DORIS BARUGH.

A Yorkshire Story

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&c., &c.

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TO

ANNIE KEARY

AND MY OTHEK KIND YORKSHIRE FRIENDS

I OFFER

WARM THANKS

FOR THEIR SYMPATHY AND GENEROUS HELP

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DORIS BARUGH.

CHAPTER I.

SWINGING ON A GATE

THE day had been full of mist, a soft white veil clung to the side of the steep hill, and blotted out the village straggling up from the river below to the old grey church, with its low crenellated tower, and screen of tall fir-trees, standing on the skirts of the moor, some hundreds of feet above the valley.

This screen of old, thin fir-trees, set north and west within the loosely piled stone fence that shut in the churchyard, gave a weird, haunted look to the spot.

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It may be that this gaunt weirdness—for beyond the thin outstretched fir-arms the moor spreads for miles in a heath-covered level—has fostered the superstition that still hangs over Burneston; even nowadays there are ghost stories about Burneston Hall—the grey old manor-house in the valley below—stories which tell how the wife of the last Burneston of Burneston walks up and down—up and down the terraces beside the river, mourning her sin and her sorrow.

Even to-day there is something chilling and mysterious in those tall thin fir-trees looming above the mist, trying seemingly to keep sight of the long range of pale grey hills across the valley.

Mr. Burneston, the present owner of the Hall, had come up through the mist from the old grey house beside the river, to call at the parsonage, but he had taken the steep way through the village, and as he stood looking at the church, and its screen of weird trees, he was opposite Farmer Barugh's pig-yard. The white gate was open just now to admit

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seven fine brown cows, breathing fragrance as they passed, and Mr. Burneston went through the gate whistling. One could see that the mist had not depressed his spirits, he looked very bright, very happy, and though there was an ease in his movement that betrayed carelessness, he looked like a wellbred kindly English gentleman. He went on past the range of cow stables, then through a rick-yard, where a few empty stone posts seemed waiting for the coming harvest, and suddenly came in sight of the gate which led to the glebe field, a swelling green croft high above the white gabled parsonage below.

A girl, dressed in a lilac cotton frock, with short sleeves, a long, buff-striped pinafore, and a white sun-bonnet, was swinging on the gate. Her back was towards him, and her head was hidden by her sun-bonnet. She did not hear his footsteps, and she went on singing to herself in a sweet voice. She made such a pretty picture there, with the background of golden-starred meadow, that

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instinctively he stood still, and these words of her song reached him:—

"May it so happen, an' may it so fall,

'at Ah may be lady o' Burneston Hall."

He had been smiling as he looked at the careless grace of the girl's attitude, but as she ended the smile broadened, and he burst out laughing.

The girl started, looked round, and then jumped down; her sun-bonnet fell back as she reached the ground, and Mr. Burneston saw the loveliest little face he had ever seen in his life. Large blue-grey eyes gazed at him in bright terror from under delicate, finely-

marked brows, shadowed by a wavy crop of brown hair, which straggled over her forehead, but did not hide its beauty; the red lips were parted with the sudden alarm, but the nose and chin were so delicate, yet so firm in their outline, that they might have belonged to an ancient statue. A bright deep blush spreading over her face and throat wakened Mr. Burneston from his sudden enchantment.

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"I beg your pardon," he said, as if he were speaking to an equal; "but where do you come from?"

It had all happened too quickly for words to render—before his sentence had ended the girl snatched at the strings of her sun-bonnet, and fled past him like a bird on the wing.

Mr. Burneston's blue eyes followed her till she disappeared, and he stood staring till two huge geese came and hissed at him. Then he rubbed his hands across his forehead, and looked about as if he had had a sudden awakening.

"Good heavens, I never saw anyone like her; where can she come from?"

Philip Burneston was easy-going, but he was an only son, and had early been his own master; he was accustomed to have his orders obeyed and his wishes gratified at once; he was disconcerted, and impatient to know who the girl was; he came back into the farm-yard, and turning his back to the church, looked at the farm-house, which showed through wreaths

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of brown and golden apples above the low stone wall.

"I cannot ask there" he said, "they are almost strangers, and the girl may belong to them."

On the other side of the road which ran down-hill past the churchyard and the large white gate of the farm, stood two stone cottages with thatched roofs and low broad lattice windows, and over the door of one of these, making a frame of light foliage, stirred now by the breeze that was lifting the mist, was a large flowered white convolvulus.

Mr. Burneston crossed the road, tapped at the door of this cottage and raised the latch. The inner door was opened by an old woman, her head and hands shaking with palsy; but she smiled when she saw Mr. Burneston.

"Ay, ay, sir, ye mun coom in," she spoke heartily, "an' sit ye doon. An' how's yersel', Maister Burneston, an' how is 't wi' t' yung maister? It's long sin fooaks seed yur face oop here."

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Mr. Burneston had to stoop as he went into the neat, exquisitely clean little room. The fire-irons and the steel fittings of the oven shone as if they were not meant for use, the walls and heavy-beamed ceiling were of chalky whiteness, in one corner was an old oat press, with glistening brass handles, and in the other corner a triangular cupboard, the red Indian lac door brass-mounted, and through this half-open door showed treasured old china cups and saucers, and plates, and even a blue and white china teapot on a high shelf.

"Well, how are you, Mrs. Duncombe? And how is Rose, eh?"

The old palsied head shook more than ever. "Ah'se as hard o' heearin as ivver Ah war; howsomivver, if ye'll bide here a bit, Ah'll just gan an' call t' lahtle lass. Rase, Rase, coom here!"

There stole in from the back door a little girl with a round saucy face, that in a minute was suffused with a blush of pleasure and

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shyness at sight of the visitor. Rose's tawny hair, with occasional tinges of red, was brushed smoothly behind her ears, and her fair freckled skin looked scrupulously clean and well kept; but there was something disorderly in the expression of her yellow-brown eyes, her small turned-up nose, and her full, parted lips. She was very plump, and looked much younger than she really was. "Why, Rose, when are you going to grow?" Mr. Burneston always had kind words for the little village girls, provided they were pretty, and Rose was his special favourite; he pinched the child's blushing cheek. "You must grow tall as well as broad, little woman." Rose's eyes drooped at the implied reproof. She thought the want of rapid growth must be caused by her own idleness, and she sighed heavily. Her grandmother could not hear the sigh, but she noted the confusion of the downcast face.

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"Mebbe it's aboot t' sewin', eh, Rase lass? hevn't Ah allays tell'd the' 'at thoo'l nivver mak a deeacent stiddy lass wiv'oot thoo sticks te t' 'needle? Mebbe thoo'l be bud a poor shift-less thing as lang's thoo lives."

At this picture of the possible result of laziness Rose's fall, pouting lips quivered, her cheeks puckered, and from the closed eyelids came a shower of tears.

Mr. Burneston's bright, frank face clouded in a moment.

"Oh, don't scold her, grannie!" he said, in a suffering voice, as if some one had wounded him keenly; then, bending over Rose, he said tenderly, "There, there, my dear, don't you cry, grannie doesn't mean it, I'm sure you're a good girl; come down to the Hall, and Mrs. Emmett shall give you a pot of jam."

Rose looked up through her tears with a loving reverence that struck Mr. Burneston, though his mind was full of something else. “How fond that child must be of jam!” and somehow he felt less pity for Rose.

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He put his lips close to Mrs. Buncombe’s ear. “Have the Barughs, those new people at the farm, any family?” he said.

The shaking old head nodded as if it meant to roll off.

“Ay, ay, t’ missis, Dorothy her man calls her, cooms ov a better sort o’ fooalk ‘an ther is aboot here. Ah reckons. Fooaks sez as sheea cooms frae t’ sooth, an’ her fayther ‘ad lots o’ brass. Neea, bud it wad be a coom doon i’ life fer sike as sheea te wed wiv a man lahke John Barugh. If Ah ain’t gaumed reeghtly, ye maun axt’ lahtle lass fer t’ rest o’ t’ teeal.” The increasing impatience in her listener’s face had shown Mrs. Duncombe that she was answering wrongly. “Are there any children at the farm, Rose?” he said abruptly. The soft-hearted child felt the change in his manner, and she blushed with pain. She who worshipped the ground the squire walked on had managed somehow to be all wrong with him in this visit.

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“There’s a lass an’ a lad.”

“And how old are they? Is the girl, for instance, older than you, and—and what is she like?”

The change in his voice made the girl look up, and Mr. Burneston reddened as he met her questioning eyes.

“They call t’ lad George, an’ he’s a reeght nice un, he is, an’ he’s boon i’ thirteen, an’ he plays wi’ me,” said Rose; “but t’ lass is nae better ‘an if sheea’d lost her tongue.

Sheea's bigger 'an me, an' as fer her 'air it's nivver tidy like, an' sheea disn't play. George sez 'at sheea's fair daft."

In her bias against Doris she spoke eagerly, quite forgetting her shyness, and Mr. Burneston felt a sudden dislike to Rose Duncombe.

"Ah," he said carelessly, and then he stood thinking—it was useless to question the old woman, she could not hear a word.

"Well," he nodded, "good-bye, Mrs. Duncombe. Be a good lass. Rose, and mind your sewing, or else when you're old enough to

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get a husband you won't be able to mend his stockings."

The old woman nodded repeatedly, but Rose did not curtsey, she stood with her fat fingers clasped together over her lilac pinafore, watching Mr. Burneston with rapt loving eyes; he had spoken to her again with a smile, and every word was treasured in her warm little heart.

"If Ah sud try fer te please mah man as Ah try te please t' maister," she thought, whya then Ah mun be yabble te dea t' sewin' o' all sorts."

People talk sentimentally of the sufferings of worms trodden on heedlessly, of birds robbed of their young; very few have pity or sympathy for the unrequited love of children or of unattractive men and women. I say unattractive advisedly, for ugly people are often gifted with extraordinary power of attraction. Perhaps much of this want of sympathy comes of unconsciousness; for people are often less conceited or conscious of the love they win and slight, than of their personal gifts or intellectual acquirements.

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Certainly Philip Burneston had no consciousness of the warm love that lay nestling for him in little Rose's heart.

Her words had stung him; he felt sure that the rough-headed daughter of Farmer Barugh must be the vision of beauty he had seen on the gate, and it jarred him that this mere village child, Rose, should speak as if the girl were her equal.

He stood facing the farm-yard, and then he turned so as to front the steep descent on each side of which lay the village. The mist had lifted and revealed the opposite side of the valley, with plots of golden corn-land, some with shocks ready for carrying; with green strips of meadow here and there, and darker lines of green hedge dotted with trees. Beyond came a long stretch of woodland, then as the land rose towards the point where the sun was just about to sink behind the hills, the corn was glittering gold and the meadow gleamed emerald against dark fir woods. Beyond all, rose the purple brown of the moor, cresting the long range of hills, purple

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almost to blackness as after a few minutes the sun sank into the leaden clouds that bordered the horizon.

