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The Lazy Tour  
of Two Idle Apprentices



## CHAPTER THE FIRST

*Saturday, 3rd October 1857*

IN THE AUTUMN MONTH of September, eighteen hundred and fifty-seven, wherein these presents bear date, two idle apprentices, exhausted by the long, hot summer and the long, hot work it had brought with it, ran away from their employer. They were bound to a highly meritorious lady (named Literature), of fair credit and repute, though, it must be acknowledged, not quite so highly esteemed in the City as she might be. This is the more remarkable as there is nothing against the respectable lady in that quarter, but quite the contrary, her family having rendered eminent service to many famous citizens of London. It may be sufficient to name Sir William Walworth, Lord Mayor under King Richard II, at the time of Wat Tyler's insurrection, and Sir Richard Whittington, which latter distinguished man and magistrate was doubtless indebted to the lady's family for the gift of his celebrated cat.\* There is also strong reason to suppose that they rang the Highgate bells for him with their own hands.

The misguided young men who thus shirked their duty to the mistress from whom they had received many favours were actuated by the low idea of making a perfectly idle trip, in any direction. They had no intention of going anywhere in particular; they wanted to see nothing, they wanted to know nothing, they wanted to learn nothing, they wanted to do nothing. They wanted only to be idle. They took to themselves (after Hogarth), the names of Mr Thomas Idle and Mr Francis Goodchild,\* but there was not a moral pin to choose between them, and they were both idle in the last degree.

Between Francis and Thomas, however, there was this difference of character: Goodchild was laboriously idle, and would take upon

himself any amount of pains and labour to assure himself that he was idle; in short, had no better idea of idleness than that it was useless industry. Thomas Idle, on the other hand, was an idler of the unmixed Irish or Neapolitan type – a passive idler, a born-and-bred idler, a consistent idler, who practised what he would have preached if he had not been too idle to preach; a one entire and perfect chrysolite of idleness.

The two idle apprentices found themselves, within a few hours of their escape, walking down into the North of England. That is to say, Thomas was lying in a meadow, looking at the railway trains as they passed over a distant viaduct, which was *his* idea of walking down into the North, while Francis was walking a mile due south against time, which was *his* idea of walking down into the North. In the mean time, the day waned, and the milestones remained unconquered.

“Tom,” said Goodchild, “the sun is getting low. Up, and let us go forward!”

“Nay,” quoth Thomas Idle, “I have not done with Annie Laurie yet.”\* And he proceeded with that idle but popular ballad, to the effect that for the bonnie young person of that name he would “lay him doon and dee” – equivalent, in prose, to lay him down and die.

“What an ass that fellow was!” cried Goodchild, with the bitter emphasis of contempt.

“Which fellow?” asked Thomas Idle.

“The fellow in your song. Lay him doon and dee! Finely he’d show off before the girl by doing *that*. A sniveller! Why couldn’t he get up and punch somebody’s head!”

“Whose?” asked Thomas Idle.

“Anybody’s. Everybody’s would be better than nobody’s! If I fell into that state of mind about a girl, do you think I’d lay me doon and dee? No, sir,” proceeded Goodchild, with a disparaging assumption of the Scottish accent, “I’d get me oop and peetch into somebody. Wouldn’t you?”

“I wouldn’t have anything to do with her,” yawned Thomas Idle. “Why should I take the trouble?”

“It’s no trouble, Tom, to fall in love,” said Goodchild, shaking his head.

“It’s trouble enough to fall out of it once you’re in it,” retorted Tom. “So I keep out of it altogether. It would be better for you if you did the same.”

Mr Goodchild, who is always in love with somebody, and not infrequently with several objects at once, made no reply. He heaved a sigh of the kind which is termed by the lower orders “a bellowser”, and then, heaving Mr Idle on his feet (who was not half so heavy as the sigh), urged him northward.

These two had sent their personal baggage on by train, only retaining each a knapsack. Idle now applied himself to constantly regretting the train, to tracking it through the intricacies of *Bradshaw’s Guide*, and finding out where it was now – and where now – and where now – and to asking what was the use of walking when you could ride at such a pace as that. Was it to see the country? If that was the object, look at it out of carriage windows. There was a great deal more of it to be seen there than here. Besides, who wanted to see the country? Nobody. And, again, whoever did walk? Nobody. Fellows set off to walk, but they never did it. They came back and said they did, but they didn’t. Then why should he walk? He wouldn’t walk. He swore it by this milestone!

