THE WISHING-GATE.

[From Chambers's Journal.]

It was rushbearing-time at Greenside, in the north country—the last Saturday of July, the day whereon the earthen floors of our small churches have their carpeting renewed with rushes from Mineton More. There were two wagons full of them; and upon the horses' heads that drew them waved their feathery tops; and in the drivers' hats, like knightly plumes, they nodded; and upon the hats of each of the band that followed, playing *Annie Laurie*, they kept measure with the tune; and bound up gracefully with wreaths of wild-flowers, and carried by young girls, still came the Mineton rushes in procession. Where the twin-rivers run into the Mere, they grow upon a bank of sand, and in the little bay beyond, under those mossgrown rocks whose heads are purple with the heather. This is a great holiday with us at Greenside; the shops—there are but two in the village—are shut, as though it were Sunday, and the church-bell is clanging: it is the same which tolls for service and knells for burials, but no one can mistake its tones to-day for anything but merriment. Every urchin in the place is having his pull at it, and, as many as can, together, so that it never gives two tinkles alike. To be carried up by it into the belfry, and so hit heads against the rafters, is rare fun. Our women-folk are employed for days upon these garlands, and every household strives that out of it shall be chosen the rushbearing queen.

'The fewer the ribbons the better, Phœbe,' was Dame Forrest's advice to her daughter upon this occasion; and Phœbe—who was but seventeen, and likely to err upon the ribbon side—made a simple girdle of blue flowers round her rushes, and was proclaimed queen by acclamation. 'Hail, beautiful Phœbe Forrest! hail, pretty queen of the rushbearing. It was the proudest moment of her young life, walking at the head of her subjects; as it was too, without question, that of her mother, whose eyes, however, were filled with tears; proudest, too, of Leonard Hirds, her lover, whose look never strays away from her, nor relaxes in its steadiness: one would think he is watching a deer in Martindale, lest it should creep out of rifle-range. A powerful young fellow, with a fine face, but for a little too much self-will about the mouth. He has the fleetest foot after a hill-fox in Westmoreland, and is the king of the dalesmen hereabouts in the wrestling ring; and the fear of the men and love of the women have spoiled him; he says he will marry Phœbe Forrest whether she will or no—and Phœbe says no—which seems a stange sort of wooing.

There was but one in Greenside that summer noon, who had not yet acknowledged Phœbe his queen, and that was not for lack of love, nor loyalty neither. Frank Meredith, the landscape-painter, who lodged in the farmhouse on the hill—he was the rebel: he had been there for the last three years, until his portfolio was filled to overflowing, and scarcely a rock in Westmoreland had escaped his canvass; but still he gave no sign of departure. The artist flood was now rolling over our beautiful valley for the fourth time since his arrival; but however pleasant his brethren—however lovely was High Crag, no wave ever bore him with it further than the neighbouring dales. Certainly his home-view was so beautiful, as not to be excelled elsewhere: the grassy mountain-side sloped down to the river and woodland from his door, and Mineton Mere lay not so far beyond it, but that every snow-white sail upon its bosom could be seen. Two sycamores gave forth perpetual bee-music to the song of the dancing brook within his garden; and towering behind and above the farmhouse, crowded the whole mountain-world. Still, there was something beyond the beatuy of its landscape that year after year, chained Frank Meredith to Greenside—its gossips said. They had found out all about him before the second year was out: how that he was a black sheep, and had disgusted his noble family, and was allowed a pound a week, upon condition of keeping out of their way; which was not Frank's history at all, nor anything like it. He was indeed of an aucient stock of painful respectability, and had shocked it a great deal by his inartificial behaviour. He was by nature vulgar, or at least had preferred landscape-painting to any gentlemanly profession; and having been intoxicated with some slight success, pursued it; which was his relatives' account of the matter. And his uncle, indeed, from whom he should have inherited thousands and tens of thousands, and chariots and horses, did, we know, disinherit him for making negus of his particular sherry—'The fellow put hot water and sugar, sir, to my 38, at eighty-four shillings a dozen'—and the family following suit to the rich uncle, washed their aristocratic hands of him, leaving the young artist to live as he could upon a hundred a year of his own, and upon his cunning in water-colours.