The river which ran through the valley, and the Hall with its circling woods, were not visible from where Mr. Burneston was gazing, the hill was so steep; and yet he seemed to be searching for his home as he stood looking so fixedly down the steep winding road with stone cottages on either side, some of these mounted so high on grassed banks above the road that they had to be reached by quaint flights of broken, time-stained stone steps.

Mrs. Buncombe had shut her door. Rose in a sudden and virtuous impulse had brought out a checked duster, and was hemming, with her eyes fixed on her needle. No one was looking at Mr. Burneston while he stood first rapt in thought, and then amused by his own hesitation.

He could not make up his mind to go home till he had had another vision of that frizzled head and the exquisite face belonging to it

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“I have not called on these people yet,” he said, “and it is the right thing to do.”

He pushed the gate open and crossed the yard diagonally from right to left, passing by the horse-pond which was near the road in the extreme left-hand corner, in the sluggish water of which four black-and-white ducks were dipping and splashing as if they knew that water was more invigorating when in motion.

There was a small gate in the furthest corner of the yard, almost hidden by apple boughs pendent with their weight of russet fruit, and through this gate Mr. Earnest on entered the small, trim garden, showing few-flowers on its neatly-raked brown borders, except tufts of monkshood and coral plant and some pink blossoms on the blue-green thrift border.

The door stood open, the squire knocked, and then stood waiting.

Mr. Barugh was a new tenant, and was therefore a new feature in Burneston: all the other inhabitants had been born in the village.

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These new tenants had come into the Church Farm while Mr. Burneston had been travelling, and as yet he had only exchanged greetings with Mr. Barugh.

“George, lad, ther’s yan at t’ deear,” a deep voice said from within; “thoo mun gan an’ see wheea’s theer.”

There was a door at the end of the passage, and one on each side, and the doors and walls were all painted buff and yellow.

A brown-eyed, pleasant-faced boy opened the left-hand door, and came out into the passage. He looked very shy when he saw the visitor.

"Mebbe it's t' squire" he said over his shoulder.

There was a momentary pause, and then a tall, powerful-looking man, with heavy red eyebrows and bushy red whiskers, appeared at the door.

"Nay, nay, Mr. Burneston, coom in, an' welcome," he said, awkwardly hitching one shoulder a little above the other, and holding out an enormous, but well-shaped red

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hand. "T' missis an Ah's reeght pleeased tu see yu, that we are. Weean't ye sit yu doon?"

Mr. Burneston looked round eagerly, but as he entered there was only one person in the low-roofed room, and she was rising with evident difficulty from a couch placed beneath the long low window.

He started forward at once.

"Please don't get up, Mrs. Barugh. I'm afraid I have disturbed you. I am very sorry. I did not know you were ill."

While he spoke his eyes were dazed with the faded likeness in the wasted, delicate face; it was as if he got here and there a faint trace of the beautiful vision he had seen on the gate, but it was all misty and uncertain. Mrs. Barugh looked very delicate; she wore a cap with lilac bows, and she was wrapped in a faded yellow crape shawl; but she must have been once a lovely woman.

She took the squire's proffered hand, and then pointed to a chair near her sofa with an ease that surprised her visitor, accustomed to

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the stiff awkwardness of his other tenants on such occasions.

"Sit ye down, John." There was a mixture of pity and of irritation in her voice, and the big man started at the summons, but as he passed her on his way to the fireplace, she frowned at him till her delicate brows met.

Mr. Burneston was amused, there was no real ill-temper in Mrs. Barugh's face, she seemed to regard her husband as a performing dog who was not going through his part correctly.

"You have very delicate health, I am afraid," the squire said; "but I hope you like Burneston." John Barugh had been standing like a stone block beside the large open hearth, where a few charred logs were burning feebly; at this question he turned to answer, without a trace of his first shyness—

"Sheea wur fairlings weel—fair eneeaf, wahle we cam oop here; bud it's ower cau'd, or sheea's ower fond, mair's t' pity. T' stock

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throddens weel, an' George, t' lad theare, is as cobby as needs be."

"I'm very sorry to hear this of your wife. We always reckon the hill so healthy; even down at the Hall, where, as you know, the river goes almost round the house, the air is considered excellent."

"Perhaps it's not owing to the air"—Mrs. Barugh's voice was so soft and pleasant that it was a pity she minced her words—"but I'm so dull, Mr. Burneston; there's no kind of society to be found hereabout."

Mr. Burneston looked puzzled, and John Barugh gave an uneasy laugh.

"Confoond it, Dorothy, yer mak' o word 'saciety' 'll dea fer ye sum fahne deay, Ah's thinkin'. Neeghbers ther' is, an' plenty. Ah tak' it."

"Oh yes, there's neeghbers." Mrs. Barugh's lips curled with the scorn her gentility repressed.

John went on as if he had not heard her.

"What neeghbers is gude fer," he said in his strong mellow voice, "is tu hev sum fooalks tu speeak tiv besides them i' yur ain hoose; else

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a man mud get ta'en oop ower mitch wi' his ain deain's; an' besahdes, he mud finnd a chance o' helpin' whoor help's neeadful. Yan neeghber's as gude as anither tu mah thinkin'."

Mrs. Barugh drew her faded yellow shawl closer together, and then shrugged her thin shoulders, wondering how she ever could have thrown herself away on John Barugh.

"Well, not quite that, John, but everyone can't think alike; an', besides, there are the children to be considered—they must have playfellows."

Mr. Burneston smiled at George, who had stood close by the door, with both hands in the pockets of his brown trousers; his eyes were fixed on a half-open book on the table. He was wondering at that moment if it would be manners to go back to Robinson Crusoe.

"I suppose that fellow goes to school somewhere," said Mr. Burneston.

One of John Barugh's shoulders rose higher than its fellow.

"Ay," he said uneasily.

The mother broke in eagerly. "Yes, Mr.

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Burneston, we have sent George to a fairly good school, for a small school, that is to say; but the master says there's somethin' wrong with the lad, an' that if he studies like the rest maybe he'll grow crippled."

"Skeealmaisters he' ther nooations as weel's ither fooalks," said John grimly.

"Such nonsense," sighed the mother.

"So you're turned out to grass for a time, eh, my lad; and you haven't got a brother to help you into mischief?"

George fixed his large, languid brown eyes on Mr. Burneston. "Ah's getten Doris," he said, "an' ther'a Rase Duncombe; sheea's as gude as a lad."

A faint tinge of colour came into his mother's pale face.

"there's a specimen of what I meant just now, Mr. Burneston. How can I like my children to play with a gurl who runs wild like little Rose? They get to speak like she does, an' I've tried hard to make Doris speak properly, an' now she's getting to speak like Rose."

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"How old is your daughter? Is she at home?" He was growing impatient to see Doris.

"Doris is goin' fifteen, Mr. Burneston, but she doesn't look so old, though she's tall. George, go fetch yer sister."

George shook his head.

"Doris'll nane coom. Ah axed her a wahle syne, an' she sed Ah wer t' say if they axed fer her, she 'at a'd bahde wi' t' bees."

John Barugh looked wrathful, and moved towards the door, but Mr. Burneston rose.

"Never mind, never mind. I shall find her in the garden," he said. "I know my way to the beehives." Then, bidding good-bye to Mrs. Barugh, "I wish I could make the place pleasanter for you," he said, "but I hardly know how. The housekeeper, Mrs. Emmett, shall come and see you, if you like; she is a very clever woman, though perhaps not much of a companion."

Mrs. Barugh looked vexed.

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Burneston. I shall be extremely happy to *see you* whenever you like to call."

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As soon as the door closed on Mr. Burneston and her husband, she fell back on the sofa.

"There's nothing but disappointment in this life," she said. "I did think, whenever I saw the squire, that he would understand and see for himself I am not an ordinary person. Depend upon it, George, there's been some low marriage in the family some time or another, or a gentleman like that would never so forget himself as to recommend a housekeeper as companion for me. Why, George, lad, what ails ye? Why d'ye go white in that way, and niver speak a word?"

She spoke irritably, but she rose up swiftly, as if nothing ailed her, and put her arm round the boy. He had turned a sickly white, and stood shivering, as if he were going to fall.

At first he clung to his mother, glad to let his head sink on her bosom, but next minute he raised it.

"Nay, nay, mother, deean't—yee'll hurt yersel'. Fayther'll be here seean." A groan,

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and then he fainted, just as his mother had drawn him close to a low chair, on which he fell seemingly lifeless.

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CHAPTER II. DORIS

"BEES is fond things," said Doris; "they're rare an' clivver, so they mun knaw hoo t' mak some sort o' change i' ther lives. Jist to think o' gannin' on year efter year, allays deain' t' same things, livin' on i' t' same hoose, wearin' t' same lilac pinny, an' warkin' hard all t' time. Weel, that's t' best pairt; wark's some fun when it isn't darnin' stockin's; if poor mother cud wark as she used, she'd hev summat to think on, shu wadn't be so hard o' fayther."

Doris paused, and looked round to see if there was any work to be done near at hand; and all at once a frown, just like her mother's,

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knitted her delicate brows, and her firm lips pouted with vexation.

“Fayther’s i’ t’ reeght; Jos is a leeazy gude-for-nowt; he’s gethered in t’ beeans an’ left t’ stalks liggin. Hooivver, Ah’ll seean fettle ‘em.”

She had been standing, sun-bonnet in hand, in front of the beehives at the end of the house farthest from the yard—a very quiet corner with a herb garden in front, and a plot of beans and artichokes behind. High above this garden was a screen of leafy ash-boughs, but there were no near trees to shade the sun from the busy bees, or the loveliness of Doris Barugh. She had recovered from her fright. There was no colour on her transparent skin, except that of youth and health. Her eyes had kindled as she spoke, and glowed deeper in colour—a colour that it is hard to define; there was blue in it, and green, grey, and yellow. Perhaps the eyes looked darker than they really were, from the long dark lashes above and beneath—darker even than her eyebrows, though these were a shade darker than her hair, and

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the hair would have looked darker brushed flat like Rose Duncombe’s, instead of curling at its will over her head, now gilded by the sunlight.

As she stood erect and thoughtful, it seemed that Doris was faultless. She wanted colour, perhaps, but then colour would have marred the spiritual tone of her beauty. At first sight she might have been likened to Undine, an Undine with brown hair and grey eyes, but the chief attributes of Undine, her love and her humility, were wanting in this fair English child. Poor Undine would not have met her hapless fate had she had the broad thoughtful forehead and the firmly-chiselled lips and chin of Doris. A fault might have been found with the size of her head; it was too small, and something in it spoke of narrowness. Also there was a certain stiffness in her gait. But no eyes looking at the girl could thus have judged her; her beauty would have blinded all criticism.

Just as her father and Mr. Burneston came up the walk, she set her sun-bonnet firmly on her

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head, and, stepping behind the beehives, began to drag the bean-haulms into a heap.

“Where’s t’ lass?” said John, but Mr. Burneston put his hand on his arm.