It was the fifth from London, so far had they penetrated into the North. Submitting to the powerful chain of argument, Goodchild proposed a return to the metropolis and a falling back upon Euston Square Terminus. Thomas assented with alacrity, and so they walked down into the North by the next morning’s express, and carried their knapsacks in the luggage van.

It was like all other expresses, as every express is and must be. It bore through the harvested country, a smell like a large washing day, and a sharp issue of steam as from a huge brazen tea urn. The greatest power in nature and art combined, it yet glided over dangerous heights in the sight of people looking up from fields and roads, as smoothly and unreally as a light miniature plaything. Now, the engine shrieked in hysterics of such intensity that it seemed desirable that the men who had her in charge should hold her feet, slap her hands and bring her to; now, burrowed into tunnels with a stubborn and undemonstrative energy so confusing that the train seemed to be flying back into leagues of darkness. Here were station after station,



swallowed up by the express without stopping; here, stations where it fired itself in like a volley of cannon balls, swooped away four country people with nosegays and three men of business with portmanteaus and fired itself off again, bang, bang, bang! At long intervals were uncomfortable refreshment rooms, made more uncomfortable by the scorn of Beauty towards Beast, the public (but to whom she never relented, as Beauty did in the story towards the other Beast), and where sensitive stomachs were fed, with a contemptuous sharpness occasioning indigestion. Here, again, were stations with nothing going but a bell, and wonderful wooden razors set aloft on great posts, shaving the air. In these fields, the horses, sheep and cattle were well used to the thundering meteor, and didn't mind; in those, they were all set scampering together, and a herd of pigs scoured after them. The pastoral country darkened, became coaly, became smoky, became infernal, got better, got worse, improved again, grew rugged, turned romantic, was a wood, a stream, a chain of hills, a gorge, a moor, a cathedral town, a fortified place, a waste. Now, miserable black dwellings, a black canal and sick black towers of chimneys; now, a trim garden where the flowers were bright and fair; now, a wilderness of hideous altars all ablaze; now, the water meadows with their fairy rings; now, the mangy patch of unlet building ground outside the stagnant town, with the larger ring where the circus was last week. The temperature changed, the dialect changed, the people changed, faces got sharper, manner got shorter, eyes got shrewder and harder, yet all so quickly that the spruce guard in the London uniform and silver lace had not yet ruffled his shirt collar, delivered half the dispatches in his shining little pouch or read his newspaper.

Carlisle! Idle and Goodchild had got to Carlisle. It looked congenially and delightfully idle. Something in the way of public amusement had happened last month, and something else was going to happen before Christmas. And, in the mean time, there was a lecture on India for those who liked it – which Idle and Goodchild did not. Likewise, by those who liked them, there were impressions to be bought of all the vapid prints, going and gone, and of nearly all the vapid books. For those who wanted to put anything in missionary boxes, here were the boxes. For those who wanted the Reverend Mr Podgers (artist's proofs, thirty shillings), here was Mr Podgers to any

amount. Not less gracious and abundant, Mr Codgers, also of the vineyard, but opposed to Mr Podgers, brotherly tooth and nail. Here were guidebooks to the neighbouring antiquities, and eke the Lake country, in several dry and husky sorts; here, many physically and morally impossible heads of both sexes for young ladies to copy in the exercise of the art of drawing; here, further, a large impression of Mr Spurgeon,\* solid as to the flesh, not to say even something gross. The working young men of Carlisle were drawn up, with their hands in their pockets, across the pavements, four and six abreast, and appeared (much to the satisfaction of Mr Idle) to have nothing else to do. The working and growing young women of Carlisle, from the age of twelve upwards, promenaded the streets in the cool of the evening and rallied the said young men. Sometimes the young men rallied the young women, as in the case of a group gathered round an accordion player, from among whom a young man advanced behind a young woman for whom he appeared to have a tenderness and hinted to her that he was there and playful by giving her (he wore clogs) a kick.

