

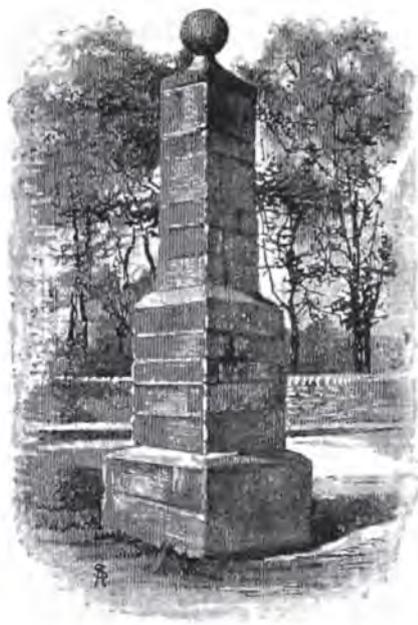
Two Chapters
Only Covering
Local Places &
Events.

BOND SLAVES

The Story of a Struggle

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'God's Providence House' 'The Manchester Man'
'Glory' 'In His Own Hand'
etc. etc.



THE DUMB STEEPLE

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CHAPTER II.

AT THE DUMB STEEPLE.

LIKE to the kindling of a beacon fire on some hill-top, so was the demolition of Rawdon Mill to the fiery spirit of the Yorkshire coppers. Like blood-hounds held in a restraining leash, they broke loose at the signal, and their great hammer, dubbed 'Enoch' in derision, and wielded by a man of powerful thews and sinews, named Jonathan Dean, was here, there, and everywhere, crushing to atoms the delicate machinery Enoch Taylor and his brother had made. 'What Enoch Taylor made, our Enoch will shatter,' was the exulting cry of General Ludd, as he marshalled his men and led them to ravage and destroy. Undefended mills in secluded spots were broken into and left in ruins. Now and then a fire was kindled, but not often, and then only in low-lying, secluded spots, since fire might serve as a beacon to bring the military down upon them, an end not desirable now that frame-breaking was felony punishable by death, as arson had been heretofore. These midnight marauders were not so heroic as to rush to their own destruction wilfully, though some of them were woefully blind.

Timid people out on their own business, meeting armed bodies of men, slunk into concealment until they had passed. Some discreetly held their peace, others rushed to sleepless Mr. Radcliffe, or to the temporary barracks, and gave the alarm.

'Fools!' cried George Mellor, with a grim curl of the lip, as



the approach of a galloping troop of soldiers, heralded by the tramp of hoofs, the clank of bits and sabretaches, gave the signal to disperse, only to reassemble when the horsemen had passed or gone astray. 'Fools! They might as well send a bellman before them to announce their coming. We can hear them a mile off, and hide where no horse could follow. I'm moore afraid of my men coming singly across that confounded Watch and Ward Radcliffe has set up to scour the town and country. Men born and bred on the spot know every nook and turn, and they know the men they meet too. But they're a noisy lot, and a fellow with any wit may give them the slip when he sees their lanthorn ahead. If they want to catch us, they must be as secret, as silent, and as sure as we are.'

At all events, three hundred Luddites marched from different quarters towards Wakefield on the 9th in regular squads; hatchetmen, hammermen, pistollers, gunners, with a guard in front and rear carrying drawn swords, and commanded by a black-faced, fiery-eyed General, armed with a peculiar pistol having a gleaming barrel more than a foot long. They were met by several wayfarers, but no one seemed to have the temerity to stop or thwart them, no one seemed to have the intelligence or the will to alarm the authorities; perhaps we should add—or the daring.

Their destination was not Wakefield. A contingent from that town met the main body on Horbury Bridge, about four miles south-west of Wakefield. The leaders exchanged a few words. The new-comers, well armed and disguised, fell in with the rest, and marched on through the village boldly to the Horbury Mills, built on a hilly slope, where a dam had been thrown across a stream to supply power for the mill.

The two sons of Mr. Foster, the owner, occupied a house in the vicinity of the mill.