“Don’t frighten her, or she’ll run away.” He hardly knew what he said, he so feared this lovely apparition would again take flight.

John chuckled inwardly.

“What wad t’ mistriss say if shu kenned ‘at Doris fettled t’ beean-stalks, an’ t’ squire theer an’ awl?”

A tawny-coloured dog with short legs, a sort of mongrel Dandie Dinmont, came running up the walk, barking at two white pigeons which hovered near the eaves of the farm-house. Doris looked up quickly, and the dog ran towards her, its bark changing into a joyous cry of welcome.

She stood, her arms full of bean-stalks; dumb with surprise and shame; her sweet face aglow with blushes.

“Set ‘em doon; that’ll deea, lass. Sheea’s a rare un, sheea is, fer fettlin’ owt ‘at’s nut muck-wark,” he said proudly to Mr. Burneston.

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“Coom, coom, Doris, an’ speeak ti t’ squire; it’s reeal kahnd uv him, it is, t’ hev coomed tu hev a bit o’ talk wi’ t’ mudher.”

By this time Doris had mastered her longing to run away. She still longed for any sort of screen to hide herself from the squire of Burneston, but as there was none to be had, she strove to seem cool and unconcerned, though she could not raise her eyes to his face.

She curtsied awkwardly, but he held out his hand, and she put her trembling clammy fingers into his warm clasp. Philip Burneston did not notice the chill touch of the frightened fingers; his eyes were fixed on the girl's downcast face, as if they could not get away; some power, he could not tell what, some magic had bound him to the sway of the slender unformed creature standing there in her lilac frock and white sun-bonnet, so utterly unconscious of the spell she was working, that she longed to unloose her hand and run away before the squire should recognise her as the girl he had seen on the gate.

Mr. Burneston let go her hand, but he did

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not speak. Perhaps he feared to spoil the effect of this vision of beauty by drawing out words that did not match the face and the unconscious repose which made the charm of Doris. She did not look humble and shrinking, as Rose Duncombe had looked, but rather as if her thoughts were occupied with matters of more importance than herself, or than that which passed around her.

"Are you fond of bees?" Mr. Burneston said at last.

She looked up in slight surprise. "Nay, Ah's nane so fond on 'em, but Ah likes t' see 'em at wark," she said shyly.

John Barugh's wife, in her teens, had been to his mind the fairest piece of womanhood his eyes had ever seen, when she came on a visit to some north-country cousins; and he had looked at her and looked at her market-day after market-day as if he fancied his eyes were magnetic, and would draw her to him unsought by words, till one day he found a neighbour also looking at fair Dorothy; then he roused himself to begin his own wooing in a manly and earnest

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fashion, and to his surprise he succeeded. He saw that Doris promised to be fairer still than her mother, and with but little chance of admirers. The Burneston farmers had either young wives and young children, or else they were old and childless. Even John, who shrank from his wife's notions about society and speaking proper English, had to own that there was no one in the village fit to be put beside Doris or George. He had stood watching with pride the effect produced by his daughter's beauty. It was a triumph to see a real gentle-man like Mr. Burneston so struck by the child's good looks.

"Ay, bud t' lass diz lahke tu see t' wark deean, let t' wark be deean by whae t' will. Ah tells her sheea war made tu be t' maister; sheea'd keep us all i' orther, 'at sheea wad, bless her."

"Faythe!" Doris spoke reprovingly, and then, as her long thin arms fell straight on each side of her, she clasped her hands firmly, and wished the visitor would go.

He asked a few questions about the bees,

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but Doris let her father answer. Mr. Burneston was unable to find an excuse for remaining, though he tried; he could not stand there gazing silently at the young girl, but the contemplation of her face made him strangely unwilling to talk.

"Perhaps," he looked at Doris, "your mother might like some books to read; there are plenty of story-books at the Hall. Shall I send some up?"

"Thank you kindly, sir." She flushed a little. "Mother does like books, but she's none so set upon tales as upon them 'at is more graver like; you know tales is nobbut fond stuff."

Mr. Burneston laughed, and the angry colour rose to the girl's forehead.

Why was he laughing at her?

"I rather like story books," he smiled at her.

"Good morning, but I will not forget what you say; good day, Mr. Barugh." He looked at his watch. "I am too late for the parsonage now, and I shall be late for dinner."

John Barugh went with his visitor as far as

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the outside gate, and then stood looking after him as he went down the steep village, which straggled nearly a mile in length from the top of the hill to the river below.

"He's a nahce chap yon," said John, "as pleeasant-leakin'a chap, an'as free speeakin' teea, as Ah've knawn, sae noo then." He said this aloud, slowly and emphatically, to an audience of black short-legged pigs, and then went back to Doris and the beehives.

She had not wasted her time in thinking of the squire. The bean-stalks were piled up in a heap, and the ground on which they had lain was raked into order. And now she stood resting while she watched the bees.

"Weel, mah lass!" her father put his broad, red hand on her shoulder, "an' what's thoo think o' Mr. Burneston? an', Doris, lass, what made thee so shy-lahke wiv 'im?"

Doris still felt sore and angry, and she did not know on whom to vent her anger. "He's weel eneeaf, Ah expect, but he's nut lahke wersels. Ah wer shy," she forced herself to speak out, "because—because Ah'd seen him

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afore. Knaw yu, he fun me singin' fond stuff o' t' gate."

She hung her head, and tears came into her eyes.

"Deean't freeat aboot that, mah lass," the farmer said kindly, "Ah'll warrant thoo'se nut t' fost lass 'at he's heeard singin' fond stuff afooar; let's hear t' fond sangs, Doris."

"Oh! fayther, it war ower fond." She had broken down at last as the full remembrance of the scene at the gate came back, and she was crying in earnest. "He mun think me sike a poor, fond lass," she sobbed, "he'll nobbut laff at me. Joseph Sunley hes a teale of a lass 'at went fond an' deed, an' awl fer t' maister o' Burneston, an' she had a feeal's sang, an' a feeal's rahme."

John Barugh looked puzzled and inquisitive, but he understood Doris too well to question her further. There was that kind of implicit unspoken trust between this father and daughter which often exists between people who never to one another expand into acts of tenderness; I say acts, for, after all, tenderness

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receives its value from the character of its recipient; and perhaps the most intense tenderness towards some natures is to make them feel that thorough though unspoken trust is felt in them. Doris and her father seldom talked together, but they never quarrelled.

John knew at this moment that a smile, a word even, might at once put a seal on the girl's unwonted confidence, and he stood still, only turning his face into a yet more listening attitude.

"Ah wer swingin' uv t' geate as Rose mud ha' done," Doris spoke, with strong contempt against herself, "an' Ah sang t' same wo'ds as t' poor mad lass sang, 'at Joseph Sunley tilld me,—

'May it so happen, an' may it so fall,

'at Ah may be lady o' Burneston Hall.'

"John's lower jaw fell. He looked so utterly confounded that Doris laughed, spite of herself. He reddened at this, and then he recovered himself.

"Thoo's i' t' reeght tu laugh, Doris. Thoo's lahtle mair than a babby, an' it's as lahke as

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nut 'at Mr. Burneston heared ne'er a word o' t' fond rahme. Bud it's a feeal's rahme fer awl that, an' Joseph's a feeal tu gae I'arnin' the' sike a rahme."

"Joseph didn't I'arn me it, faythe r. He said it yance, an' then Ah couldn't get it oot o' mah heead. Ah says it ovver an' ovver again," she said angrily.

"Weel, nivver freeat theesel' aboot 'im—theer's neea hairm." John felt uneasy, though be tried to hide it. He was wondering what Dorothy would think of this adventure. "Nivver freeat theesel' aboot 'im, lass; thoo may be seer Maister Burneston heerd nowt on it."

He did not look at Doris, but her eyes fixed on him with a hard scrutiny. It was difficult to believe that such eyes, so full of sweet reflection, could concentrate their expression into such hardness. Then, as her father turned his back, and went slowly and heavily towards the house, the girl said to herself,

"Fayther forgits hoo auld Ah is when he

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puts me off lahke a babby. Whya, Mr. Burneston heared ivvery wo'd o' t' rahme, Ah's seer o' that; an' it wer reeght doon cruel o' him to coom an' finnd me oot."

She pulled at the strings of her sun-bonnet with each hand, and walked indoors with even more dignity than usual.

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CHAPTER III. THE SHADOW OF A PURPOSE.

SOME one has said that you should never judge of men and women till you have seen them at home in the familiarity of domestic life, where all the angles of their characters are in broad light, and where these reflect and refract prism-wise the various influences brought to bear on them directly by the tempers and tongues of near kin, while they stand unprotected by any of the blinds and shields which the reticence and ignorance of strangers make for them when abroad.

Till his marriage Philip Burneston had never suffered from any domestic contradictions. He was the only child of loving

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parents, who died before he was twenty, and though he then spent a short time at Cambridge, his health as a boy prevented him from learning discipline and self-control at a public school, or at least it did not give him the opportunity of learning it. And yet his natural gentleness kept him from any head-strong or self-willed measures when he came into the management of considerable property.

He married at twenty-two the wife assigned him by family arrangements ever since he and Miss Beaumont had been twelve years old, and he had made an irreproachable husband.

The first discipline of life came to him in those nine years of marriage. Mrs. Burneston was very elegant and fashionable, very shallow, exacting, and affectionate. In all larger matters, such as expenditure, place of residence, choice of friends, disposal of time, her husband soon found domestic peace was only to be had by submission, and as human nature must ordinarily, with regard

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to its fellows, have some compensation for self-sacrifice, this submission, so long unknown to his life, had for compensation a quality also hitherto undeveloped—a determined obstinacy about his own special fancies.

At the end of nine years Mrs. Burneston died, leaving a little boy of eight years old, and a great blank in her husband's life. She had been his occupation rather than his companion, but she had so often asserted her love for him that it would have been impossible to the loving, gentle-natured man to disbelieve in it—to realise that love is an active rather than a passive quality. He would have been indignant to learn that his wife had died with a falsehood on her lips—unless, indeed, mere fidelity and lip assurance constitute love.

The sensation of freedom was, therefore, alloyed with a sense of loss, and for two years he had wandered about aimlessly, his wife's dislike to foreign travel having hitherto kept him from much that he wished to examine; and

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during this time he had come home only to get occasional and brief glimpses of his hoy Ralph, left ostensibly to the devoted care of Faith Emmett, the housekeeper of Burneston, and to the guardianship and tutorship of Mr. Spencer, the vicar. In reality, Ralph had been left free to exercise his own small despotisms on all who came in contact with him.

Mr. Burneston was an archaeologist, and though he often had with him a companion sympathetic in the matters of stonework and stones, yet of late he had felt a new discontent, a longing for some more human interest, and on his return from a long Scandinavian excursion he had announced his intention of settling down for a year at least at Burneston.

The villagers smiled at this announcement, and Faith Emmett laughed in the bailiff's face as he made it.