On market morning, Carlisle woke up amazingly and became (to the two idle apprentices) disagreeably and reproachfully busy. There were its cattle market, its sheep market and its pig market down by the river, with raw-boned and shock-headed Rob Roys hiding their Lowland dresses beneath heavy plaids, prowling in and out among the animals and flavouring the air with fumes of whisky. There was its corn market down the main street, with hum of chaffering over open sacks. There was its general market in the street too, with heather brooms on which the purple flower still flourished, and heather baskets primitive and fresh to behold; with women trying on clogs and caps at open stalls, and "Bible stalls" adjoining; with "Doctor Mantle's dispensary for the cure of all human maladies and no charge for advice", and with Doctor Mantle's "Laboratory of medical, chemical and botanical science" – both healing institutions established on one pair of trestles, one board and one sunblind, with the renowned phrenologist from London begging to be favoured (at sixpence each) with the company of clients of both sexes, to whom, on examination of their heads, he would make revelations "enabling him or her to know themselves". Through all these bargains and blessings, the recruiting sergeant watchfully elbowed his way, a thread

of war in the peaceful skein. Likewise on the walls were printed hints that the Oxford Blues\* might not be indisposed to hear of a few fine active young men, and that whereas the standard of that distinguished corps is full six feet, "growing lads of five feet eleven" need not absolutely despair of being accepted.

Scenting the morning air more pleasantly than the buried majesty of Denmark did,\* Messrs Idle and Goodchild rode away from Carlisle at eight o'clock one forenoon, bound for the village of Heskett Newmarket, some fourteen miles distant. Goodchild (who had already begun to doubt whether he was idle, as his way always is when he has nothing to do) had read of a certain black old Cumberland hill or mountain called Carrock, or Carrock Fell, and had arrived at the conclusion that it would be the culminating triumph of idleness to ascend the same. Thomas Idle, dwelling on the pains inseparable from that achievement, had expressed the strongest doubts of the expediency, and even of the sanity, of the enterprise, but Goodchild had carried his point, and they rode away.

Uphill and downhill, and twisting to the right, and twisting to the left, and with old Skiddaw (who has vaunted himself a great deal more than his merits deserve, but that is rather the way of the Lake country) dodging the apprentices in a picturesque and pleasant manner. Good, weatherproof, warm peasant houses, well white-limed, scantily dotting the road. Clean children coming out to look, carrying other clean children as big as themselves. Harvest still lying out and much rained upon; here and there, harvest still unreaped. Well-cultivated gardens attached to the cottages, with plenty of produce forced out of their hard soil. Lonely nooks, and wild, but people can be born, and married, and buried in such nooks, and can live and love, and be loved, there as elsewhere, thank God! (Mr Goodchild's remark.) By and by, the village: black, coarse-stoned, rough-windowed houses, some with outer staircases, like Swiss houses; a sinuous and stony gutter winding uphill and round the corner, by way of street. All the children running out directly. Women pausing in washing to peep from doorways and very little windows. Such were the observations of Messrs Idle and Goodchild as their conveyance stopped at the village shoemaker's. Old Carrock gloomed down upon it all in a very ill-tempered state, and rain was beginning.

The village shoemaker declined to have anything to do with Carrock. No visitors went up Carrock. No visitors came there at all. Aa' the world ganged awa' yon. The driver appealed to the innkeeper. The innkeeper had two men working in the fields, and one of them should be called in to go up Carrock as guide. Messrs Idle and Goodchild, highly approving, entered the innkeeper's house to drink whisky and eat oatcake.

The Innkeeper was not idle enough – was not idle at all, which was a great fault in him – but was a fine specimen of a north-country man, or any kind of man. He had a ruddy cheek, a bright eye, a well-knit frame, an immense hand, a cheery outspoken voice and a straight, bright, broad look. He had a drawing room, too, upstairs, which was worth a visit to the Cumberland Fells. (This was Mr Francis Goodchild's opinion, in which Mr Thomas Idle did not concur.)

