw cannot bide to goa any farther; tha'd better leave me, for aw'm sure we'st be too lat."

"Happen net—tha'll be better in a bit,—put thi arm raand mi shoulder, tha'rt nobbut leet; aw could ommost hug thi if it worn't soa slippy. Sup o' this tea, si thee, it's warm yet, an' then tha'll feel better: an' if we are a bit too lat, aw should think they'll let us in this mornin'."

Susy drank of the tea, and, revived by its warmth, she made another attempt to pursue her way. But it was slow work; Tom did his best to help her, and tried to cheer her as well as he could, though now an' then a tear fell silently from his eyes, for his little fingers were numbed with cold, and he felt the rain had already penetrated to his skin, and the dreadful prospect of being late, and having to remain in the cold for two hours, was in itself sufficient to strike dread into the heart of one older and stronger than he. Even the watchman as he passed, turned his light upon them for a moment, and sighed. It was no business of his,—but under his waterproof

cape there beat a father's heart, and he murmured as he paced the solitary street, "Thank God, they arn't mine."

But we must leave them to pursue as best they can, their miserable way, whilst we return to have a glance at the occupants of the cottage from which we saw them start. It is a one storied building, with but one room and a small out-kitchen; in one corner is a bed, on which is laid a pale, emaciated young man, to all appearance not yet thirty years of age: he is asleep, but from the quick short breath, it is not difficult to infer that his best days are over. In another corner, a number of boxes are arranged so as to extemporize a bed, now unoccupied, but from which the two little factory-workers have but lately arisen. A jug of herb tea is on the table. The fire is very low, and the light from it is only sufficient to render all indistinctly visible. In a chair opposite is a young woman with such a mournful, careworn face, that a glance inspires you with sorrow; and from a bundle of clothes on her knee issues the fretful wail of a restless child. The monotonous tick of an old clock is the only sound, saving the longdrawn sigh of that young mother, or the quick, hollow breathing of the sleeping man. Now and then the wind whistles more shrilly through the crevices of the door, and the rain beats with greater force against the little window. The mother draws still nearer to the few red embers, and turns a timid glance to the window and then to the bed: another sigh, and then the overburdened heart overflows at her eyes, and the large bright drops fall quickly on that dearly loved infant.

The church clock chimes a quarter after six—this rouses the mother once more to set aside her own griefs; the wind still howls, and the rain beats with unabated fury against the glass: her thoughts are of those little ones, and a tremor passes over her as she fears lest they should be shut out. The man moves wearily in his bed, and opening his eyes, he looks towards his wife. She is at his side in an instant.

"Have they goan, Bessy?" he asks.

"Eea, they've goan, an' aw hooap ther thear before nah."

"It saands vary wild. We ne'er thowt it ud come to this twelve year sin, Bess,—an' it's all along o' me!"

"Nay, Jim, tha munnot say soa—tha knows we can nooan on us help bein poorly sometimes, but when spring comes tha'll pick up thi crumbs agean, an' things 'll be different."

"That's true, lass,—aw feel that's true—things *will* be different when spring comes, an' afoor it comes, aw'm feear'd. Has ta iver been i' bed to-neet?"

"Nay, aw couldn't come to bed, 'coss th' child wor cross, but aw've slept a bit i' th' cheer: dooant thee bother, aw'l look after mi sen. Will ta have a sup o' this teah?"

"Whisht!" he said, "that's awr Susy callin, aw'm sure it is! Oppen th' door!"

She flew to oppen th' door, and the storm rushed in with fury; the snow had begun to fall thickly: she strained her eyes and called, "Susy! Susy!" but she heard no response: yet her heart misgave her, for the thoughts of her darlings being exposed to such a storm made her shudder; but necessity knows no law, and on the slender earnings of these two children depended the subsistence of herself and husband.

"Aw think tha wor mistakken, Jim: aw con see nowt," she said, as she returned and closed the door.

"Well, happen aw wor; but it's a sorry mornin to turn aght two little lambs like them. Bessy," he said, lowering his voice to a whisper, "aw know aw'm i'th' gate,—aw con do nowt but lig i' bed, an' aw know 'at thee an' th' childer have to goa short mony a time for what aw get, but it willn't be for long. Dooant rooar! tha knows it's summat 'at we've nowt to do wi; an' tha heeard what th' parson said, 'Ther's One aboon at 'll work all things together for gooid,' an' aw feel my time's commin' varry near; but aw'm nooan fretened like aw used to be; aw think it's gooin to be a change for th' better—an' He'll luk after thee an' th' little ens."