"Mr. Burneston hes nivver stayed three months at a tahme at t' Hall sin' I knew it," she said scoffingly; "it's nut t' place to suit a

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lively gentleman. Just t' little she did see o't war t' death o' t' poor lady—it fair gav her t' hurrors, poor soul."

But the butler, Benjamin Hazelgrave, an old servant of the Burnestons, was sternly indignant when he heard of Faith's prophecy.

"Mistress Emmett sud knaw," he said loftily, "that the gentlemen of Burneston are nane fond, like silly wimmin, an' it doesn't become yan ta'en fra t' other side o' t' country, an' slipped in as laady's favourite ower awder heads than her awn, to be talkin' o' t' maister as if he wur lahke hersel'."

This he said at, not to, Mrs. Emmett, and then treated her with scornful silence, it being a sore point with Mr. Benjamin that his own wife, the cook at Burneston, should have had Mrs. Burneston's maid and nurse. Faith Emmett, an entire stranger, set in authority over her as housekeeper.

Faith was right, however, about the aspect of Burneston Hall. It was very weird and dreary; a heavy mass of grey building which, on closer inspection, took the shape of an

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two wings projected towards the river, and in the centre was a shorter projection; between this, which formed the garden entrance, and the river, came a smooth lawn, swept by drooping cedar branches in the centre, and at the sides by low-growing beech-

trees, so closely set that even from the meadow, planted like a park, on the other side of the river only occasional bits of the grey house, and its upper lattice windows could be seen. The river ran swiftly and darkly past the low wall, which formed a long semicircular terrace, with here and there wild roses throwing their long arms abroad, and willow-trees bathing deeply in the water, giving a weird, damp look to the manor-house, especially in the dark corners formed by the ends of the semicircular wall, one of which was completely overshadowed by pendent boughs, while the other emerged from the mystery of an immense weeping beech-tree in a straight bit of wall, behind which, at a little distance, rose the lofty enclosure round the real entrance to the house and the stable-yard. Originally Burneston had been used as a shooting

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residence, and little pains had been taken either with the entrance or with the garden. Her husband's refusal to improve these had determined Mrs. Burneston's dislike to the place.

Just beyond the Hall, on the right as one faced the house, was a stone bridge with three arches, and through these the current swept strongly, the river broadening to nearly double its width on the farther side, till there was room for a tree-covered islet in its midst. Beyond this islet was a narrow wooden bridge, and leading to this came the road down-hill from the church, with the village scattered along its sides; but the Hall was so thickly belted in with trees that no signs or sounds of human life reached it; even the smoke curling from the cottage chimneys as they mounted the hill was hidden away. It was just a place where ghosts might linger.

But at this moment, within the Hall itself, there is noise enough to banish all ghostly fancies. In the entrance hall, a square pleasant

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room, with a faded Turkey carpet, painted glass windows, and old pictures, a tall slender woman is struggling with, and trying to pinion the arms of a fair-haired boy about ten years old. The woman's abundant white hair, confined by a black net with a plain quilled tulle border, contrasts strangely with her long, deep-set dark eyes, flashing brightly with anger and excitement.

"Oh! you limb o' Satan!" she calls out amid the boy's outcries. "An' how dare you? It's none my fault, it's your own, Maister Ralph, if I say them words; it's your deains at makes me say 'em. Yu'r' as brassend as Hector."

Ralph's blue eyes are bright with mischief rather than anger, and his face has got scarlet in his efforts to free himself; but at this he stands still, and laughs contemptuously.

"Oh! I like that, I do, you hardened old hypocrite. You know you are as glad as you can be to get a chance of using bad words, or they wouldn't come to your tongue so easily. Let go, I say, or I shall twist your wrists, and

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then you'll be sorry, you old Marplot—I hate you!" he adds angrily.

Faith Emmett lets go his arms at once, and drops exhausted into a high-backed cane chair. The flush leaves her face; she sits there grey and colourless.

Ralph, in his surprise, forgets his purpose; he stands looking at his nurse, and a sudden hush comes over the storm. Into this hush, startled by the previous clamour, comes Mr. Burneston from a doorway at the end of the hall farthest from the windows.

"Ralph, what are you doing? Is anything the matter with Faith?" for in an instant he sees the woman's pale face.

She rises at once.

"It's nowt. Maister Ralph was playin', an'—"

"Hold your tongue, Faith, and don't tell stories to my father."

Faith turns paler still.

"Maister Ralph," she says sadly, "that's nut t' way to speak to me."

"No, Ralph, it is not, and you ought to

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be ashamed of yourself." Mr. Burneston speaks in a vexed tone; he does not like the nurse's interference, and yet he cannot resent it.

"The long and the short of it is, father"—Ralph looks up coolly in his father's gentle face—"neither of us has been behaving at all. I wanted to shoot at Sir Marmaduke"—he points to one of the old pictures—"with my pop-gun—his nose annoys me—and Faith was goose enough to think she could hold my arms back and prevent me."

Ralph laughs, but looks uneasy when no smile comes on his father's face.

Mr. Burneston looks inquiringly at Faith, but she has seated herself again in the high-backed chair, as if the case were going to be tried before her. Seeing this, he raises his head slightly, and turns to the door by which he came into the hall.

"I want you in the study, Ralph." And he walks on, leaving the boy to follow.

But, instead, Ralph turns indignantly on the old woman

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"Bother you; why can't you hold your tongue? My father doesn't care what scrapes I get into and get out of by myself, but he hates to find me sparring with you. I know it by

the look of him. Well, I'll just tell you what'll happen. He'll send me to school, and I'm not sure but what, after all, I shan't be jolly glad of it."

This is too much—he has said, "I hate you," he has accused her of telling a story, but to be glad to go to school!—she breaks down into tears, though she struggles hard to hide her tears from Ralph.

He stands a moment, then he dashes up and gives her a kiss.

"Don't be an old silly, you'd much better go and make that toffy you promised me, than sit here crying."

"Go, go. Master Ralph, honey, go sharp, or your father'll be anger'd wi' you." She chokes down her sobs, and smiles as the boy nods and runs away, and then she sits with her hands in her lap, frowning till nothing of her eyes is visible but the yellow light gleaming

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through her black lashes. She has a curiously shaped face, so wide at the angle of the cheek-bones that it seems as if in infancy the forehead and chin had been pressed towards each other, and the loss of her front teeth has increased this nearness by shortening the space between nose and chin.

Her face is plump, though her figure is slender, but spite of this plumpness there is just now a stern, inflexible expression about the mouth, and an almost baleful glare from her eyes which does not impress one favourably.

She sits for some time clasping her bony hands and looking at them as if for counsel. At last she shakes her head—

"Eh, dearie me, an' hoo'll it ivver end?—he'll nivver hev no beeans, he's all made o' gristle, he's as wake as a sneeze. That comes o' so much blood fra t' South comin i' t'

family. Ah'd liefer far hev seed him go away stubborn, an' keep stubborn, an' all, than get all in a minnit like a bit o' silk wi' t' creeases smoothed out on't. But no, no, he'll be as fierce as a buck-rat one minnit, an' t' next as soft as a dumplin';

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nae mair aim iv him than his father afore him, unless it's fer some folly or other, an' then if he war te want t' moon he'd waste all t' brass 'at ivver he'd gitten i' stairs to reeach it. Weel, so lang as ther's no new mother browght hame to vex him, mebbe he'll git on, bud that 'ud bring bad tiv us awl, lit alane Master Ralph; I misdoot t' master hissel'."

She rose up at the sound of footsteps, and it was surprising to see how quickly her vindictive look changed into a smile of welcome as she went forward to hold the door for the person who had opened it from the outside, and now entered the hall.

He was tall and thin almost to leanness; long, dark lively eyes and the dark hair hanging over them gave him the appearance of a gipsy, and his slouched felt hat, threadbare coat, and patched boots, might have carried out this idea, but for the housekeeper's deep curtsey, and for that something about Gilbert Raine which made him look like a scholar and a gentleman.

He held carefully a fragment of dark-coloured

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glass so frosted over with long interment that it was covered with prismatic tints; there were fragments of clay sticking to it, and Faith held out her hand.

"Where's the master, Emmett" He took no notice of her outstretched hand, but spoke in a quick, abrupt voice that seemed unused to contradiction.

"The master 's i' t' study, sir; but shan't I wash that for ye, Mr. Raine? It isn't fit to taake indoors, I'm sure."

Raine pressed the precious relic against his coat.

"Wash it! good heavens—no, thank you, Mrs. Emmett—I haven't quite forgotten the scrub-bing you gave to my terra cotta Latona, and the mural frescoes you took care of for me last year. Ah, you want a month's training at Austin's End, you do. I expect you'd like to polish my brazen shield there, and send a good deal else to the dusthole." He laughed, and went out to the study with his relic. "She can't help being a woman" he said to himself, "and women's ideas are confined to decorating

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their persons, and cleaning all that doesn't want cleaning."

He found Mr. Burneston alone. Ralph had been dismissed with a lecture.

"Look here, Phil, I was just digging beneath the wall of the fruit-garden, where that bit of brick turned up the other day, and I found this."—He paused, for Mr. Burneston looked up with. only a sickly smile—"Is anything the matter?" said Gilbert Raine, with a sudden change of tone.

Philip Burneston pressed his hand on his forehead.

"Well," he tried to laugh, "I suppose I ought not to have stayed away from home so long, and then all these minor miseries would have been such a part of my existence that I should not have minded them; but I seem now always to be called on to interfere about Ralph."

"What's the matter now?" Raine's quick, jerking utterance had returned and formed a striking contrast to the slow, refined speech of his companion, it was so full of seeming impatience, and the fire of his dark eyes strengthened this idea

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"Oh, a trifle not worth repeating, except that trifles make or mar life. I was asking myself just as you came in, how I am to bring up Ralph without his mother to help me."

"Nonsense—I beg your pardon, my dear fellow"—his voice was gentle in an instant, for he had ha

d deep sympathy with his cousin's sorrow, though he considered Mrs. Burneston had spoiled her husband's life—"but at ten years old I think a boy is better away from women."

Mr. Burneston fidgeted with a paper-knife on the table near him.

"Yes, I know I ought to send him to school, but then his mother thought him too delicate, and Faith says it would be the death of him."

"Just like a woman. I shouldn't listen to Faith."

"No, you would not listen, because a single man of your age does not believe in a woman's judgment on certain points of health as a married man does, simply because the single man is a theorist in such matters."

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Gilbert Raine shrugged his shoulders and laughed. "I intend to keep to theory; but if you don't send the boy to school, you must marry again, Phil; you can't expect Ralph to submit to an old nurse, the boy wouldn't be worth his salt if he did." A slight flush tinged Mr. Raine's dark, hollow cheeks, he was conscious of having encouraged Ralph in small rebellions against the housekeeper's interference.

"Well, perhaps not, but you are the last man I expected such advice from." Mr. Burneston sat upright and looked hard at his friend.