The ceiling of this drawing room was so crossed and recrossed by beams of unequal lengths, radiating from a centre in a corner, that it looked like a broken starfish. The room was comfortably and solidly furnished with good mahogany and horsehair. It had a snug fireside, and a couple of well-curtained windows looking out upon the wild country behind the house. What it most developed was an unexpected taste for little ornaments and knick-knacks, of which it contained a most surprising number. They were not very various, consisting in great part of waxen babies with their limbs more or less mutilated, appealing on one leg to the parental affections from under little cupping glasses, but Uncle Tom was there, in crockery, receiving theological instructions from Miss Eva,\* who grew out of his side like a wen, in an exceedingly rough state of profile propagandism. Engravings of Mr Hunt's country boy,\* before and after his pie, were on the wall, divided by a highly coloured nautical piece, the subject of which had all her colours (and more) flying, and was making great way through a sea of a regular pattern, like a lady's collar. A benevolent elderly gentleman of the last century, with a powdered head, kept guard, in oil and varnish, over a most perplexing piece of furniture on a table – in appearance between a driving seat and an angular knife-box, but, when opened, a musical instrument of tinkling wires, exactly like David's harp\* packed for travelling. Everything became a knick-knack in this curious room. The copper tea kettle, burnished

up to the highest point of glory, took his station on a stand of his own at the greatest possible distance from the fireplace, and said, "By your leave, not a kettle, but a bijou." The Staffordshire-ware butter dish with the cover on got upon a little round occasional table in a window, with a worked top, and announced itself to the two chairs accidentally placed there as an aid to polite conversation, a graceful trifle in china to be chatted over by callers as they airily trifled away the visiting moments of a butterfly existence in that rugged old village on the Cumberland Fells. The very footstool could not keep the floor, but got upon the sofa, and therefrom proclaimed itself, in high relief of white and liver-coloured wool, a favourite spaniel coiled up for repose. Though, truly, in spite of its bright glass eyes, the spaniel was the least successful assumption in the collection, being perfectly flat and dismally suggestive of a recent mistake in sitting down on the part of some corpulent member of the family.

There were books, too, in this room: books on the table, books on the chimney piece, books in an open press in the corner. Fielding was there, and Smollett was there, and Steele and Addison were there in dispersed volumes, and there were tales of those who go down to the sea in ships,\* for windy nights, and there was really a choice of good books for rainy days or fine. It was so very pleasant to see these things in such a lonesome by-place; so very agreeable to find these evidences of a taste, however homely, that went beyond the beautiful cleanliness and trimness of the house; so fanciful to imagine what a wonder the room must be to the little children born in the gloomy village – what grand impressions of it those of them who became wanderers over the earth would carry away; and how, at distant ends of the world, some old voyagers would die, cherishing the belief that the finest apartment known to men was once in the Heskett Newmarket Inn, in rare old Cumberland. It was such a charmingly lazy pursuit to entertain these rambling thoughts over the choice oatcake and the genial whisky that Mr Idle and Mr Goodchild never asked themselves how it came to pass that the men in the fields were never heard of more, how the stalwart landlord replaced them without explanation, how his dog cart came to be waiting at the door and how everything was arranged without the least arrangement for climbing to old Carrock's shoulders and standing on his head.

Without a word of enquiry, therefore, the two idle apprentices drifted out resignedly into a fine, soft, close, drowsy, penetrating rain, got into the landlord's light dog cart and rattled off, through the village, for the foot of Carrock. The journey at the outset was not remarkable. The Cumberland road went up and down like other roads, the Cumberland curs burst out from backs of cottages and barked like other curs and the Cumberland peasantry stared after the dog cart amazedly, as long as it was in sight, like the rest of their race. The approach to the foot of the mountain resembled the approaches to the feet of most other mountains all over the world. The cultivation gradually ceased, the trees grew gradually rare, the road became gradually rougher and the sides of the mountain looked gradually more and more lofty and more and more difficult to get up. The dog cart was left at a lonely farmhouse. The landlord borrowed a large umbrella and, assuming in an instant the character of the most cheerful and adventurous of guides, led the way to the ascent. Mr Goodchild looked eagerly at the top of the mountain and, feeling apparently that he was now going to be very lazy indeed, shone all over wonderfully to the eye, under the influence of the contentment within and the moisture without. Only in the bosom of Mr Thomas Idle did Despondency now hold her gloomy state. He kept it a secret, but he would have given a very handsome sum, when the ascent began, to have been back again at the inn. The sides of Carrock looked fearfully steep, and the top of Carrock was hidden in mist. The rain was falling faster and faster. The knees of Mr Idle – always weak on walking excursions – shivered and shook with fear and damp. The wet was already penetrating through the young man's outer coat to a brand-new shooting jacket, for which he had reluctantly paid the large sum of two guineas on leaving town; he had no stimulating refreshment about him but a small packet of clammy gingerbread nuts; he had nobody to give him an arm, nobody to push him gently behind, nobody to pull him up tenderly in front, nobody to speak to who really felt the difficulties of the ascent, the dampness of the rain, the denseness of the mist and the unutterable folly of climbing, undriven, up any steep place in the world when there is level ground within reach to walk on instead. Was it for this that Thomas had left London? London, where there are nice short walks in level public

