

# BRITISH WORKMAN



AND FRIEND OF THE  
SONS OF TOIL

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**A TALE OF THE SEA.**

BY THE LATE GEO. MOORHEAD, ESQ.  
*One who served as the cabin-boy "Old Humphrey."*  
It was in walking along the edge of the High Downs that overlook the open sea, that I fell in with a one-armed old sailor, with a sun-burnt face, and a countenance calm and collected. The old man had been on an errand to the Preventive station, a mile or two from the spot. At first he

seemed but little disposed to talk with me, merely returning a short, but civil answer to the common-place questions that I asked him. By degrees, however, he became more communicative, describing to me the different head-lands stretching out in the distance towards the sea. A stranger likes to pick up what information he can in a neighbourhood, so that I found the old tar a very agreeable companion.  
"Excuse me, sir, in answering you short

as I did," said he; "for the truth is, a lad of mine is out in the fishing smack yonder, and I don't much like the look of the weather. Coast fishing is an ugly trade when squalls are blowing, and we have had a few losses lately that make us a bit anxious like. I shouldn't care so much if I was in the smack, but one can't be quite easy when our young ones are in danger. We somehow think that we could manage better than they can."

"I don't wonder at your feeling anxious. The sea has been the watery grave of thousands."  
"It has, sir; when one's young and strong we think but little about it, but as we get older it sobers us. That sky, to the west, doesn't please me sir; I'm afraid a blow is coming on."  
"I'm afraid so too. It would not be a trifle that would tempt me to quit the shore with such a prospect before me."

"May be, sir, you have never been in a storm on the wide waters, a thousand leagues from shore. You have never seen a good ship in her distress, struggling for life among the frothy billows, seeking for and everything against her?"  
"Never! never! The very thought of it makes the water look fearful to me. You are used to storms, I suppose?"  
"I have been in a few, sir, in my time, but having lost my arm, I am put by now,



Mr. Mogridge (now known as the celebrated "Old Humphrey") conversing with the old Sea Captain on the High Downs.





## THE INNOCENT VICTIM.

BY MRS. C. L. BALFOUR.

"How wages, neighbour Jones, are only a blessing if people know how to use them; if not, they are a curse."

This was the remark of an intelligent young girl, Alice Rice, as she turned sadly away from the friendly dwelling of the only woman in the district with whom she had formed an intimacy.

It was a stormy night, and Alice was seeking her father. Poor girl! her was a hard fate, her mother was dead, and she lived with her father and uncle, who were employed in a great iron foundry situated in one of the loveliest valleys of South Wales. How happy that household might have been. Their pretty cottage was on a hill side, looking down a long winding woody glen, that stretched away for miles between green hills and moss-crowned rocks. Along the bottom of the glen, a rapid river leaped and sparkled over its rocky bed, and at night, many a hill top and wild nook were lighted into a ruddy glow with innumerable furnaces. The whole region was rich, not only in external beauty, but deep within its hidden recesses it was rich with the coal and iron that make England's greatest wealth. And the workmen in that region were well paid, as they ought to be, for their hard toil, and some of them knew how to use the money that their industry had gained, and their homes were comfortable and happy—but Alice's father and uncle were not of those. No—though twelve pounds a month was the common earnings of each—though house rent was low, and coals cheap, they were always in debt and difficulty. Very hard was it for Alice to get the pittance on which she contrived to keep house, and clothe herself in the poorest garb. She was a quiet girl, a pious christian, and a most patient, dutiful daughter. Her dying mother had charged her not to desert her erring father, and she had faithfully obeyed the charge. Alice had the charity that "hopeth all things," and she was borne up by that hope—but on the night that she spoke to Mrs. Jones, as the outlet of our simple narrative records, her heart was sad within her, for her father and uncle were both getting worse and worse in their habits, and when pay time came, they made the cottage not a home, but a den of sorrow.

Only the night before, her father had come home out and bruised by many falls among the broken pathways of the rocks, and Alice had a sort of presentiment of evil that kept her from wading his return as usual in the evening, as was her custom, and forced her to go forth and look for him. He might, perhaps, have straggled into neighbour Jones'. He was not there—and as she went down the mountain towards the village, the night grew stormy; the rain, driven by the wind, fell in blinding sheets. It was so dark, that, but for the direction of the furnaces, even Alice's accustomed foot would have been at fault among the many intricate pathways of the mountain side. Now and then in her walk she heard steps near, and listened for the tread she knew so well. Sometimes she called out, "Father, is that you?" and received a hasty but mostly a civil answer, in the negative. At length, as she went on, she gained the river's side, and was walking so fast as the high wind would permit, towards a public house, where two men (landlords) had made fortunes,