"I dare say—well, yes—but one can't always preach what one practises; a wife would destroy my happiness, she might increase yours; at least, I can see very plainly, old fellow, that you must have some one to take these petty worries off your hands, though, to tell you the truth, I always thought you much too light-hearted to let yourself be worried easily."

Burneston got up, shook himself, and laughed.

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"So I am. You happened to come in at a moment when I had been vexed, by this evening I should have forgotten all about Ralph's scrape. I believe," he laughed again, "it is not anything in itself that worries, it is rather that nature revolts from the harness of civilized life, after our two years of Arab freedom."

Raine groaned.

"Ah! there is the outcome of having been drilled by a wife. Now I'm going back to Austin's End. I don't mean that my responsibilities equal yours. I have one small estate to look after, and you have two large ones and a boy besides; but still I shan't allow myself to be worried at home, any more than I worried while we were vagrants."

"I wish we were vagrants again," Mr. Burneston sighed.

Raine went on,

"Then again I keep the fewest possible servants, not only from economy, but because I find that servants are a worry. I never study fashion, either in dress or anything else, or that

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would soon grow into a worry, and I never allow dusting in my rooms: dusting is the greatest worry I can conceive in life, and a wife, you see, would at once bring servants and fashion, and dusters and brooms, to Austin's End."

Burneston was laughing heartily. "My wonder is," he said, "that you don't try to find some one of your own way of thinking. You must often want help in arranging your treasures in that wonderful den of yours."

Raine looked serious for an instant.

"No, Phil, I thought of it once, I even argued it out, but I found it would not do. No," he shook his head. "A woman with my tastes would be a sloven, and I could not stand that in a wife; and probably she would be ugly. I thought once of another plan, but it would be too troublesome."

"And what may that be?"

"Well," Raine reddened, he shrank from his friend's ridicule. "It is an experiment that has been tried, but the result seems doubtful; of

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course it may not have been made under favourable conditions. I thought whether it would do to choose out some young, good-looking, healthy country girl, of twelve, or thereabouts, and have her brought up precisely to suit me."

"But, my dear Gilbert, don't you see that to suit you she must have a certain amount of culture, and with that very culture would come the seeds of all you shrink from, love of dress, fashion, order, and need of attendance, just as one foot follows the other as you walk."

"Yes, I know," Raine looked foolish, "I saw all that, and I also saw another evil harder to bear than any—there might be children, and then there would be that unutterably vexed question of confusion of race, and though the Raines are poor, they have managed to keep to Conservatism hitherto."

"You think opinion is influenced by blood, then?"

"Undoubtedly; from such a marriage might spring a thorough-going Radical, who would

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perhaps level the old place, and build a modern mansion lighted by gas," he said mockingly.

"You are joking; you know as well as I do that outward surroundings and associations do much to cultivate and refine, and that whoever married you would, for peace and quietness' sake, adopt your opinions"

"Well, I shall not try the experiment, though I still think the idea, as an idea, is not a bad one; but, to go back to the beginning, take my advice, and send your boy to school."

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CHAPTER IV THE FIRST STEP.

GILBERT RAINE only stayed another day at Burneston, and then set off for his cheerless, quaint, museum-like home at Austin's End, nearly a hundred miles away.

Mr. Burneston felt doubly lonely without him; Gilbert Raine was not a talkative companion, unless some favourite topic was discussed; but he was so full of genial warmth, so ready with rough, counsel or with full-hearted sympathy, so deeply read and

many gifted, that when he went away the old manor-house felt as chilly to its master as if the fires had gone out on the wide hearths, and the candles had sunk in their sockets.

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there had been a singularly strong affection between the friends in their university life, when Gilbert Raine's public school training had enabled him to be of great service to his home-bred cousin. Gilbert Raine had never known the spoiling of prosperity. He had been brought up by an eccentric bachelor uncle, who had made his inheritance of the small estate called Austin's End dependent on the boy's success both at school and college, and had besides enforced on him the strictest economy and self-denial. So that when at thirty he became his uncle's heir, he went on instinctively with the same simple inexpensive habits, content to be left alone with his books, and only rejoicing in his larger means for the power they gave of adding to his treasures. Some of his equals called Gilbert Raine a miserly book-worm; but his poor tenants knew better, and said that there was a real good master at Austin's End.

Mr. Burneston had been so long with his cousin that he felt strangely unsettled at his departure, and yet he had no wish to leave the

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Hall. He took a lively interest in some planting on one side of the estate, and in draining and farm-building in another quarter; it was only when he came home, tired out with his day's work, that a restless discontent mastered him. And as discontent requires a very strong guardian, to be kept entirely out of sight, he was stern to Ralph and harsh to Faith, and disposed to general fault-finding with his house-hold. Benjamin shook his head, and whispered to his wife,

"Theer'll be a new missis afore lang at t' Hall."

"Gan yer ways, sheea'll be a furrineer, then, t' maister hesn't hed t' chance o' seein' English laadies, an' efter awl it 'u'd be nobbud nat'ral, he's ower yung tu be left aleean."

Another person, a keener observer than Benjamin, and one who had watched the ways of more than one squire of Burneston, was watching this one like a hawk.

Joseph Sunley, the old sexton, who lived in the stone cottage next Mrs. Buncombe, was growing much disturbed by the squire's ways.

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He saw Mr. Burneston nearly every day, and he commented on his frequent visits to the Church Farm. Joseph was not a conscious gossip, but by living alone he had got a habit of talking to himself, and being a little deaf, was unaware how much of his mind he gave to the public.

One evening, about a fortnight after Mr. Raine's departure, he sat at his door in a round-backed, three-cornered wooden chair; it was a warm evening, and he sat in his shirt-sleeves smoking a pipe.

His old brown face was puckered more than could have been caused by the effort of holding his pipe, and when he removed it, and held it between his fingers, the creases deepened round his mouth.

"Dang it!" he struck his hand heavily on his brown fustian knees, "it fair caps mu, that it diz. John Barugh's a deeacent chap, a trahfle slaw an' awkard; bud that missis o' hiz sheea's as fahne as a fiddle, an' that's aboot t' treeath, an' Ah deean't think Maister Burneston can finnd owt mich tu seay tiv her. Mebbe he gans noo tu

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see t' badly lad, bud Ah deean't knaw, an' Ah deean't pruffess tu gaum what fer he gans theer sae oft, it's mair 'an a boddy lahke me can skill; bud he diz gan theer, an' that's seer an' sartain, noo then."

He stopped not a minute too soon. Looking across the road, he saw Doris opening the white gate. She came slowly in answer to his nod. "Hoo's t' lad?" he said. Doris looked very grave.

"Nay, but it's sad then," she spoke slowly. "T' doctor telt' mother yisterda that t' poor lad'll mebbe nivver hev t' reeght use o' his leg ageean."

"Eh, what's 'at he sed, lass?" Joseph's face contracted, till a fan of wrinkles spread from the corners of his eyes and lips. "Poor chap, nut hev t' use o' his leg ageean—nut walk! What diz t' lass meean?"

"He'll mebbe nut walk 'cept wi' crutches. Eh, Joseph Sunley, nobbut just to think o' oor George wi' crutches." She pressed her lips tightly together; "but t' doctor hes said sae—sae noo you knaw.

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"Mr. Burneston gans tu see t' lad, eh, lass I it's reeght kahnd o' him tu gan sae oft; 'e's a kahnd chap, t' maister is."

"Ay," said Doris, "but he disn't say mich tu George, he talks tu my mother an' me; but Ah mun gan, Joseph Sunley, Ah mun gan my ways to t' parson's hoose."

Joseph sat still watching the girl as she went round the corner to the churchyard gate, and then out at a smaller gate in the corner nearest the farm, which led into the glebe field. She could have done this just as well by going through the farm-yard, and out into the glebe field by the gate on which she was swinging when the squire first saw her. But ever since that luckless afternoon Doris had hated the gate with all the strength of her nature. She did not hate Mr. Burneston, her sense of justice told her that he was not to

blame because he had heard her foolish song; but she never felt at ease with him, and when she could she avoided being present at his visits, although she secretly delighted in listening to his gentle voice and refined speech.

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To-day, besides her dislike to the glebe gate, she had seen Mr. Burneston standing in the rick-yard talking to her father, and she at once remembered that she had promised George to fetch him a book from the Vicarage.

"Bon it!" Joseph said to himself, "t' wo'ld's full o' streeange things. Tu think o' a stiddy chap lahke Mr. Burneston spindin' his tahme wi' t' lahke o' Dorothy Barugh as he diz. Ah'd thowt he'd hev cared tu hear o' his fayther an' his gran'fayther when baith on 'em wer lahtle lads lahke Maister Ralph. Ah minds 'em baith; they war fahne lads, mebbe nut so bonny leeakin' as this chap hes grown; bud neea, neea, t' tahmes is changed, fooalks nivver leeaks back noo, it's allays forrad, forrad, forrad!"

At that moment Mr. Burneston was an apt illustration of Joseph's words. For more than a week he had been soothing his restlessness by mental pictures, which he felt only required an act of will to be converted from castles in the air to realities. And the

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past—which he had thought of with regret, even if he had never felt a longing for its return—was gradually fading into a grey mist, in which indifference made all indistinct. No wonder that Ralph complained of his father's dulness—every link that bound the boy to his father formed part of other links that went backwards into life; there was as yet nothing to bring Ralph into this dream-like fancy which so entirely absorbed the present.

Mr. Burneston saw Doris go out of the house, and then he saw the white gate swing, and he knew that she would not come through the rick-yard. But to-day he had made up his mind to act, and her absence was a necessary preliminary to this action.

He watched the girl pass beside the screen of fir-trees, and then he turned with a new purpose in his face to John Barugh.

“I want to have some talk with you and your wife together,” he said; “shall we go in?”

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He did not wait for the farmer’s assent, but led the way to the house.

Joseph had seen Mr. Burneston coming from the rick-yard, and by the time they were crossing towards the house the old man had reached the gate.

Preoccupied as he was, Philip Burneston could not forget his habitual courtesy.

“Good day, Joseph. How’s the stiff knee? Did Mrs. Emmett’s stuff do any good?”

Joseph shook his head.

“Neeah, neeah, sir, it warn’t lahkelys ‘at that sort o’ stuff ‘ud deea fer a knee, when it war wrate on’t i’ plain wrahtin’ it war fer a airm; a knee an’ a airm isn’t made alahke, bliss t’ lass. Sheea sud read what’s o’ t’ bottles afore shea sinds ’em te fooalk.”

“Well, I’ll tell her,” but Mr. Burneston spoke so absently, as he turned away, that a fresh pucker rose on Joseph’s forehead.

“Dash mu! Ah’s fair capt. Ah is; he’s as glum as a sperret,” he said, as he limped back to the seat outside his door. “Mebbe Mistriss

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Duncombe knaws summat aboot ‘im; sheea’s a cute owd lass.”