gardens, with benches of repose set up at convenient distances for weary travellers – London, where rugged stone is humanely pounded into little lumps for the road, and intelligently shaped into smooth slabs for the pavement! No! It was not for the laborious ascent of the crags of Carrock that Idle had left his native city and travelled to Cumberland. Never did he feel more disastrously convinced that he had committed a very grave error in judgement than when he found himself standing in the rain at the bottom of a steep mountain and knew that the responsibility rested on his weak shoulders of actually getting to the top of it.

The honest landlord went first, the beaming Goodchild followed, the mournful Idle brought up the rear. From time to time, the two foremost members of the expedition changed places in the order of march, but the rearguard never altered his position. Up the mountain or down the mountain, in the water or out of it, over the rocks, through the bogs, skirting the heather, Mr Thomas Idle was always the last, and was always the man who had to be looked after and waited for. At first the ascent was delusively easy: the sides of the mountain sloped gradually, and the material of which they were composed was a soft, spongy turf, very tender and pleasant to walk upon. After a hundred yards or so, however, the verdant scene and the easy slope disappeared, and the rocks began. Not noble, massive rocks, standing upright, keeping a certain regularity in their positions and possessing, now and then, flat tops to sit upon, but little, irritating, comfortless rocks, littered about anyhow by Nature – treacherous, disheartening rocks of all sorts of small shapes and small sizes, bruisers of tender toes and trippers-up of wavering feet. When these impediments were passed, heather and slough followed. Here the steepness of the ascent was slightly mitigated, and here the exploring party of three turned round to look at the view below them. The scene of the moorland and the fields was like a feeble watercolour drawing half sponged out. The mist was darkening, the rain was thickening, the trees were dotted about like spots of faint shadow, the division lines which mapped out the fields were all getting blurred together, and the lonely farmhouse where the dog cart had been left loomed spectral in the grey light like the last human dwelling

at the end of the habitable world. Was this a sight worth climbing to see? Surely, surely not!

Up again, for the top of Carrock is not reached yet. The landlord, just as good-tempered and obliging as he was at the bottom of the mountain. Mr Goodchild, brighter in the eyes and rosier in the face than ever, full of cheerful remarks and apt quotations, and walking with a springiness of step wonderful to behold. Mr Idle, farther and farther in the rear, with the water squeaking in the toes of his boots, with his two-guinea shooting jacket clinging damply to his aching sides, with his overcoat so full of rain, and standing out so pyramidically stiff, in consequence, from his shoulders downwards that he felt as if he was walking in a gigantic extinguisher – the despairing spirit within him representing but too aptly the candle that had just been put out. Up and up and up again, till a ridge is reached, and the outer edge of the mist on the summit of Carrock is darkly and drizzlingly near. Is this the top? No, nothing like the top. It is an aggravating peculiarity of all mountains that, although they have only one top when they are seen (as they ought always to be seen) from below, they turn out to have a perfect eruption of false tops whenever the traveller is sufficiently ill-advised to go out of his way for the purpose of ascending them. Carrock is but a trumpery little mountain of fifteen hundred feet, and it presumes to have false tops, and even precipices, as if it were Mont Blanc. No matter; Goodchild enjoys it, and will go on; and Idle, who is afraid of being left behind by himself, must follow. On entering the edge of the mist, the landlord stops and says he hopes that it will not get any thicker. It is twenty years since he last ascended Carrock, and it is barely possible, if the mist increases, that the party may be lost on the mountain. Goodchild hears this dreadful intimation and is not in the least impressed by it. He marches for the top that is never to be found, as if he was the Wandering Jew, bound to go on for ever, in defiance of everything. The landlord faithfully accompanies him. The two, to the dim eye of Idle, far below, look in the exaggerative mist like a pair of friendly giants mounting the steps of some invisible castle together. Up and up, and then down a little, and then up, and then along a strip of level ground, and then up again. The wind, a wind unknown in the happy valley, blows keen and strong, the