On this same rushbearing night, he stands on the natural terrace that leads into Greenside from High Crag, leaning upon the carved gate which opens into the quarry-field, and smoking his clay-pipe. He has not with him, wonderful to say, the instruments of his beloved art, for he has taken that same view from the Wishing-gate a thousand times. There are many spots in the north to which poetic legend has attached this 'faculty of giving,' and to none with a more harmonious fitness than to this at Greenside. The good fairies never had a more lovely dwelling-place than that on which the perfect moon was then outpouring her silver treasure: the songs of the holiday-makers had not yet ceased, but came up from the valley beneath on a gentle wind, which set the clouds afloat over the mountain-sides, but could not bend the fir-trees on their crests; the lake lay sleeping with a quiet smile, like a maiden dreaming of love. It is of love, too, the painter dreams as his charmed eyes wander over the scene; his lips are parted with a smile too, as he whispers his wish across the gate. How many half-believers before him have done the same, in that same place! How the carved bar is cut along and across with the various desires of men! some of them in sober prose, and some in simple song, but all 'of the earth, earthy.'

'A woodbiney Cottage and Kowe' is, alas, the best of them. '4000L.' is the limit of one ambitious mortal's wishes; and 'A five pound note' contents another. 'Carriage and Pair,' exceedingly well cut, and with a flourish, must, we think, be a youug lady's vision of bliss, and 'Susan' as unmistakably a young gentleman's. 'King at Carel' is the most remarkable inscription and would puzzle many to decipher; but Meredith, who is an excellent wrestler himself, and well conversant with Westmoreland aspirations, recognises at once the darling hope of some young athlete that he may win the champion's belt at the approaching meeting at Carel (Carlisle). Frank Meredith smiles again and again at all these things, but nevertheless, he draws forth his penknife, and begins to inscribe a little wish of his own heart. 'P'—that has something to do with painting, or perhaps power: 'PH'—that may possibly be the way in which an eccentric genius may spell fame: 'PHŒBE FORREST!'—the note of admiration is our own—is what it last came to!

'And here she is,' said a sweet low voice as he finished the inscription, and the qneen of the rushbearing was standing by his side. She had laid aside her sceptre, and taken the wreath of flowers from her hair, but looked no whit less lovely than before. Frank gazed at her an instant, as though she were indeed a supernatural visitant who had obeyed his call, and then convinced himself of her humanity by an embrace. He was very handsome, and, although still something too youthly in figure, had a frame well knit and active. The two seemed, in that time and place, to be fit inhabitants of some new Eden Garden.

'I could not come before,' she said, 'Frank, for Leonard made me dance with him three dances on the green there; and as it is, I fear he, half suspects us'——A shrill scream concluded the sentence, as the huge form of the young dalesman strode in between the pair.

'I do suspect you, Phœbe, and I blush for you,' he said. 'Go you home to your mother, wench, at once; and for this young gentleman, I will take his chastisment into my own hands'.

'Don't move a step, Phœbe, exclaimed Frank. By what right, man, do you dare interfere between her and me?'

'Because I am her cousin, Mr. Meredith, and shall be her husband. Because I would not have your blood upon my hands, which, as there is a God in heaven, would be there if dishonour'——

'Silence, sir!' thundered Frank. 'Go home, Phœbe. Nay,' he added, as he saw her hesitate to leave such angry folk together, 'we are not going to fight, dear.' And she obeyed him instantly.

The two young men stood opposite each other, face to face, and there was no cowardice in either's eyes.

'If, Leonard Hirds, you came up here to stand between me and her who is to be my wife, I will thrash you to-morrow, big as you are, to a mummy; if you really came to defend the purest and best girl on earth from him you supposed to be a villain, I forgive and honour you'.

'I did think you meant falsely, Mr. Meredith,' said Leanord frankly; 'but now, I look upon you, I confess you do not seem like a seducer. With regard to Phœbe being your wife, that shall never be; and as to the thrashing to a mummy, let us try at once.'

'I have promised not to harm you to-night,' returned Frank.

'But to-morrow,' said the young giant, 'I shall be at Carel in the wrestling ring.'

Frank hesitated a moment, and then replied with meaning: 'And I shall be there also, Leonard Hirds;' and each took his way in silence to his own home.