In the dead of the night they were aroused from sleep by a confused sound without, the thud as of a heavy hammer on the outer door, the tramp of heavy feet upon the stairs, and, before either could do more than thrust his limbs into his nether garments, they were surrounded by dark figures, held fast by strong, rough hands, tied down in stout chairs with their own bell-ropes, and placed in front of their own windows,



to witness what General Ludd and his followers were about.

What availed resistance in such hands, when gleaming pistol barrels touched their brows, and they had evidence before them what they might expect?

Hundreds of such black figures swarmed around their father's mill; there was a crashing as of wood and iron under the strokes of hammers by the score; then every window of the mill was alight; it was ablaze; the stifling smell of singeing wool mingled with the fumes of burning oil and wood; glass melted, blue and crimson flames leaped forth, licking and biting the very stone; the roof fell in, the sparks flew, flame and smoke commingling writhed and twisted, and with a rush and roar the fire waved its red banners high in air for all the country round to see.

Was there no one to spread the alarm? Were there no work-people to oppose these men and throw water on the flames? Was there no one to appease the agony of the young fellows compelled to witness the appalling outrage, by showing an interest in the preservation of their father's mill?

The alarm had been given. The work-people, roused from their beds, were there, spectators only. Not a voice was raised in protest, not a foot or hand stirred to bring so much as a bucket of water. A few women stood aloof wringing their hands, and that was all.

It could not be that the men they employed would wantonly consent to be thus thrown out of work, the young masters argued.

They little knew how men were entrapped as Luddite recruits, or the nature of the oath that enslaved free will. In their own persons they could testify what force and armed numbers could effect.

In vain they groaned aloud, and struggled against their bonds, as they saw with a crash the roof fall in, and for an instant a dense smothering cloud hang over like a pall. Then, as from the crater of a new volcano, there was an upward rush of sparks, of burning rags and brands, to fall in fiery shower upon the lands around for more than half a mile. Had the cottages near been roofed with thatch instead of flagstone, the village would have gone down along with the mill.



The falling in of the roof appeared the signal for retreat. A shot was fired from the brass-mounted pistol of their leader.

Without clamour, without disturbance beyond a parting shout of triumph, the men fell in and marched from the scene of destruction as if they had done a glorious deed, and not one of the stunned and helpless crowd they had robbed of a livelihood dared follow to see whither they went.

All trace of them was lost when the two young masters were released by trembling servants, and freed to arouse magistrates and military.

They had retreated, but not dispersed. There was other work before them, and they were in the excited mood to do their resistless leader's bidding without cavil.

In the morning light there was a terrible record of devastated mills and property destroyed. And if Hartland and a few more having sensitive natures hung back from the holocaust, yet crept to their homes like criminals, self-condemned, there were others who found a fiendish joy in outrage and destruction, and called their hideous work 'retribution.'

George Mellor and his immediate colleagues went back to their different cropping shops and daily work flushed with triumph, and deeming themselves invincible in the terror inspired by the very name of General Ludd. To him the sense of dominant power was intoxicant. He had an army of bond slaves at his beck. He who had been kicked and beaten in his boyhood held the lives and fortunes of the West Riding at his disposal. The whole world would speedily ring with his name as the liberator of his fellows, the destroyer of upstart tyrants. In his confidence, caution was forgotten.

'Heh, George! where did'st get that fine pistol o' thine?' inquired Sowden the next morning, when, before the news spread, he came upon the other cleaning the lock and fluted barrel. At that time there were neither revolvers, nor percussion caps, nor cartridges; all guns and pistols were fitted with small bits of flint, out of which flew a spark to the gunpowder, when the trigger was pulled, and brought the steel hammer down upon the firestone at the right angle. The art of killing had not been elevated to a science in the early years of this century. It has made gigantic strides since then, and won golden honours, rarely bestowed on the nobler art of healing. Possibly the heads of nations think it is nobler to



kill than to cure. The Luddites arrived at the notion that to kill was to cure; to kill masters was to cure distress!

'Where did I get it? Why, I bought it from a Rooshian when I was away on my travels. I call it "Peter the Great." Now, Sowden, lay that stock down!' he added, seeing the long, thin cropper closely examining the curious workmanship of the brass-mounted stock.