"O! Jim! tha munnot talk abaght leavin us yet; tha'll be better in a bit."

"Niver i' this world, Bessy! Come, put thi heead o' th' pillow here beside me, aw think aw want to rest."

She placed the little babe upon the coverlet, laid her head upon the pillow, and worn out with watching, she wept herself asleep.

The church clock had chimed the half-hour before Tom and his little sister landed at the mill yard, and it was closed. The storm was still raging, but to his repeated entreaties for admission the same answer was returned, "Tha'rt too lat! tha cannot come in afoor th' braikfast." Experience had taught him how vain his endeavours would be to obtain admission; and had it been himself alone that was shut out, he would have gone quietly away and spent the time as best he might; but he felt emboldened by the responsibility that was upon him on his sister's account, and he redoubled his efforts, but the timekeeper was inexorable:—"My orders iz, az nubdy mun come in after a quarter past, an' if tha doesn't goa away aw'l warm thi Jacket for thi; tha should ha come i' time same as other fowk." Poor Tom! there had still lingered some little faith in the goodness of human nature in his breast, but as he turned away, the last spark died out. To attempt to go home he knew would be useless, and therefore he sought as the only alternative, some place where he might find shelter. At a short distance from the gate, but within the sound of the whirling wheels, he sat down with his uncomplaining sister upon his knee. The snow began to fall gently at first, and he watched it as the feathery flakes grew larger and larger. He did not feel cold now; he wrapped his little scarf around his sister's neck. The snow fell still thicker: he felt so weary, so very weary; his little sister too had fallen asleep on his breast;—he laid his head against the cold stone wall, and the snow still fell, so softly, so very gently, that he dozed away and dreamed of sunny lands where all was bright and warm: and in a short time the passer-by could not have told that a brother and sister lay quietly slumbering there, wrapped in their shroud of snow.

The hum of wheels has ceased; the crowd of labourers hurry out to their morning's meal; a few short minutes, and the discordant whistles again shriek out their call to work. Tom and Susy, where are they? The gates will soon be closed again!

Well, let them close! other gates have opened for those little suffering ones. The gates of pearl have swung upon their golden hing-

es; no harsh voice of unkind taskmaster greets them on their entrance, but that glorious welcome.

"Come, ye blessed!" and their unloosed tongues join in the loud "Hosannah."

But those pearly gates are not for ever open. The time may come when those shall stand before them unto whom the words, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me," shall sound the death-knell of all hopes throughout an inconceivable eternity.

CHAPTER II.

It is night, and the wind is sighing itself away. The snow has ceased to fall, and the moon looks down upon the hills in their spotless covering, shedding her soft, mild light upon all. The little cottage on the hill side would be imperceptible, were it not for the light that streams through the window and the open door. The church clock has just struck eight, and for nearly an hour a woman has stood looking towards the town, her anxiety increasing every moment. She listens to the sound of feet on the crisp snow — they come nearer — they are opposite the turn that leads to the cottage: but they pass on. Again and again she listens: — once or twice she fancies she sees two children in the distance — but they come not. Passersby become less frequent; again the church clock chimes, and all is still. Her husband and her babe are asleep. Quickly putting on her bonnet and shawl, she runs to her nearest neighbour to ask if she will sit with them until she returns, for she must go and learn how it is that her children have not come home. She fears no denial, and she meets with none; as soon as she has stated her case, the good woman replies, "Sit wi' 'em lass! aw'm sure aw will! an' thee," she said, turning to her husband, "put on thi hat an' coit an' goa wi' her."

"O, they're nobbut laikin at snowball, or else slurrin a bit," he said; — at the same time he put on his hat and coat, and showed as much alacrity to join in the search as the mother herself.

Owd Becca thrust into her capacious pocket a tea cake and two eggs, and taking the teapot into which she put a good supply of tea, she prepared for starting off; but suddenly recollecting herself, she returned and called in loud tones to her daughter: "Sarah I get that