The two yonng men were not without respect for one another at heart; Frank Meredith knew that amongst the dalesmen, with most of whom he himself was perfecly well acquainted, Leonard was considered highly; it was true that he had forbidden any to aspire to the hand of Phœbe save himself, but this pre-eminence of his excused him somewhat in the painter's eyes, who made allowance for his arrogance as he would have for the like pretensions in a higher rank, where a fortune as well as a bride might have been the prize, and hair-triggering, twenty-pacing cousin the monopolist. On the other hand, Leonard Hirds would freely own, that there was nothing like pride about Frank Meredith, but plenty of pluck and spirit. The young painter had long accustomed himself to Westmoreland sports, and was especially skilful in wrestling, making np in litheness and acivity for what he wanted in strength: he had been thrown by the young dalesman often enough, but each time with the greater difficutly, so as to have become of late by far his most formidable antagonist. Frank well knew by whose unclerkly hand the desire to be 'king at Carel' had been carved upon the Wishing-gate, and he determined, if it were possible, to humble Leonard's pride on the morrow in presence of the three counties.

Our wrestling in the north is a very different matter from prize-fighting, and I should be sorry if it ever grew to be like it: it is seldom that any serious hurt befalls the competitors, and victors and vanquished appear to be equally in good-humour. The honour of being in the last two or three pairs—much more that of being sole conqueror—is esteemed far higher than the prizes themselves, which, indeed, are of no great value. Wrestling at Carel, to a youth who is only experienced in contests with his neighbour dalesman, is what speaking in the House of Commons is to a Cicero of 'the Union' at Cambridge or Oxford. There are a great number of pairs, and a young and unknown wrestler rarely 'stands up' more than one or two, and there are thousands of spectators to applaud or criticise. Raised and covered seats for those who fear the rain or love high places, and forms let out at a lower rate, enclose the arena, and a plentiful sprinkling of the masses lie down within upon the grass. The umpires also stand within to watch the combatants, that the fall be not attempted until each has obtained a fair hold—one arm under, and one over, and that when they have once grappled, neither shall let go.

Two men come forward chosen as the first pair by lot, and strip themselves, except to their shirt and drawers; they have been weighed in a neighbouring field, and are light or heavy weights as they are under or over eleven stone. They shake hands before commencing, and endeavour after a hold, each seeking for the best purchase, and grapling tightly when it is once found. Then comes the tug and the tussle: their arms are almost at a stretch, their faces, which were but now seen over each other's shoulders, have disappeared; the backs of their heads are alone visible, drawn down on a level with their spines. The strain for a few minutes is very great, but it does not commonly last long; one of them is dragged downward, and touches the ground with his knees, or their legs mingle together; and, after revolving twice or thrice with great velocity they both come to the ground—the uppermost being of course the winner. The cries of 'Bonny Ambleside!' 'Bonny Nipthwaite!' or whatever may be the dwelling-places of the respective athletes, never cease. The phrase of 'Bonny leil one' puzzle the stranger a good deal, and begins to think it some extremely populous district; but 'leil one' means little one—the smaller of the two competitors.

At this particular Carel meeting, the light and heavy wrestlers were mixed, and the prizes made general without regard to weight. We of Greenside had several likely youths, but Leonard Hirds was our best man by far. Much to our astonishment, we saw the young painter drawing his lot amongst the rest, at whom Leonard threw a contemptuous smile, and was evidently disappointed at not being in the pair with him. Frank Meredith looked fragile enough when stripped. One ancient wrestler—now with one leg and one arm only, their fellows having been blown away by powder-blasts in Langdale—who always attends this scene of his former feats, assured me that 'the bonny lad would be broken athwart the middle;' and indeed he did look rather waspish about the waist. His first competitor was a large and powerful fellow; and when, after a long struggle, Frank cast him to the earth by the 'swinging hype'—the knee thrown inward sharply against the adversary's thigh—there arose a great cry of astonished joy. He was afterwards lucky in his drawing for some time, and obtained pretty easy victories; his beauty and youthfulness, the smile upon his face as he shook hands before each contest, and the sympathising look, without a trace of vaunt, with which he regarded his unsuccessful rivals, made him popular with the whole assembly, albeit there was not one amongst them who could hope for his final success. Nevertheless, it did so happen that the day wore on, and the pairs grew fewer and fewer, until Leonard Hirds and Frank Meredith alone 'stood up,' of all competitors. There had been a quiet determination about the latter throughout, like the concentrated purpose of revenge, which had prompted him to take the minutest pains in every contest, while the former had thrown his opponents to right and left like a madman, as though they intercepted his approach to some more worthy antagonist; both had opened their lot-tickets with greediness, and read them with disappointment; each desired, up till now, a combat with his particular foe. The embroidered champion's belt, and the honor of being 'king at Carel,' must needs now remain with one of them, and the excitement grew intense. It was evident that Leonard Hirds thought seriously of the task before him, and would not let slip a chance of success through contempt of his less sturdy rival. They were to wrestle for the best of three falls; and it was evident from the beginning that the design of the stronger was to weary Meredith out. Frank instantly obtained his hold, but the other refused to clasp his own hands for a great while, so that the strain might fatigue his antagonist. Many shouted to the young painter to beware of this, for he was a favourite, as we have said, and Hirds had made himself many enemies through arrogance; but Meredith gave no heed to us in his excitement, forgetting that to himself none had 'laid down,' while to his foe no less than four had succumbed without an effort, leaving him by so much the fresher. Frank suffered as we feared: after many loosings, in which his object had been greatly obtained, Leonard took up earth in his hands—as is the custom for the firmer hold—for the first time; and we knew the struggle was nigh. Both of them 'held' at once and together, strained to their utmost shoulder to shoulder, and then head to head, rapidly whirled round for a second or two, and fell—Hirds uppermost.

