

**TALES AND SKETCHES  
OF LANCASHIRE LIFE.  
PP.10-268**

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Tales and Sketches of Lancashire Life. pp.10-268 by Ben Brierly

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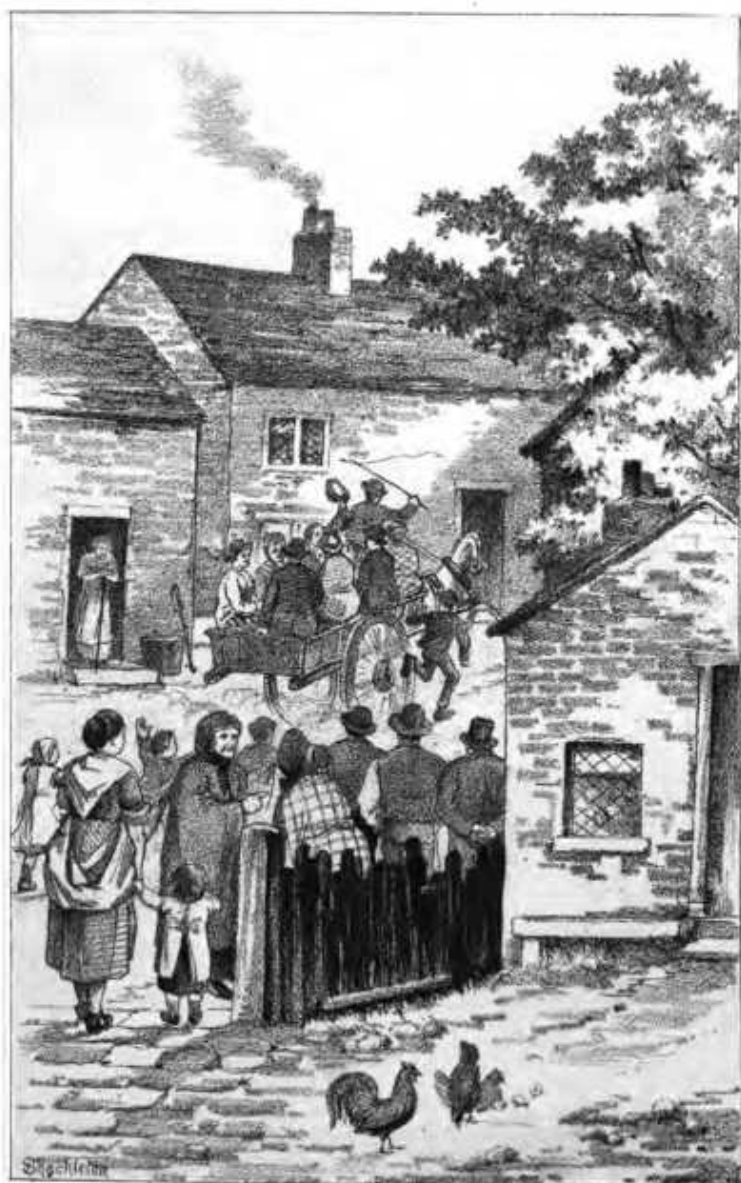
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THE WEDDING PARTY LEAVING TREADLEPIN FOLD.

TALES AND SKETCHES

OF

LANCASHIRE LIFE.

By BEN BRIERLEY.

TREADLEPIN FOLD.  
THE NEW BOROUGH.  
A FIGHT FOR LOVE.



**Manchester:**

ABEL HEYWOOD & SON, 56 & 58, OLDHAM STREET.

**London:**

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & Co., STATIONERS' HALL COURT.

1884.

3025 . e . 5.

imitation by smearing every brick and stone that lay within the range of their brushes, thereby displaying fancy undulations of margin, suggestive to the beholder of mountain ranges, rude precipices, and riverless deserts. Against a kitchen wall abutting on the sink some local artist had tried his maiden powers by sketching a full-length figure intended for a man, but whose frying-pan trunk, turnip-head, and pump-handled legs and arms suggest a model of other than the biped species. Doors are grey and furrowed with age, windows are sunken like hollow cheeks, and look bleared and dim, as if they had ceased to admit what little light of day the Fold could spare them. There is one dwelling, however, conspicuous among the rest by the regularity of its exterior, and the promise of something more than ordinarily interesting within. The windows of this habitation are comparatively whole, and entirely free from paper light-obstructors, stuffings of rags, and mortarless crevices. The door has two hinges to swing upon, and is not quite free from paint. On the centre panel some wag, who in all probability has learned the art of practical joking behind it, has rudely cut the initials "O. L.," surrounding them with a border in the same style of carving. If thou shouldst have the boldness to knock, which would be far more objectionable than a thundering authoritative kick, thou wouldst be answered by a shrill, though not unmusical voice, which would most likely call out—"Come in, if yo'r shoon're cleean;" and if, upon entering, thou shouldst inquire if owd Linderinbant lived there, the same voice would call out—"Jammie! thou'rt wanted;" and, in an after-breath, would say—