Generally Mr. Burneston’s visit only lasted half an hour, but to-day, though Joseph never relaxed his watch, an hour and a half passed, and still the squire did not come out. Doris came back, went in with the book, but she did not stay in-doors, and Joseph saw her go on to the beehives.

At last the house-door opened, and Mr. Burneston appeared, followed by both husband and wife. Joseph gave a grunt of disapprobation, as he watched the cordial leave-taking, and then he tried to listen as Mr. Burneston stopped, when he came to the gate, to say a few more words to John Barugh.

They seemed very earnest words, but the sexton’s deaf ears disappointed his eager longing; he could not hear Mr. Burneston say,—

“Well, I hope in time you will see the matter as your wife does. All that Doris gains at school will be undone if she spends her holidays

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here; you shall go and see her once a year, and she will of course write to you constantly”

John Barugh’s face was full of trouble.

“Ah knaws ‘at yu meeans it fer t’ lass’s gude, sir; bud Ah meean no offence whaea Ah say, Ah cannot see ’t, ner Ah cannot say ’at Ah thank yeh nowther. Ah cannot thenk ony man ’at wants ti tak mah lass aweay fra’ mu.”

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BOOK I.

SCHOOL

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CHAPTER I. TWO SCHOOL-GIRLS

ABOUT four miles from London, on the skirts of a large common overgrown with golden gorse, there stood and still stands a large old-fashioned house, probably dating as far back as the Tudors.

In the large plot of front garden is a group of trees round which sweeps a broad gravelled carriage drive, entered through tall iron gates set in the high railing which mounted on a low -wall screens the house from the road. There is a portico over the central doorway; and above the old-fashioned windows are three quaint gables. The entrance under the portico is closed, but on the left side of the house is a conservatory, and through this you can, if you

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please, enter Pelican House, cross its slippery marble-floored hall, and find your way out through double glass-doors on the left into a sort of second matted hall, and thence to a pleasant lawn surrounded by shrubberies, and shaded on one side by the lofty elms which screen the grounds of Pelican House from those of its neighbour.

If you look round the matted hall a variety of garden bonnets hanging on pegs, a collection of battledores and shuttlecocks, with here and there the hoops and sticks for a game called *La Grâce*, skipping-ropes and balls, will have suggested to you that Pelican House is a girls' school, and a few steps outside the glass door will convince you of this fact, for the bell is ringing, and about a dozen girls of various age and size come rushing out, some by the way you have come, some from other doors, for the house is much

larger than it looks from the gates; and in a minute, although almost all have disappeared among the shrubberies, a soft buzz of girls' voices, and occasional notes of merry ringing laughter, reach you as you

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stand on the range of shallow steps which forms a terrace above the lawn.

The girls divide as they pass out of sight into small groups, and some twos go hand-in-hand or with arms circling each other's waists. The last two are neither the eldest nor the youngest. They are well matched in height and age, very different in face and figure.

The tall slender girl, with erect head and delicately cut regular features, is Doris Barugh; but the ease with which she walks, and a nameless something which has spread over her whole person, show that the two years spent at Pelican House have given her, at least, out-ward refinement both when in movement and in repose. As the "principal," or schoolmistress, as she was simply called forty years ago, had said to Mr. Burneston, "the girl has so much natural refinement of look and dignity of manner, that there will be little up-hill work in training her."

And as Miss Phillimore's idea of education for her pupils did not go beyond refinement and culture, both of look and manner, with

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the amount of head knowledge and the accomplishments necessary for "a young lady," Doris was from her point of view a complete success.

Mr. Burneston had said to the schoolmistress that a country friend of his wished to place his daughter under her care—a very remarkable girl, but one whose education had been neglected. "Outward refinement and polish are what she chiefly wants," he said, getting

a little confused under the calm eyes of the observing lady; "she has plenty of self-respect and dignity."

Miss Phillimore had that quickness in perceiving weak points which is so often found in a shallow nature incapable of deeper insight or sympathy, and she at once, woman like, jumped at the result which this charming, pleasant-looking gentleman, was contemplating; but she kept her surmise a secret, only, having ascertained the extent of Mr. Burneston's property, and the importance of his position, she resolved to attach the new pupil to herself and to fit her in every way for the future which she had divined, and which she thought the girl

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deserved; for cold, world-hardened Miss Phillimore was at once fascinated by the girl's beauty and the graceful dignity of her manner.

Often to herself the schoolmistress wondered how it was that this farmer's daughter had so rapidly shot out of the sheath of ignorance and broad speech which had at first separated her from her schoolfellows, and had now distanced them all in any study to which she chose to apply herself.

"Choose is the word" said Miss Phillimore thoughtfully. "Doris is so conscientiously in earnest in all she does, that I have never yet had to thwart her will. I fancy she could be very stubborn." But the schoolmistress dismissed the half revelation which came to her with these words; and on the old plan of "leave well alone," she was doubtless in the right, having, with all her quick-wittedness and perfection of outward manner, about as much knowledge of the human heart, or of the way to help it in its struggles against self, as a hair-dresser has of the inside of the heads that pass under his hands.

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"Ah, Doris," she said with a smiling bow as the two girls met her at a turn in one of the shrubberies. "A delightful afternoon, is it not?" and then she included Doris's companion in her very pleasant smile, and passed on towards the house.

The girl, shorter and less slender than Doris, looked and breathed fresh country air, she might have just been gathered from a wild rose spray—"I wonder," she said, pushing her hazel nut-brown hair out of her eyes, "if that smile may be trusted."

She looked after the sweet-faced, erect lady, who, with her fair, peach-like skin, silver hair, and exquisitely-made dress, was like a bit of Dresden.

Doris lifted her long dark lashes and gave a surprised look at her companion.

"I should not have thought you mistrustful, Miss Masham."

"Why 'Miss Masham?' I told you this morning that if I did not bore you I should like to be your friend. I will call you Doris."

"I will call you what you like," said Doris quietly. "I think your name is Frederika?"

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"Yes—is it not horrible? four mouthfuls of name; you must call me Rika. At home the boys call me Freddy, but I don't like it, and my mother always calls me Rika."

"You have a mother, then?"

"Oh yes," sadly, "that is why I work so hard. I want to be very clever; my mother is very delicate, and if anything happened to my father, I should like to be of use. You see I am terribly unlike other girls—at least they say so, and I am come here to be 'licked into shape,' as the boys say."

Doris smiled, and such a rare sweetness spread over her face that Rika looked up at her lovingly.

"Certainly you are not like other girls," she said, in the soft low voice that had charmed Mr. Burneston. She had lost the Yorkshire dialect, and there was only a suspicion of accent, but she had still the sweetness of northern tone. "But then these two years that I've been here, I've seen so many girls, and I have often wished they were not all so like one another."

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"Ah! but," Rika broke in, with impulsive abruptness, "are you quite sure they were alike? Don't laugh at me, Doris, but it seems to me that you do not notice much that goes on round you. You often seem to be dreaming; perhaps," she looked admiringly at her lovely friend, "you are thinking out thoughts beyond our comprehension."

Doris blushed so deeply and in such confusion that Rika felt puzzled.

"Don't say that to me, please. I can't talk about my own thoughts. I daresay we are none of us quite so good or quite so bad as we seem. But I want to know why you distrust Miss Phillimore?"

"Well, I've only known her a few weeks, but she never has any phases or moods. It is natural you should like her, she treats you like a queen, but it seems to me that such a perpetually serene smile must be artificial and mechanical. People feel hot and cold, are glad and sorry, and well and ill; and of course, all these phases must affect both mind and body; and somehow I don't think Miss Phillimore goes in for religion enough to make

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her perpetual sweetness the result of saintliness; if it were this she would not be so serenely self-satisfied."

"I know nothing about saints," said Doris coldly, "but I fancy they must be dull and uninteresting, even if there are such people."

Rika's large grey eyes had been fixed earnestly on her companion. In an instant they grew dark and liquid as the pupils dilated, and she said with intense feeling, "Hush! Doris dear. Please don't say that. My father and mother are both saints, and so was my sister who died."

"Why?"—began Doris, but she stopped. Rika's pink dimpled hands were placed on her eyes to keep in the tears which began to show through them.

They walked on silently. Doris soon forgot Rika, she went on thinking out a thought that often occupied her—What would life be like when she went to live at home? To-day this thought pressed heavily, and after it came another, how much longer should she stay at school? And then the dread, which week by week grew stronger as she brooded over it,

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should she be happy when she left Pelican House? Whenever she thought of her parents and her old life, she grew more and more aware of the change in herself. Another thought sometimes intruded, but she did not let herself dwell on it. A feeling that was partly pride, partly a kind of awkward shyness, which linked her to the past she so longed to forget, always made her try to banish any reveries about Mr. Burneston; and the share he had had in her going to school; but still every now and then, seemingly against her will, she found herself wondering whether she should ever see him again, and whether he would see the change in her, and then her face would grow crimson at the memory of that first interview; but by degrees as time went on she had made herself regard it as a thing of no consequence.

Mr. Burneston had paid several visits to the farm before he could get John Barugh to listen patiently to his plans for Doris. He argued that the girl must be educated somewhere; that there was only an infant school in Burneston;

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even at Steersley, the nearest town, there was only a third-rate school, where Doris would learn more harm than good; even there she would have to go as a boarder, so that there must be a separation. If Mr. Barugh would tell him how much he would spend on his daughter's schooling, he (the squire) would promise that the sum named should satisfy the schoolmistress he had in view.

But always at this point John shrugged his broad shoulders and retreated to the mantel-shelf, leaving Mr. Burneston to finish the talk with his wife.

At last, at the end of a month, wearied out by the squire's persistence and his wife's incessant persecution, John conceded that the decision should be left to Doris herself, on condition that he was present when the matter was put before her.

On the evening following this concession her mother called Doris in from the beehives.

"Doris, lass, will ye like to go to school again?" she said cheerfully.

The girl had a sort of quiet mistrust of her

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mother's wisdom. She looked up to the tall red-bearded father for explanation.

John sighed, and a smothered groan came from him as he leant on the mantelshelf.

"Neeah, lass, if thoo disn't cotton tiv't, thoo sall bide at yam. Better be content wi' thy awn fooalk than freeat theesel' tu be made a laady."

"Nay, nay, father, that's not fair." There was a sharp anxiety in Dorothy's thin voice, and as her husband listened to it his head sank as if his last hope were gone. "We was to put it straight before her, an' she was to choose herself."

"What is t' choice?" said Doris firmly. "An' who is't can hev owt tu do wi' me, beside fayther an' you?" John Barugh made a step forward, and then, with a great effort at self-control, he went back to the hearth.

"You tell her if you like," his wife said fretfully. She was trembling with eagerness lest her father's evident unwillingness should check the girl's ambition.

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John Barugh shook his head.

"What for duan't ye tell it out, mother?" said Doris.

"I'm sure it's time you were sent to school to learn manners, let alone how to talk. I'm sure I can't teach you, even to speak properly, though it's not for want of trying," said Dorothy. Then, afraid that her husband would tell her story for her, "If you like, Doris, you may go to a good school, such as reel ladies goes to, an' be taught everything heart can wish, an' to talk like 'the quality' as your father says, an' cost little to him neither."