rain-mist gets impenetrable, a dreary little cairn of stones appears. The landlord adds one to the heap, first walking all round the cairn as if he were about to perform an incantation, then dropping the stone onto the top of the heap with the gesture of a magician adding an ingredient to a cauldron in full bubble. Goodchild sits down by the cairn as if it was his study table at home. Idle, drenched and panting, stands up with his back to the wind, ascertains distinctly that this is the top at last, looks round with all the little curiosity that is left in him and gets, in return, a magnificent view of... nothing!

The effect of this sublime spectacle on the minds of the exploring party is a little injured by the nature of the direct conclusion to which the sight of it points – the said conclusion being that the mountain mist has actually gathered round them, as the landlord feared it would. It now becomes imperatively necessary to settle the exact situation of the farmhouse in the valley at which the dog cart has been left, before the travellers attempt to descend. While the landlord is endeavouring to make this discovery in his own way, Mr Goodchild plunges his hand under his wet coat, draws out a little red morocco case, opens it and displays to the view of his companions a neat pocket compass. The north is found, the point at which the farmhouse is situated is settled and the descent begins. After a little downward walking, Idle (behind as usual) sees his fellow travellers turn aside sharply – tries to follow them – loses them in the mist – is shouted after, waited for, recovered – and then finds that a halt has been ordered, partly on his account, partly for the purpose of again consulting the compass.

The point in debate is settled as before between Goodchild and the landlord, and the expedition moves on, not down the mountain, but marching straight forward round the slope of it. The difficulty of following this new route is acutely felt by Thomas Idle. He finds the hardship of walking at all greatly increased by the fatigue of moving his feet straight forward along the side of a slope, when their natural tendency, at every step, is to turn off at a right angle and go straight down the declivity. Let the reader imagine himself to be walking along the roof of a barn, instead of up or down it, and he will have an exact idea of the pedestrian difficulty in which the travellers had now involved themselves. In ten minutes more Idle

was lost in the distance again, was shouted for, waited for, recovered as before; found Goodchild repeating his observation of the compass, and remonstrated warmly against the sideways route that his companions persisted in following. It appeared to the uninstructed mind of Thomas that when three men want to get to the bottom of a mountain, their business is to walk down it, and he put this view of the case not only with emphasis, but even with some irritability. He was answered from the scientific eminence of the compass on which his companions were mounted that there was a frightful chasm somewhere near the foot of Carrock, called the Black Arches, into which the travellers were sure to march in the mist if they risked continuing the descent from the place where they had now halted. Idle received this answer with the silent respect which was due to the commanders of the expedition, and followed along the roof of the barn, or rather the side of the mountain, reflecting upon the assurance which he received on starting again, that the object of the party was only to gain "a certain point", and, this haven attained, to continue the descent afterwards until the foot of Carrock was reached. Though quite unexceptionable as an abstract form of expression, the phrase "a certain point" has the disadvantage of sounding rather vaguely when it is pronounced on unknown ground under a canopy of mist much thicker than a London fog. Nevertheless, after the compass, this phrase was all the clue the party had to hold by, and Idle clung to the extreme end of it as hopefully as he could.

More sideways walking, thicker and thicker mist, all sorts of points reached except the "certain point", third loss of Idle, third shouts for him, third recovery of him, third consultation of compass. Mr Goodchild draws it tenderly from his pocket and prepares to adjust it on a stone. Something falls on the turf – it is the glass. Something else drops immediately after – it is the needle. The compass is broken, and the exploring party is lost!