"Whoa're yo'? Are yo' a putter-out? If yo' are, sink yo'!" Then turning a rude inquisitive glance towards thee, would survey thy person from head to foot, and probably conclude her examination by a significant "Humph!" as indicative of a not over favourable opinion as to the integrity of thy motives in thus paying a visit to Treadlepin Fold. Yet, do not mistake the old girl. She has no harm in her, bless her! It is only "her way." Rough and kind she is, with no grace about her but of her large and bountiful heart; goodness not always upon her lips, but in her breast a changeless resident there. She would call a man an "arrant jackanapes," a "gallows poucement;" and if properly roused, would in a moment consign his "limbs" to the keeping of a gentleman whose custody nobody would delight to honour; but let a neighbour's child be sick, or a widow be fretful, and she has a hand so gentle for them—a manner so soothing—that you forget the coarse, unseemly gossip in the "ministering angel," and feel disposed to attribute her foibles to the hard and merciless jolts the rude world has given her in her journey through it.

I remember once there was fever in the Fold, and people closed their doors and held aloof from each other, lest some shaft of the epidemic lurked in their clothes, or their breath, and would suddenly appear and strike them down unawares. A man in the prime of life was the first to succumb to the great destroyer; and ere he was closed in his coffin his widow laid herself down beside him and shared his everlasting sleep. Such an event naturally inspired great terror in the minds of people who seem to be cut off from the



common sympathies of humanity, and who have to fight "the ills which flesh is heir to" with death's handmaid, poverty, hugging them in her icy arms. They looked on with awe, and listened to the wailings of the orphan children without daring to lift a hand to help, or a voice to console them. But there was one woman who had a heart for everything, and that was "owd Nan." She saw the helplessness of the little brood left without their natural protectors, and took them in her kindly care. When others huddled themselves, as it were, in their terror-stricken hearts, she tucked up the sleeves of her womanhood, and, accompanied by the doctor, entered the house of pestilence. She took the children first; cleaned, fed, and consoled them; then distributed them amongst the neighbours, insisting that those who had a mouthful to spare should take one child and adopt it as their own. Such a proceeding inspired confidence in those who were terrified before, and kindness was never wanting. The children were cared for. Nan's next business was with the dead. In that dark chamber where the two lay stretched, now beyond the reach of mortal agony, she passed hours alone. Then a neighbour woman came, led by her heroic example; another followed, and the house was cleaned, the dead were shrouded, and the last offices that the living pay to the departed were performed decently, and with so little noise, that the world beyond Treadlepin Fold knew not that death had been there. Oh! heart of woman! how wayward and unaccountable betimes, yet how matchless art thou!

But the other phase of owd Nan's character. What a temper she has, to be sure! You would think if you

sometimes saw her standing in the middle of the floor, with her knuckles resting upon her hips, her elbows stuck out defiantly, her toothless gums champing against her skinny lips, and the screen of her mob-cap shaking for all the world like a whirling mop, you would think that the next movement would be a tiger-like spring at that grey and scraggy head that is somewhat guarded in the rear by the high back of a stool-armchair. However, "owd Jammie" —or Bant, as she sometimes calls the proprietor of the head against which the cream of her wrath seems directed —knows how high the wings of her "devilment" will carry her before she sweeps down upon him, and he has the prudence either to call her gently back by some potent spell, or otherwise take a sudden but temporary abdication of his throne in favour of his only successor, the cat, and seek refuge in the more secure dominions of the loom-house. Here would he chuckle and cough, and mutter over old endearments that would finally bring her to, and the bobbin-wheel which she plied would again be heard to jolt and "huzz," the shuttle would speed slowly and measuredly upon its way, certain and unmistakable signs that the storm had subsided, and that things had resumed their proper course.

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## CHAPTER II.

It had often been the boast of the hero of these sketches, that he was the "oldest inhabitant" of Treadlepin Fold. He had been born there, and had scarcely breathed any other atmosphere for upwards of sixty years. The mansion

in which he lived he had inherited from his immediate ancestors, who are now laid in the cold grave. In the pride of their palmiest days, when weaving was good, they had hoarded their earnings, and invested them in the construction of a substantial tenement which would shelter their grey hairs, and afterwards descend to posterity as a monument of the good times that had been. Dying, the old man bequeathed it to their only son "James and his heirs for ever;" and when they were gathered to their fathers, owd Linderinbant, then a youth of forty-five, was left alone in his heritage, a bachelor more from neglect than from any impediment that would not easily be removed. He had enjoyed the companionship from childhood of a few who, like himself, had been brought up to the manners and usages of Treadlepin Fold; who had imbibed the lore peculiar to the locality, and retained most of the prejudices and superstitions that had found rooting there. It was their greatest pleasure on a winter's evening, when storms raged without, and all communication with the outward world seemed closed as with a bar of ice, to sit by the blazing hearth, telling all kinds of weird stories, of adventurous ghosts, mischievous "boggarts," and enchanting fairies. Many a time have they sat till midnight, and the spectator might have seen how the merry laugh had given way to the look of wonder, and then how awe-stricken the whole group would have been as some legend more horrible than the rest had fastened upon their imaginations, and turned their hilarity to silence. And then when the spell had been broken, and voices from above had solemnly intimated that it was "time t' goo whoam," how timidly they have