

The next day they were sobered, and thought it wise to keep almost entirely to the road, going through Princetown, that most dreary of all places under the sun, possibly chosen for that very reason as a convict prison. It is situated on a high plateau, from which a vast and dreary expanse of moorland stretches on all sides, so that if a prisoner does happen to succeed in escaping from the prison, he is sure in the end to be seen, standing out in the distance against the horizon as a clear target for all to shoot at. Certainly a prisoner would do better to remain where he is; even if the life is monotonous and dreary, it is at any rate safe and fairly comfortable; and as it appeared to these two pedestrians, they are not over-burdened with work there, for they saw, as they walked through the place, many of the convicts looking well and vigorous, and about twenty of them, with their attendant warders, all engaged in gently and leisurely sweeping the dust from the roads and putting it into a light cart, and then going on and doing the same, a little further, and so on. They were very inclined to think, after watching this process for some time, that the work of a convict prisoner is very much lighter than that of a Hospital Nurse, although they were by no means inclined to give up the life of the latter for the sake of the ease of the former.

The next day being bright and clear, they were tempted to leave the high road and venture again on the moor, and make further explorations upon it; and very delightful they found it, especially when the different Tors presented themselves to their sight, looking grand and majestic in their beauty, with the picturesque rivers of the Tavy and the Tamar winding through the valley below, and the pretty villages of Mary-Tavy and Peter-Tavy nestled in at the foot of the mountains, and surrounded by glorious trees. It was, they thought, on the whole, the most beautiful view they had seen, with its grandeur and simplicity combined. It was too tempting not to make them pause and get out pencil and brush, and try to perpetuate the scene on paper, as well as to impress it thoroughly on the mind's eye; but, alas!—

“ They could not paint to Memory's eye
The scene, the glance, they dearest love—
Unchanged themselves, in them they die,
Or faint or false, their shadows prove.”

So the result, perhaps, was not quite satisfactory, and as they had many miles yet to traverse, they could not pause long, but had to be off again on their march.

At length they reached the pretty village of Lidford, where they were put up at a little country inn, very neat and clean, but primitive withal, where eggs and bacon was the one food

procurable, but where the neighbourhood was so charming, that they at once decided, in spite of any mundane drawbacks, to make Lidford their head-quarters for two days, and take long walks in the country round. Never had they seen such a luxuriance of wild flowers, of ferns, of mosses, and of birds.

“ They heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove they sat reclined;
In that sweet mood, when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.”

From Lidford, they planned a splendid walk right across the moor, over Yes Tor, the highest point on Dartmoor, through some of the grandest scenery, to Okehampton, and they consulted their map (which had more than once played them false) with careful minuteness. For this expedition, however, one thing was absolutely necessary above all others, and that was a clear atmosphere. The day arrived, and with it showers, but no mist; so they started in high spirits, drinking in as they went the bracing air of the moor, which was to strengthen and nerve them for the day's work. Alas! they had only got a little way upon the moor, had only just lost sight of all other companionship than that of bleating sheep, when the ominous mist appeared, rolling on towards them, first only hiding the highest Tors from their view, and then coming nearer and ever nearer, until at last they could scarcely see each other. So far, however, they knew their way, and had merely to keep to a rugged path until they came to a cottage which was marked on the map, and where they hoped for guidance. But, alas!—

“ When they came there, the cupboard was bare,”

or, to speak more accurately, it was a deserted cottage, without any inhabitant, and with no sign of the “last human tenant of those ruined walls.”

Then came the important question, What was to be done? Here they were again on the beautiful, glorious moor, but with all its beauties and its glories completely hidden from their view by the thick impenetrable mist; and not only so, but which way to turn their steps was quite unknown to them. The map, which would have been so valuable, were there no mist, was under present circumstances useless, and the compass was gone. Whilst they were seriously debating what should be the next step, the mist lifted slightly for a minute or two, just enough to enable them to distinguish in the distance some sheds and smoke, which spoke to them of the possibility of a human being with whom to consult. In spite of more mist and a heavy down-pour of rain, they groped their way along, and at last did come to various sheds and outhouses, with stacks of peat in great abundance, but no human being to help them.

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