'Ay, ay,' replied Sowden, obediently laying it down tenderly, as if there had been danger in the wood. 'It's a rare piece o' wark; I reckon there's ne'er another like it in all Yorksheer. I'd know it annywherees. But, I saay, that name thou's gien it ne'er cam out o' thy own head, I know.'

'No! John Booth found the name. A conqueror and a Rooshian, he said it was.'

'Ay,' replied Sowden, who, being a steady sort of man, kept much at home by his wife, had contrived to read a bit now and again. 'A masterful man, Peter the Great; mich like thee, George. He could conquer an' govern others, but not himsen.' And having by this time stripped off his old coat and rolled up his shirt sleeves, he turned to his work fresher than others, who came in as wearily as if they had been at work the night through, as no doubt they had.

They were all in high glee, however, as over the performance of some great feat, and the looking forward to a still greater achievement close at hand. They talked of the victories of Luddism over wrong and tyranny, and of masters, out of very dread of General Ludd, returning to the old system of hand-cropping, as proof of the good they wrought. And as excited strangers hurried in to tell John Wood or his men the direful news of the night's dark doings, Sowden pressed his thin lips close, and looked askance at Mellor, as if he was aware of more than it was prudent to reveal.

Hitherto the Ludds had pursued their career unchecked. They had yet to learn what was meant by disaster and repulse.

The mysterious messenger from the head centre in Halifax had been busy of late; travelling hither and thither with a well-filled wallet over his shoulder, which, like Æsop's basket of bread, seemed to lighten at every call he made in country or in town.

On the morning of Saturday the 11th, he took his way



at an early hour to Mr. John Wood's, passed through the cropping shop, followed by the furtive eyes of Sowden, and so on to a quiet room, where, as before, George Mellor was found at work alone. The wallet was here considerably lightened of its heavy contents; and George Mellor stowed away in a private press a fair supply of powder and bullets; and then the man went his way, to distribute the remainder elsewhere, with messages to enforce attendance at the gathering that night.

As he went out, Sowden muttered to himself, 'I thowt I'd seen yon queer chap afore. I knaw now he's th' mon they called Dickenson, as came here last year wi' Jonathan Dean, telling the lads all the frame-breaking doings in Nottingham-sheer, an' putting them up to the same soart of devilry. I'd best say nowt, but I'se sure he's been here fur noa guid now.'

Sowden's conclusions were right. His chicken-hearted reticence alone was in fault.

About four miles from Huddersfield on the north-east, by Cooper's Bridge, where the high-road is met by others from Leeds, Wakefield, and Halifax, stands an ancient obelisk as a landmark for travellers which is known as the *Dumb Steeple*. It bears no inscription, and its origin is lost in the mists of time. It rises foursquare from a broad base, like an outlying step, and at a distance does bear some resemblance to a steeple or belfry. Yet it is merely a solid block of masonry about twenty-four or twenty-five feet high, narrowing again to its apex, where it is surmounted by a stone ball, and bears no mark or token of former aperture for the admission of a bell. And no doubt some unremembered wag, in mockery of its delusive promise, stood sponsor for the singular name it bears.

Here, in an open corner of Kirklees Park, the Ludds had frequently gathered for drill; drill that was to culminate in that night's victory, when one strong will was to be pitted against another equally as strong.

It was a spot well chosen. It was secluded from observation. The 'Three Nuns Inn' was close at hand, and patriotism is thirsty. Then the meeting highways had byeways and branches straggling up hillsides, or diving down hollows to smaller towns and villages, and, close by, the Colne and the Huddersfield canal lost themselves in the serpentine Calder,



all bridged for traffic. And that memorable night, by every avenue, came single men or groups, under the starlight, to that well-known rendezvous by the old monument, much as their Nottingham *confrères* met by the twin obelisks in Sherwood Forest.

But of those who gathered beneath its long shadow that night, was there more than one of that grotesquely-disguised assembly who called it otherwise than the vernacular 'Doom Steeple'? or did that one for a single instant think that the shadow it cast was as a finger of *doom*?