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and some hundreds had lost all that was worth having in this world and the next. She listened, and bore upon the breeze, came the wild tumult of a course song raved in chorus by what seemed a large company of carousers. Alice hesitated to go on—it was no place for her! and yet, how could her father, already feeble with the excesses of the past night, get home safely amid the storm of wind and rain, and along that steep bank of the river? So she pressed forward, she felt suddenly over something that obstructed her path. Rising in haste, she felt herself clutched fiercely, and before she could do more than

utter a wild shriek, she was hurled with all the strength of a sturdy arm over the edge of the narrow path, into the river! The stream, swollen by recent rains, was rushing with the force of a current along the glen, and Alice was swept away, like a fallen leaf, in that wild surge. The drunkard who had said or swore as he dashed out his murderous arm, "You rascal! I'll teach you to tread upon me," was roused by the scream and the plunge. He sat up—rubbied his eyes—felt his wet garments—scrambled up from the muddy ground—hiccupped, "I'll get home; my girl 'll be on the look-out," and plunged and staggered and stumbled

on his way, every now and then slouting out to his brother, "Tom! where are you?" He was too stupid with intoxication to do more than enter the door of his empty cottage, and throw himself on the ground. His brother Tom made what he called a "night of it," and staid out entirely. Hour after hour passed in the brutal sleep of intoxication, but when morning shone into the little room, and the heavy mass of filth and fever began to turn and stretch, and open the bleared eyes, there was the old familiar room, but he noticed some difference. Often, as he had slept on that floor, when he awoke he had found that a pillow

had been put under his head, a blanket had been thrown over him, his neckcloth had been loosened, and generally, the first sight his dim eyes saw was his patient Alice. Now, he was stiff with cold, unassisted, alone! To call aloud until the humble roof rang again, was his first impulse, then to rush to the pump, and throw the fresh water over his aching head, and quaff it down his parched throat—and in his strength to mount to Alice's chamber, dressing, he knew not what. There was her room, but clean bed—the little table, with her Bible on it, but no Alice! A strange awe fell on the miserable man! A wild remembrance of the very scenes and distinct than his other drunken visions, flashed like lightning over his brain. A shudder—plunged! and he shivered till his trembling limbs would hardly bear him down the stairs. Then came the dismal search, the agonized enquiry. Widow Jones remembered Alice calling, and her words about "high wages"; one and another could testify that they met, or passed her, in the gathering darkness, for they heard her calling on her father. To trace the path with maddened steps, to reach the place where some slippery clay filled the broken space between two points of rock that overhung the river, was the work of but half-an-hour, but there was a sight there to fill a long life-time with misery! The print of two little feet, that seemed to have slipped, was traced onto the very sides, and far down, on the face of the rocks, a torn fragment of a shawl hung upon the jagged point of granite, flapped to and fro over the swollen waters of the turbid river. The father thought they were Alice's footprints, he knew it was her shawl, he had only remembered falling down on that place, and again the scream and the plunge seemed to ring through him. The neighbours turned out to seek for the body; among them one, who wished to give to Alice a decent burial. They followed the course of the river until they came near to the populous town, the great mart of the district, and there—twenty-four hours after the girl had been hurled into eternity, they found her. As they lifted the slight form and threw off the bonnet, the long fair hair fell over her shoulders, and the pale, livid, and ghastly deep calm of death, was so awful a sight for the guilty father to behold—he rushed away a raging maniac. Her loving father and uncle, as the light of the policeman's lamp

shone on the face of the dead, gazed horror-struck! Both knew that she had lost her life while seeking her intemperate father; neither knew exactly how; but both in that solemn hour resolved to renounce the drink that had caused the calamity, and they were reformed.

The verdict of "Found drowned" satisfied the world, but when the reason of the distracted father and uncle, he had a consciousness of the sad truth that weighed upon his heart until it ceased to beat. On his miserable death-bed, a few months after the events recorded, he gasped out to neighbour Jones as she watched by his side, what were the real father returned, and the pale, livid, and ghastly death of poor Alice! Oh! working men! how long shall the drinking house, and the drinking company, rob your homes, ruin your families, wither up your strength, plant thorns in your dying pillow, dig your graves, and damn your souls! how long! Shake out these slavish fetters that bind you to the public-house. Be men, not slaves, not brutes, but men. The Great God who made you, gave you the gift of reason: use it.



POOR ALICE RICE'S DEAD BODY IS FOUND IN THE RIVER, AND HER FATHER BECOMES A MANIAC.