The chances against Meredith were now two to one, and his strength seemed failing besides. Some spoke to him flatteringly of his having obtained the second prize; and even his rival, as he shook hands after the fall, said something to the same effect, to which Frank answered in a fierce whisper, that he would throw him yet, and be 'king of Carel' after all. It seemed as if the painter's darling hope was now to be the winner of the wrestling match. In the second trial, they took less care for holding, as Leonard found he could not play the same game twice, and both grappled at once, as if with hooks of steel. The dalesman clasped his right leg round his rival's left, and bent the slender body backwards like a reed. With every muscle at fullest stretch, and the veins standing out on their foreheads, but without a trace of ferocity, they stood—models of power and firmness. For upwards of a minute and a half they stood, every instant of which we expected Meredith to give way, with the whole weight of his man thus thrown upon him, and he himself off the perpendicular; but all on a sudden, Leonard's leg-clasp failed; we saw it tremble, and then relax, and almost instantly, taken at a frightful disadvantage, the young giant was thrown heavily. A great cheer burst from a thousand throats, but not so much as a smile came over Meredith. Although his rival gathered himself up, and retired into the tent without difficulty, Frank knew that he was seriously hurt. An overstrained sinew had indeed given way; and while the spectators were awaiting the issue of the last 'tie,' the contest was virtually over, and the victory remained with the young painter. At present, none knew this but the two combatants. The victor followed the vanquished to where he was siting alone, and took his hand. 'You're king, sir,' said the poor giant, 'through this cursed strain.'

'You must have thrown me, else, Leonard,' exclaimed Frank honestly; 'and it is not fair that you should be deprived of your honours by an accident: your heart was set upon this victory, as I know by what was written on the Wishing-gate, and I shall "lay down" to you, Leonard Hirds.'

Leonard lifted himself up with pain to grasp his rival's hand, and tears were standing in his eyes, as, after a little pause, he said: 'Thank you, thank you, sir! I don't wonder at Phœbe Forrest's preferring so generous a fellow to me. From what I read, too, on the Wishing-gate last night, I think I know the dearest wish of yours too, Mr. Meredith. What interest I may have with my aunt, her mother, I beg then, to transfer to you. I took too much upon me every way, trusting to this brute strength of mine, and I am fitly humbled.'

'Nay, then,' said Frank, 'you have more reason to be proud of yourself than ever, and have conquered at Carel indeed.'

There was great disappointment and great disapprobation when it was known that Meredith had given up so good a chance, and 'laid down' without a struggle to his antagonist. It was thought that there would be no living at Greenside now, for the airs the victor would be sure to give himself. But from that day, on the contrary, was our young dalesman altered, in all points for the better; and Frank Meredith, on his part, was amply consoled for his loss of the kingship at Carel, by his gain of the queen of the rushbearing. And thus did the good fairies of the Wishing-gate give to each man the gift he desired.

THE TEREDO, OR SHIP WORM.

[From the Scientific American.]

The last number of the *U. S. Nautical Magazine* contains a paper on the above subject, by James Jarvis, Esq., read by him before the National Institute at Washington. The introduction to his paper is taken, as he says himself, from various authors—especially Rees and Tredgold. We will pass over this and give his own observations and experience as briefly as possible, as it is worth a thousand times more than all we have found in the old authors referred to.

By order of Commodore Smith, Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, he had been engaged at particular times in a series of experiments since 1849. In order to ascertain the best composition to prevent