From nine o'clock until close upon midnight did that motley group of desperate men come dropping in, alone, or in groups that had overtaken each other on the roads. Some wore women's gowns and bonnets, some carters' or plowmen's smocks, others, of whom was Hartland, had simply turned their coats inside out, but all had blackened or otherwise disguised their faces, albeit with only a handkerchief brought well over the upper lip. Their arms were as various. Guns and pistols that had done better service, axes that might have felled oaks or oxen, hammers that only a smith could wield, bludgeons cut from thorn or hazel, iron bars wrenched from palisades, and one sword. A fatal sword for its owner.

Hartland was on the ground only a little in advance of Mellor and his young lieutenant Booth, whose lips kept up an incessant twitching. The latter had arrayed himself without leave in a gown belonging to Mrs. Wright's maid; the other in a greasy smockfrock, under which the Russian pistol lay perdu.

They had followed Hartland for some distance, and might have overtaken him had they been so willed, he walked so slowly and languidly.

George Mellor had observed it with flashing eyes.

'Yon chap does not seem to carry much goodwill in his shoes. He will have to be brought to account shortly, I've a notion,' was his stern remark.

'Not so,' replied Booth. 'It's poor Hartland; he's getting very thin and feeble. You should help him from the fund. I believe he is starving himself to let his sick wife and children feed.'

'More fool he,' said George Mellor gruffly; 'but I'll see what can be done for him after to-night.'



The arrival of the 'General' on the ground was the signal for the mustering of the men present in companies under their several leaders. Then followed a short drill, and the calling over of the roll, which fell far short of the number expected.

At about half-past eleven Mellor gave a long low whistle to call in stragglers. It brought a few from their ale-cans in the 'Three Nuns' public-house, whose landlord's interest kept him silent. A faint echo from a distance, and a party of fifty or more from Bradford and Dewsbury.

Still their numbers fell short of the army the 'General' had counted on, although the mysterious messenger had beaten up for special recruits in every nook and hollow. It might be that some were sickening of wanton destruction, or that Wainwright's preparations for resistance had got wind, and discretion became the better part of valour.

Midnight was approaching. The Leeds contingent was to meet them fully three miles ahead.

Mellor grew impatient. He would wait no longer for laggards. He gave the word for his followers to quit the field for the road.

Stepping in front of his men, he harangued them much as a nation's general might address his army on the eve of a decisive battle.

'My lads, I suppose you all know the object before us this night is to chastise and humble that insolent braggart Wainwright of Greenfolds, who sets our army at defiance; it will be no child's play if his preparations are as perfect as he boasts. The neighbourhood swarms with soldiers, and there is a blustering parson who has offered to lead them to attack us. But, lads, we have friends among the troops, and we can laugh at the reward he has offered for information of our march to wreck the machines of his tyrannical friend. Three miles ahead we shall be joined by our brethren from Leeds, and then let the domineering tyrant beware. We shall strike a blow this night that will ring through the land, and bring the purse-proud masters to their knees. Now, shoulder arms! Defile! Gunners to the front. Now pistollers. Now hatchet-men. Now hammerers. Now bludgeonmen to the rear. March!'

He had taken up his own position, with Booth by his side, far in advance of Hartland, who had no weapon except a staff



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of blackthorn. A workman dismissed by Wainwright went on before as guide over Hartshead Moor. His name was Harley, and he, as a Luddite, had been at once the most bitter against his old master, and the most active in sowing the seeds of disaffection in and around Liversedge.

In the still hours of the night the heavy and measured tramp of armed men upon the hard highway beat on the ears of sleepers, and, startled, they awoke. It was so at all times. Then, when the midnight deeds of the Luddites had struck terror into the hearts of rich and poor, and no man knew whose turn would come next to be ruined, or to see his employer ruined and himself flung out of work, the sound was awful. Blanched faces might be seen pressed against cottage windows as the dark mass strode on, with a faint shimmer of the starlight on hatchet, hammer, or gun barrel. And perchance, as the white faces turned from the window, there might be an under-breath exclamation, 'It's them Ludds!' and the husband's response be, 'Ay; theyn be bahn fur Greenfolds, an' if they bin, there'll be murder done, sartain as owt.'