"Tell t' trewth, Dorothy." John Barugh had come forward, and there was a bitterness in his voice that startled the girl. Rarely had her mother's fretful twitting and constant complaints drawn an angry word from the strong patient man, who sixteen years before had married for love, and had never, before one of his children, rebuked his wife thus sternly. Then turning to Doris, who had become pale with sudden shrinking from this token of deep unspoken strife between her parents, "Ah'll tell

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t' lass mysel'. Doris, lass, ther's tweea sahdes t' ivverything i' life; yan's bright an' tither's sad, an' thy moother's bin telling o' the' aboot t' bright un noo. T' ither's a sad sahde tu me, lass. Mebbe Ah'm wrang, an' if thoo thinks Ah's wrang, thoo'll noane be feared o' speeakin' oop an' tellin' thy fayther thy thowghts, lass."

She looked at him, trying to understand.

"Ah can't say while Ah kens nowt, fayther."

It was curious that the girl's accent always broadened in speaking to her father.

"Well," said Mrs. Barugh pettishly, "there's a vast o' words wasted. It's soon said; you'll have to spend your holidays at school, and never come home till ye've done with the learnin'."

Doris stood with open mouth and staring eyes. It was too much to take in all at once. She had first been dazzled, now she was shocked.

"Nivver come yam!" She looked longingly at her father, and the pain in her voice soothed the hunger which had been gnawing at his heart.

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"Neeah, lass"—and then, with an effort against himself, the supreme martyrdom of which no child could ever comprehend—"bud Ah tell'd yu t' leeak o' beath sahdes, yan as mitch as t' other. Ther's t' scheeal an' t' l'arnin' 'at yu says noo an' again ye wearies efter, an' books, an' music, an' sike; an' ther's stayin' on i' t' yam wi' t' fayther an' moother an' t' poor lad."

"George'd miss me," said Doris simply. John Barugh turned his back, went again to the mantelshelf, and gulped down a sob there.

Then came a silence.

"Fayther"—Doris spoke resolutely—"nae doobt scheeal's a greeat thing fer a lass. Ah'd liever nut say oot at yance what Ah chooses."

"Neeah," he sighed;" 'at's trew an' fair eneaf; t' mooarnin' 'll deea tu talk ageean, if it's to be."

But his heart was very heavy; he had clung to the hope that he was as necessary to the girl as she was to him, and her hesitation told him what her decision would be.

And he was right. In less than a month

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Doris had bid good-bye to her mother and to poor sobbing George, and found herself less sorrowful than she expected when she had parted from her father at the gates of Pelican House. For John Barugh would not risk a farewell before witnesses.

"Ah tell ye what, old woman," he said to Dorothy, when he got back, "Doris leeaks a laady; nae need fer t' fahn scheealmistriss tu see 'at she hes sike a rough chap tu her fayther."

At the end of the year he claimed Mr. Burneston's promise to go up and see Doris; he managed to see her alone and to exchange as few words as possible with anyone else. And when he came back he said to Dorothy,—

"Gi' mu a kiss, lass. Thoo waz i' t' reeght, an' Ah waz i' t' wrang. T' lass is as beautiful an' as sweet as ony queen; nowt's ower gude fer t' lahke o' Doris. Sheea's i' t' reeght pleeace. Sheea war cleean thrawn away on sike as wersels."

And Mrs. Barugh gave the kiss. She did not hear the sob in her husband's voice; she hungered for a sight of her beautiful child, but her

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ambition was stronger than her love, and she sat with half-closed eyes and smiling lips, listening to all John had to tell, and weaving the part she meant to play in the brilliant future which in her opinion lay before Doris.

Only George looked dissatisfied.

"Fayther," he said, after a pause, "are yu fair seear Doris is i' t' reeght road?"

Even his mother's doatiug fondness could not keep her from an angry word.

"George, ye're turning foolish, lad; was ever the like o' such silly stuff as that?"

"Ah meeans, fayther"—the boy's eyes looked earnestly in John Barugh's face—"it says, 'To do our duty in that state of life to which God hes been pleased to call us.' Now God didn't make Doris a laady."

His father's face clouded, but his mother laid her hand on his lips.

"Ye want yer supper, my poor lad." Then going over to her husband, who was stooping to get a light for his pipe, "Don't heed his sick fancies," she said; "it's best not take notice."

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George was silent; but the day after his father's second visit to Pelican House, nearly two years after her departure from home, when he was alone with his father, he asked for writing tools, and with much effort wrote to his sister.

When he had finished he looked at his father. "Seeal it oop, fayther, an' sen' it on to Doris." And then he fell back, white and exhausted with the effort he had made.

It was this letter that had made Doris so very dreamy and abstracted for the last few days.

She was not troubled by George's earnest question. "Are you in the right road?" he had asked. "T' poor sick lad," she said to herself, "no wonder he takes fancies as he lies there day after day; but I will write to him. Nay, nay, it's but a fancy. Anyone must be i' t' right who's trying to better herself; Miss Phillimore has said so." Now and then, and especially when she was thinking of home-life, Doris would fall into the old familiar thought, and then check herself proudly for the error.

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She glanced at her companion, whose pure, refined enunciation had greatly impressed her, and she felt thankful she had not spoken aloud.

Meantime Rika had recovered her self-possession.

"You have no sisters, either," she said quietly. She was glad that Doris was not demonstrative, for she shrank from some of her more gushing school-fellows, but still she wished her new friend had kissed her just now, when she must have seen she was very sad, and wanted some comfort.

Doris started. "No. I've only got that poor sick brother I told you about, who is almost always lying on a sofa."

"How dreadful!" and Rika's sympathetic face grew puckered in an instant. "How glad you must be when your holidays come, to go home and amuse him! Are you good at making up stories?"

Doris laughed.

"I never made up a story in my life, unless"—she hesitated—"do you call looking forward

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and planning what may happen to oneself making up stories?"

Rika looked curiously at her companion.

"What a strange creature you are!" Then, noticing a quick flush on her friend's delicate face, "I beg pardon. Do you mind—did I vex you? I did not mean to; I only thought that you take the same trouble and get less fun."

"I don't understand." There was pain in Doris's voice.

"Why, isn't it more amusing to make stories about people one has never seen, to make new people to think about, than to go on thinking about oneself? Of course you're a different self to me; but I've heard so much about my-self in the way of scoldings, and so on, that I believe I'm rather sick of Rika Masham and all that belongs to her."

Doris thought before she answered.

"It may be more amusing to do as you say, but it is not reality, Rika. How old are you?"

"I am fifteen and a half, and you—"

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"I am just seventeen; but it seems to me I am ever so much older than you are. I daresay you'll do me good. Some day I'll tell you about myself, and why I am what you call such a strange girl."

"Tell me all this minute: you know all about me, and my father, and my mother, and my four brothers—such jolly boys!—and all I know of you is about poor sick George. When I love people I like to be able to imagine them in their home-life. Perhaps you will let me go and see you some day. I have written to my father already to let me ask you to our house."

Doris blushed brightly, but this time she was evidently pleased.

"You are very kind indeed; but I stay here in the holidays; I do not even go home. Some day, if we keep friends, you shall know all about my home and everything, and then perhaps"—she made a great struggle to be frank—"you will not want to come and see me."

"Naughty Doris"—Rika's arm stole round her neck and drew her down to be kissed.

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"But no, I will not go to see *you*; I shall go to your home on purpose to tell stories to that poor darling lame George."

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CHAPTER II. ROSE.

WHAT is the instinct which tells us that w loving thoughts are with us—that loving words are spoken of us, or written to us; nay, which even heralds the approach of some dearly-loved friend, and when the thought of us is deep and more special makes us conscious of soothing and help in a sudden and inexplicable way? This spiritual or electric wave touched George Barugh as Rika's interest in him deepened; and as Doris only spoke of her friend vaguely, George grew up in ignorance of this sweet new sisterly love that had ripened for him; and when the tide of instinctive feeling flowed warmly into his bosom he said to himself,—

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"Doris is thinking of me. How dearly Doris loves me!"

At such times the boy's generous heart was full of self-reproach. He knew that he had often chosen Rose Duncombe as a playfellow instead of Doris, and he felt that even when his sister came back it would be hard to give Rose up for Doris.

Rose had spent part of every day with him daring the first two years of his illness, and these visits had grown to be a part of his life. At first Mrs. Barugh had tried to keep Rose away, she said that "George must learn to speak properly against Doris came home, and Rose was a bad companion in this way," but the boy craved after his playfellow, and at last the mother yielded, the doctor having told Mr. Spencer, the vicar, that Rose's visits were as good as change of air and scene to his patient; for the disease which had appeared with such apparent suddenness had been latent in the system, and there was little hope of perfect cure; even if George outgrew it, he could scarcely hope to outgrow the lameness it had

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produced, for at the end of two years one leg was shorter than the other.

But then came a heavy trial for George. Joseph Sunley was a kindly man, folks said, but he dearly loved his prerogatives. He had been petted by the squires of Burneston for three generations, and it seemed hard to him that new-comers like the Barughs should absorb the attention and interest which he felt were due to him.

Ever since Doris had gone away to school in London—and Joseph always looked sceptical on this point—the squire, during his occasional visits to Burneston, went more often to the Church Farm than anywhere else.

"He's nane gitten t' same heead-piece 'at his fayther and his gran'fayther had. Ah reckons." Joseph was sitting in his usual place at his cottage door, where he now often found a companion, for the kitchen felt dull without Rose, and Mrs. Duncombe brought her knitting to the door while her grandchild sat with George. She nodded her head, but it was all one to Joseph whether she heard or not; he was far

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too much accustomed to preaching to need an audience.

“He’ll nane settle at Burneston. He’s here yan day, an’ t’ neeist he’s away tu Lunnon, or mebbe Paaris. T’ only wise thing ‘at he hev done sin he coom back fra travellin’ war puttin’ t’ lahtle lad tu scheeal. Scheeal’s t’ making o’ yung ‘uns, let ‘em be big or lahtle. Ah say, mistress”—he leaned forward to shout in the old woman’s ear—”when are yu thinkin’ o’ puttin’ t’ lass tu scheeal?”

The old woman’s smooth full face looked troubled, and her large double chin wagged.

“Ah’ve nae thowt o’ sendin’ ’er ageean,” she said querulously; “t’ scheeal-man said sheea did neeah gude—sheea nobbut made t’ ither lasses laff when theea sud be sewin’; an’ Ah war vexed an’ teeak ‘er away. Sheea’s foweteen noo—shu’s ower awd fer t’ scheeal.”

Joseph shook his head.