It is the practice of the English portion of the human race to receive all great disasters in dead silence. Mr Goodchild restored the useless compass to his pocket without saying a word, Mr Idle looked at the landlord, and the landlord looked at Mr Idle. There was nothing for it now but to go on blindfold and trust to the chapter of chances. Accordingly, the lost travellers moved forward, still walking round the

slope of the mountain, still desperately resolved to avoid the Black Arches and to succeed in reaching the "certain point".

A quarter of an hour brought them to the brink of a ravine, at the bottom of which there flowed a muddy little stream. Here another halt was called, and another consultation took place. The landlord, still clinging pertinaciously to the idea of reaching the "point", voted for crossing the ravine and going on round the slope of the mountain. Mr Goodchild, to the great relief of his fellow traveller, took another view of the case, and backed Mr Idle's proposal to descend Carrock at once, at any hazard – the rather as the running stream was a sure guide to follow from the mountain to the valley. Accordingly, the party descended to the rugged and stony banks of the stream, and here again Thomas lost ground sadly and fell far behind his travelling companions. Not much more than six weeks had elapsed since he had sprained one of his ankles, and he began to feel this same ankle getting rather weak when he found himself among the stones that were strewn about the running water. Goodchild and the landlord were getting farther and farther ahead of him. He saw them cross the stream and disappear round a projection on its banks. He heard them shout the moment after as a signal that they had halted and were waiting for him. Answering the shout, he mended his pace, crossed the stream where they had crossed it and was within one step of the opposite bank when his foot slipped on a wet stone, his weak ankle gave a twist outwards, a hot, rending, tearing pain ran through it at the same moment and down fell the idlest of the two idle apprentices, crippled in an instant.

The situation was now, in plain terms, one of absolute danger. There lay Mr Idle writhing with pain, there was the mist as thick as ever, there was the landlord as completely lost as the strangers whom he was conducting, and there was the compass broken in Goodchild's pocket. To leave the wretched Thomas on unknown ground was plainly impossible, and to get him to walk with a badly sprained ankle seemed equally out of the question. However, Goodchild (brought back by his cry for help) bandaged the ankle with a pocket handkerchief, and assisted by the landlord, raised the crippled apprentice to his legs, offered him a shoulder to lean on and exhorted him for the sake of the whole party to try if he could walk.

Thomas, assisted by the shoulder on one side, and a stick on the other, did try, with what pain and difficulty those only can imagine who have sprained an ankle and have had to tread on it afterwards. At a pace adapted to the feeble hobbling of a newly lamed man, the lost party moved on, perfectly ignorant whether they were on the right side of the mountain or the wrong, and equally uncertain how long Idle would be able to contend with the pain in his ankle before he gave in altogether and fell down again, unable to stir another step.

Slowly and more slowly, as the clog of crippled Thomas weighed heavily and more heavily on the march of the expedition, the lost travellers followed the windings of the stream till they came to a faintly marked cart track branching off nearly at right angles to the left. After a little consultation, it was resolved to follow this dim vestige of a road in the hope that it might lead to some farm or cottage at which Idle could be left in safety. It was now getting on towards the afternoon, and it was fast becoming more than doubtful whether the party, delayed in their progress as they now were, might not be overtaken by the darkness before the right route was found, and be condemned to pass the night on the mountain, without bit or drop to comfort them, in their wet clothes.

The cart track grew fainter and fainter, until it was washed out altogether by another little stream, dark, turbulent and rapid. The landlord suggested, judging by the colour of the water, that it must be flowing from one of the lead mines in the neighbourhood of Carrock, and the travellers accordingly kept by the stream for a little while in the hope of possibly wandering towards help in that way. After walking forward about two hundred yards, they came upon a mine indeed, but a mine exhausted and abandoned – a dismal, ruinous place with nothing but the wreck of its works and buildings left to speak for it. Here there were a few sheep feeding. The landlord looked at them earnestly, thought he recognized the marks on them – then thought he did not – finally gave up the sheep in despair – and walked on, just as ignorant of the whereabouts of the party as ever.

The march in the dark, literally as well as metaphorically in the dark, had now been continued for three quarters of an hour from the time when the crippled apprentice had met with his accident. Mr Idle, with all the will to conquer the pain in his ankle and to