In less than an hour Greenfolds Mill lay in the hollow before them, its waterwheel at rest, the beck singing a lullaby to the sleepers within, the very rows of starlit windows seeming like the eyes of Argus winking in their watch.

'Halt!' cried Mellor. It was the spot where he had expected to find the Leeds contingent. He waited, listened; no sound of marching feet came on the clear, dry air. He and Thorpe employed the interval marshalling their men in files, thirteen abreast.

'I say,' whispered Ben Walker to Booth, 'thirteen's an unlucky number! I wish we wur well out o' this!'

'You coward!' retorted Booth; 'you'd best not let the General hear you breathe a syllable of *ill-luck*. He's just in the mood to give you a quietus for less.'

And if Walker did not understand the word, he could take the hint, for Mellor's temper *was* up.

The Leeds reinforcement had not appeared. There was still no sound of men on the march.

Mellor cursed and chafed at the delay. He was too impatient to wait, as Thorpe, Booth, John Walker, and other leaders advised.

'Here, Hartland,' he commanded, 'you go back and bring



the stragglers up. Marshall, run along the Birstal road and hurry the Leeds men on. I'll wait no longer. We're strong enough to do this business without them.'

'I think you had better wait,' suggested Booth. 'You know the place is fortified, and you risk other lives besides your own.'

'If thou'rt turning coward at th' last pinch, thou'd best go back,' sneered Mellor in his temper. 'I want no cowards here to daunt my brave men.'

'I'm no coward,' replied John; 'but rashness may spoil all. However, have your own way.'

Impetuous Mellor did have his own headstrong will. He had all the fierce courage, but not the coolness, for a leader of men.

'It's no use waiting here till hot blood cools,' he cried impatiently, and in another second gave the word to 'March! Caution!'

'Bring the stragglers up,' he had said to Hartland; but Hartland *sent* the stragglers forward, and still went on, quitting the high-road and cutting across through Fixby woods unseen. When he at last emerged from the woods of Grimescar, all disguise was gone. He was hurrying home. Whatever might betide, he kept his oath never to raise an ungrateful hand against his benefactor.

Little knew he how, or by whom, that benefactor had been warned and kept on the alert.

And as little knew Betty and Thomas Longmore whither their two sons were on the march that fatal night.





CHAPTER III.

THE ALARM BELL.

FOR six weeks had Mr. Wainwright slept in his mill, with a woefully small garrison to oppose the numbers on the march to attack, but he depended more on the vigilance of the few trusty work-people and soldiers,—nine all told,—and on the peculiar strength of his fortifications, than on uncertain numbers.

There were two stout watchmen outside the great gates to give the first alarm. There was a different sentinel alone on the abandoned ground floor, but the floor above was flagged, and in line with the windows. Metal rings were sunk into the stone, at once to raise the huge flags as screens from outer fusillade, and to enable the protected garrison to pour a murderous fire on any assailants near the windows, or who might rush as into a death-trap below; nay, the very stairs were protected by a revolving *chevaux-de-frise* at the head.

On that upper floor was situated the owner's counting-house, and there his temporary bed had been, whilst mattresses had been laid down for his garrison under shelter of the tilted flags. In the daytime the traps were down, and work-people came and went in utter ignorance that the floor was less a solid fixture than it seemed.

He had never relaxed his vigilance, and Benjy's well-meant warning had given a fillip to his watchfulness; but nature will take its revenge on over-tried nerves, and that night sleep found him early.



The Rev. Bertrand Marston had offered a golden bribe for the earliest intelligence of Luddite advance; but a sentinel no gold could bribe was the one to give the first alarm in the mill.

Stealthily and craftily as Indians, two wiry Luddites had sprung upon the warders at the gates and gagged them; but, ere the silent deed was done, there was a growl, and then a frantic bark from the grand sentinel inside the mill, and all there upsprang, alert, scantily clad, discreetly silent.

The hoarse voice of Mellor might be heard outside, 'Hatchetmen, hammermen, to your work!' and in less than a minute the ponderous weapons were hacking and beating the great strong gates into matchwood.

A yell as from the throats of a host of savages proclaimed the downfall of the outer gates, and a rush into the spacious yard. At once a shower of great stones, torn from adjacent walls, went dashing and crashing through the shining windows with a splintering sound, as if every bit of glass or frame had gone at one swoop.

Another wild yell from without, a maddened barking from the honest dog within, the hoarse command, 'Fire!' and a volley from the besiegers, poured in through the empty windows, was spent upon senseless flagstones.

The contemptuous silence of the besieged had exasperated Mellor; he knew not what it meant. He had not learned the strength that lies in waiting. The garrison had simply kept within the law, had waited the first fire.

The answering volley from the darksome, loopholed mill was instantaneous—and effective.

Some one had fallen, others had cried out in pain, as bullets found their billets.

And even at that crisis, while Mellor, in a voice hoarse with rage and desperation, called his 'Hatchetmen, to the door!' and in the same breath cursed the tardiness of the Leeds detachment, those said Leeds Luddites, for whom he had not the patience to wait, were even then within hearing of the din, and of the alarm bell clanging over all—and, liking not the sound, incontinently retreated.

Meanwhile, excitable young Booth, Thorpe, and other leaders were rushing to and fro amongst the men with words



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of command or inspiration, the thin womanish voice of the saddler almost drowned by the deep bass of Mellor.

A worthy door was that, of thick, stout oak planking, clamped with iron inside, thickly studded over with great iron nails, bolted and barred across into the very masonry.

The hatchetmen were foiled. Their weapons were dented or broken at the shafts, their own brawny arms felt the jar of resisting force. They yielded, the door did not, though it was chipped and hacked. With curses on their lips, they lowered their weapons and confessed themselves beaten.

'Forward, hammermen!' cried exasperated Mellor, as the baffled hatchetmen withdrew to make way for gigantic 'Enoch' and its fellows to dint and batter at a barrier as obstinate as its owner.

The bell within the turret rang and clanged, the dog barked and howled by turns, the massive door shook under the tremendous blows, and sparks flew from the stone lintel and jambs as other hammers struck at random.

And through it all, gunners without and within loaded and fired, the formerly impotently, the latter tellingly, as many a sharp cry proclaimed.

'Silence that bell! Fire at the bell!' shouted Mellor, with an oath, infuriated lest before the door was down, or the mill in their hands, its incessant tolling should bring the troopers down upon them.

In another second the bell was mute. 'Hurrah! th' bell's done for!' shouted the man who had fired.

'Hurrah!' went loudly up from scores of Luddite throats.

They shouted too soon. Only the rope had broken.

Equal to any emergency, Mr. Wainwright despatched two men to the roof, the one to ring whilst the other fired on the surging crowd below.

And again the alarm rang out that should have brought help to the besieged.

Half beside himself with baffled rage, Mellor called out, 'Try the back!'

There was a rush of figures round the mill, and the defiant voice of Mr. Wainwright promised to be there to greet them.

The back! There lay the mill-pool and the water-wheel.



The first foolhardy adventurer, a man named Brook, fell into the goyt or dam, and lost his *hat* if he managed to save his life.

And still the bell rang on, and still was a running fire kept up, steadily from the garrison, irregularly from the Ludds, whose ammunition began to fail.

There was a cry that the door was yielding.

'Bang in, lads!' shouted Mellor in exultation. 'In with you! Are you in, my lads? Keep close. Bang in and d——n them; kill every one of them!'

A studding nail had been driven in and the wood around it splintered. It left a gaping hole, but the strong bolts and locks stood firm.

There was a sudden rush to the door, John Booth one of the foremost.

A soldier standing on the stairhead saw the glimmer of light through the aperture. He aimed steadily at the hole, and poor John Booth dropped with an awful shriek to the earth. He reloaded, aimed again, and then 'Enoch' fell from the powerless arm of the gigantic hammerman, Jonathan Dean, just as he had beaten in another hole.

Mellor was in despair. All was going wrong. They had been fighting for half an hour, yet the firing from the mill was as steady as ever.

All was not so well within the mill as he thought. John Walker, clambering up to one of the windows, hung on by an arm, and, though a bullet was sent through his three-cornered hat, he fired his pistol into the mill, and the noble dog set up a howl of pain.

On the upper floor there was suspicion of treachery. Mr. Wainwright, by the light of the flashing musketry, observed a soldier standing idle at his side.

'You are not firing,' said he; 'how is that?'

'I might injure a brother if I fired!' was the low reply.

'A brother?' ejaculated Mr. Wainwright, and cast a withering glance of scorn upon the man, but not another word. He felt he had there a traitor to watch, in addition to the mob outside.

He had misunderstood the soldier. *He* was no Luddite. He was only a Luddite's brother—Tom Hartland, one of the dismounted carabineers.



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With the disablement of the great hammerman, and the fall of his friend Booth, George Mellor lost heart.

Other strong men wielding sledge-hammers had taken the place of Jonathan Dean, keeping clear of the fatal hole. They pounded away with all their might, but they hampered each other, and half their blows were spent on the masonry, the flying chips telling on their own faces. But the discovery that all the great 'Enoch' had accomplished was the dislodgment of a defective nail and five or six inches of woodwork, and that the door was still practically sound, disheartened them.

What was to be done?

The leaders drew together for conference, out of range of musketry.

'It's no use pounding at that door, now "Enoch's" useless,' urged Thorpe. 'We'd best give up!'

'We've hardly a charge of powder left, and they keep firing from th' mill like demons! I wish I'd my pistol at their powder barrel,' said John Walker.

'That confounded bell bangs me,' said Mellor.

'Ay,' remarked another. 'Booth said it was tolling his knell.'

'If we stay here it will toll the knell of Luddism,' cried Mellor bluntly. 'It seems as if in the lull I could hear the tramp of troops. We must be off, and reckon with Wainwright some other way. Pass the word to the men. But what of Booth and Harley? We cannot leave them on the ground to perish.'

'We MUST!' said Thorpe significantly. 'We came cocksure of victory, and made no provision fur defeat. It will be all work to save oursens.'

'John,' said Mellor, kneeling by his friend's side, 'it's all up with us. We would carry you away with us, but we never provided for an hour like this. We were certain of success. It cuts me to the heart to desert you, but the cause demands it. Whatever comes, *remember your oath*. We will have vengeance on Wainwright yet for the blood he has spilt.'

And so John, *Mellor's dearest friend*, was left to his fate.

By this time the rioters were tearing out at the gates, shouting as they went, 'To the house! To the house! We'll soon



find entrance there!' But Mellor had the other helpless sufferer to visit and exhort to keep his oath.

As he turned to quit the yard, the very last who had power to leave it, he shook his fist at the grim mill, on which a streak of moonlight fell through a rift in darkening clouds, and shouted out a violent threat of vengeance on the owner.

And then he also took to his heels. Not from care for himself, but to arrest his predatory followers.

'You must save yourselves, my brave men. That demoniac bell is bringing the troopers down upon us. I can hear them coming. We will settle with the tyrant Wainwright another day.'

Already the crowd had dwindled. The Liversedge and Heckmondwike men had already slunk away to their homes. Some there were who fled, and never were seen more; a few who fled, and returned in after years, when Luddism was but a memory. There were wounded men hiding behind walls, in coppices, in lonely huts; men afraid even to seek the surgical aid required. Like Xerxes at Thermopylæ, they looked for victory and found defeat.

The cry 'To the house!' smote Mr. Wainwright as with the sting of a bullet. For a moment he went ghastly. In another he had shaken it off.

'They would not dare,' he said, 'with this bell ringing out. We must have troops here presently—Marston would be certain to bring them. Besides, that threat might be only a ruse to draw me forth, and open a way for them to get in. God protect my wife and little ones if those savages do storm the Hall. Thank God! Kate has a spirit and presence of mind. I'd back her and Janet to do men's duty in a crisis such as this. Still, her guard is small, and the odds are fearful.'

The reflection was not one to ensure tranquillity. He listened with his ears on the strain for every sound, now praising his wife's nerve, anon cursing the delay of his friend Marston and the troops. It was an agonising time for the husband and father.

Mrs. Wainwright might be a brave woman; but bravery compelled to remain passive is apt to chafe at inaction, whilst the dearly beloved are exposed to dangers bravery cannot share.

All were asleep in the house, except the sentinel pacing the slated entrance hall below.



THE ALARM BELL.

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As the alarm bell sent its message pealing through the air, the sleepers started in their beds.

'That cannot be the church bell!' gasped Mrs. Wainwright in dismay. 'It is dark night. Oh, surely it is not the mill! God help my dear husband if those Luddites are upon us!'

She was up and dressing in feverish haste, ringing the servants' bell first thing. She met them on the stairs, as much alarmed as herself.

The horrid din of hammering, yelling, firing, told what a conflict was raging.

'Oh, missis,' cried frightened Mary, 'suppose they come here, what's to be done?'

'We must keep them out,' was the prompt reply. 'I can fire a gun, and so can Janet.'

'But th' darling bairns?'

'Dress them quickly, and bring them down-stairs. I will find some safe hiding-place for them.'

When Mary, trembling in every limb, brought her charges down-stairs, equally alarmed at being awaked in the middle of the night and at the noises of the pandemonium 'so terribly near, she found her mistress placing cushions in a huge clothes-basket, and Janet extinguishing the last embers of yesterday's fire.

'Now, my darlings,' said the mother, placing the children in the basket, 'we are going to hide you up the big chimney to keep you safe from the bad men who are making all that noise. You must be quiet as little mice, my darlings, and mother will give you some nice cake.'

The uproar had terrified the children into submission. They were laid in the basket as in a cradle, and then Mary, obeying orders, climbed up the wide chimney, and, standing on the pothook bar, contrived to fling the end of a stout rope over the axle of the smokejack fan, by means of which the basket was hauled up out of sight and well secured.

A comical figure Mary cut undoubtedly, face, hands, frock, all smeared with soot. At another time there might have been a laugh at her expense. The situation was too tragic for laughter.

The soldiers guarding the front door saw nothing of this.



'Missis,' said she, almost blubbing, 'I con do noa gooid down here. Hadna I better sit on th' crowbar an' talk to th' bairns to keep them quiet,'

'That's a good lass. Ay, do.'

Thus encouraged, back she went to her perch, jerking out as she went—

'I wish all th' Luddites were hanged with one rope, that I do! It's all through them as faither con get noa wark.'

Ah! she little thought how often her hasty wish would recur to her, or the fresh significance it would bear in the after-time.

It was an anxious time then for the two soldiers in the hall as well as for the mistress and her maids in the kitchen. They held a post of danger and of responsibility, but the yelling and firing told of fearful odds should the enemy assail the house.

Mrs. Wainwright thought less of odds than of defence. Whilst Janet reached down a couple of fowling-pieces from their rack over the high mantelshelf, she went to encourage the guard.

'If you are only brave and faithful to us,' said she, 'Mr. Wainwright will not fail to reward you well. We have our own guns loaded, and shall not trouble you with our timidity.'

She was a woman of nerve and purpose. Brave as a lioness in defence of her young, she did not give way to useless terror; but it knocked loudly at her breast, for all the resolute face she showed.

Excepting in the brief interval when the rope broke or was cut by a shot, the boom of the bell kept the wife and mother's anxious heart on the strain, every fresh yell adding to its intensity. She dreaded to think what tragedy might be enacted that night, and many a fervent prayer went up to the Almighty throne from silent lips.

After some twenty minutes the firing seemed to slacken, but the brazen-throated bell neither wearied nor grew hoarse.

Then she fancied she heard the rush of feet drawing nearer to the Hall, and was sure she caught the cry 'To the house! To the house!'

At once she laid her hands upon her gun, and bade Janet do the same.

Then came a sudden halt, a rush of flying feet that seemed to die away in the distance.

THE ALARM BELL.

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The beating of her heart had kept pace with the ticking of the great hall clock, and but for the continuous booming of the bell, she would have felt assured the Luddites had left ruin and tragedy behind them.

They had done both, but not precisely as she was dreading.