“Sheea mun gan wi’ sum ‘udy ‘at ‘ll keep ‘er teghter than what ye deea, ye awd feeal, ur else mebbe sheea’ll gan tu t’ divvil—sheea’s just t’ soart, is Rase; sheea’s as idle as a’ alligatur.” Then projecting his old dark withered chin,

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and bringing it into striking contrast with the blond, easy-going face beside him, “Bon it! yu mun send t’ lass away fra’ Burneston. Yu can’t larn ‘er tu wark here; sheea’ll spend mair an’ mair o’ ‘er tahme wi’ t’ sick lad. Mah wo’d, yu hevn’t seea mitch brass, neeghber, ‘at yu can keep Rase lahke a leeady.”

Mrs. Buncombe’s double chin waggled, and she began to cry.

“Neeah, neeah,” she said piteously; “scheealin’ costs brass, it disn’t save it; an’ wheer’ll be t’ use o’ seea mitch scheeal tu t’ lass?”

“Ah knaws t’ scheeal fer Rase.” Joseph spoke oracularly. “At Steersley ther’s t’ scheeal wheer sik a lass as Rose’ll larn tu get ‘er ain livin’ by teeachin’. They tak’s ‘er an’ larns ‘er, an’ efter a bit sheea larns t’ lahtle lasses; an’ theer’s nut ower mitch tu pay; an’ if sheea stays wiv ‘em fer three years, they finnds ‘er a pleeace fer gude an’ all, seea noo yu knaws.”

He waited for an answer, but Mrs. Duncombe sat thinking, and her easy face grew stiff in the unusual process. Rose was a trouble, but she was loving, so loving that the grandmother could not summon courage to send her away.

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“Neeah, neeah” she said weakly, in a struggling voice, as if she were trying to get free from a strong grasp, “mebbe she’ll larn mischief at t’ scheeal, an’ sheea’ll git nae ill fra t’ sick lad.”

Instead of answering, Joseph looked straight before him, and spoke in his loudest, strongest voice.

“Caps me, it diz, wheea God A’mighty made t’ lasses, sae noo. Theer’s need fer summat i’ t’ lass way Ah knaws, bud a few on ‘em wad ha’ done; an’ they needn’t hev had as mitch toongue as t’ lads; an’ Ah aims if yu war tu leeak fer’t ye’d finnd a lass had twahce as mony roots tiv ‘er toongue as a lad. It’s that ‘at keeps it waggin’ feeal’s nooations.” Then shouting in his companion’s ear, or more truly through the net of her frill-bordered cap,—“Fer seear t’ lad’s nae hairm iv ‘im, bud ‘e can’t larn t’ lass tu keep ‘ersel’ when ye’re deead an’ gane, an’ that’s what a lahkely lass lahke Rase sud larn. Put her tiv a manty-makker, ur mak’ ‘er a teeacher if yu pleease, it’s all yan tu me,” he said loftily, and went on in his

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usual voice. “T’ ane puts vanity ootsahde, an’ t’ ither puts it insahde t’ head o’ lahtle lasses. Weel, they’re made fer ‘t. Ah reckons ‘at follies mun hev awners, an’ mebbe t’ lasses wur made tu help t’ peeacock to spreead his teeal—they keep ‘im i’ mind o’t o’ Sunda’s.”

The old woman wiped her eyes, but did not answer. Joseph saw that for the present he must give up the subject, but next day he found a potent ally in Rose herself.

The grandmother had poured out Joseph’s suggestion to Rose with many tears, and, to her surprise, the girl announced her willingness, and indeed her wish, to go to the Steersley school.

“Ah’s tired o’ Burneston,” Rose said; to herself she added, “ther’s nobbut George to speak wiv, an’ he’s dowly noo he can’t gan nuttin’ nor nowt; an’ Ah aims ther’s shops i’ Steersley, an’ gran’mother mun gi’e mu some new frocks if Ah gans to t’ boardin’-scheeal.”

So Rose had her way, and went to Steersley to be educated for a nursery governess. . The

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boarding-school was kept by an ignorant woman, who, having once been housekeeper in a gentleman’s family, thought herself qualified to teach; by means of an artificial manner modelled on a good pattern she had managed to get under her care most of the farmers’ daughters round Steersley, and a few girls from other districts, whom she took at a cheaper rate, and whom, as she asserted in her prospectus, she fitted for teachers. Rose grew prettier and perter every day, but she managed to be a universal favourite, especially among the little ones she was set to teach. Her fellow-teachers were always willing to undertake her duties, and left her plenty of time to practise affectations and follies. Still in her holidays she was as devoted as ever to George, and he saw no change in her, except the improvement in her reading and the pleasure she gave him by singing

the pretty songs she learned from her richer schoolfellows. She did not learn much besides, except what she considered an improved way of speaking, that is to say, she lost much of the country dialect

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and quaint expressions, and picked up the vulgarisms of some of her southern schoolfellows. George had at first pined after his playfellow, and his mother took him to the sea for a while. The air had a most wonderful effect both on mind and body. The boy's eyes, so long obliged to content themselves with the surroundings of his own home, devoured all he saw with delighted intelligence, and when he came back his face was full of life and colour, and he could walk with the help of a stick.

Mr. Burneston gave him books, and, what he wanted most of all sympathy in his studies, and between these and the delight of Rose's holidays his life passed happily enough. The bond between him and his mother had drawn closer during Rose's absence; and now that the three years were over and the girl was to come home for a few months, Mrs. Barugh felt some pangs of fear lest her place in her son's heart should be taken from her.

George had been, very fidgety this afternoon.

"Moother, are yu seear that's t' best nosegay 'at yu can finnd i' t' gardin?" to which the

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fond mother's answer was to go out and gather a glorious group of autumn leaves, crimson, and scarlet, and purple, and yellow of every shade, from palest gold to tawniest orange. These she placed in a little flower-basket, one of Rose's gifts, beside the nosegay of China asters on George's book-table.

But even this attention did not satisfy him, though he got up and, limping across to his mother, kissed her and thanked her.

"Flowers and leaves disn't suit side by side" he said, " 'cept t' leaves is green." Then when he came back to his seat he said, half aloud, as if talking to himself, "It seems ower gude news, disn't it, mother, 'at Rose is comin'—we s'll see her ivvery day?"

Mrs. Barugh bent over her knitting. She looked far less delicate, and she led a more active life now; even the sound of her voice told of better health.

"I don't know about that, lad," she said gravely. "Rose'll never be able to stay at home, unless she takes to the dressmakin', an' there's two or three before her there. I suppose

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Mrs. Buncombe hasn't got enough to keep a likely lass such as Rose at home doin' naught. If she meant that, why did she give her schoolin'?"

"She went to school to get clevver like our Doris; eh, but, mother, Rose is growin' varry 'cute—she knows ivverything."

"You must not think of Doris and Rose i' the same breath, lad. Doris is a lady now."

A flush spread over the boy's face.

"Mother, Rose is kind an' lovin', an' I don't know whether that's not as gude as being a laady, but d'ye really think 'at Rose'll gan fra home?" he looked full of anxiety. "Mr. Burneston helped to pay for her schooling. I'll ask him if she mun gan away, or if she can get little lasses to learn at home."

Dorothy felt vexed that she had troubled him. George was the centre of her life now, all her thoughts circled round her poor crippled boy.

"I mean nought, lad, but I think a pretty face like Rose's won't bide at home for long. Why, she's seventeen and past. Maybe

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Ephraim Crewe or Nicholas Wigglesworth'll be wanting her to wed; they're both marryin' men."

George leaned back in his chair and sighed wearily.

"Ye're tired out, lad." His mother gave him a quick glance, full of a new and sudden fear. Though she consulted her wise thoughtful son and looked up to him on all intellectual subjects, till this moment it had not occurred to her that he was nearly eighteen, and that he might no longer think of Rose only as a playfellow. "You've been afoot," she said, with a sudden indignation against his lameness, "on that poor stupid leg of yours since six o'clock, and you've ate no dinner, an' you must have your tea at once—get on the squab, lad, an' take a wink o' sleep while I make the kettle boil."

George obeyed silently, turning his face to-wards the wall, and Dorothy went on with the tea-making; but presently, as she stooped over the kettle, she thought she heard a groan. She turned round quickly and looked at the sofa.

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George lay quite still, seemingly sound asleep with his face buried on his pillow.

"Poor lad," said Dorothy, "he's tired him-self out—and a good thing it 'ud be for Rose if a steady chap like Ephraim were to ask her. I've a mind to put it in his head."

She went away to call her husband in to tea. The husband and wife had drawn closer together over the sick-bed. As her footsteps sounded in the passage George opened his eyes and looked round him with eager burning glances.

"Rose—marry some one else!" he said, with passionate scorn, "Rose is mine, sheea shall keep to me. Sheea hes always been mine." And then, as he rose up and limped across the floor, he sighed heavily.

Tea was quickly over, for John Barugh did not come in, and soon after Dorothy went out with a sort of vague purpose of seeking Ephraim Crewe. "If our lad wants her to stay i' the village, she must stay, but she'd best have a man of her own."

Presently there was the click of the gate.

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and George's heart beat very fast as he listened; a light tread came over the gravel, and then a bird-like chirping voice said at the open door, "Please may I come in, Mrs. Barugh?" The wan wearied look left the boy's face, his brown eyes grew dark with happiness.

"Pull t' bobbin, an' t' latch'll gan up, Rose Riding Hood. Eh! why can't Ah run to meet you?" he said, as the door opened before he could reach it.

There stepped down into the room a pretty coquettish-looking damsel, who looked quite twenty, though she was really about three years younger. Her complexion was as pink and as white as when we first saw her, but her freckles had disappeared, and her face was more oval than round, her blue eyes and her little turn-up nose were still as saucy as ever.

"Grumblin', George, oh fie for shame, all t' little dogs shall know your name!" She gave her head a little toss, and untied the strings of a gay bonnet covered with artificial roses. "I thought I taught you to say 'go' instead of 'gan,' " she said pertly.

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George was taking her hand, but she drew it back to pull off a glove before she shook hands with him.

“Gloves, eh! Rose, lass, you’re grown a fine lady, an’ nae mistake.”

“I pay for ‘em myself,” she spoke sharply, and then she softened into a smile as she seated herself in the chair he had placed for her. “Look here, George,” she said, “we put on our best on prize day, an’ as I got a prize,” she glanced at a book under her arm, “I came away in haste to show it just as I war i’ my Sunday clothes, an’—”

“Show us the prize” George said eagerly; “is it a gude story?”

Her face clouded as she gave him the book.

“Nay, it’s but dull readin’, it’s a sermon or something o’ t’ sort, but t’ pictures is pretty, an’ sae is t’ ootside,” and she pointed to the gilt lettering and scarlet binding.

Such a glow of pleasure came into his face as he read the title, “The Pilgrim’s Progress.”

“Eh, lass, Ah hev wanted this sorely. T’ awd yan theer”—he pointed to a dingy-looking

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bookshelf with some old volumes on it—“hes only two pages at t’ beginnin’, an’ haalf o’ t’ middle is torn oot, an’ Mr. Burneston hes oft sed he’d lend it me fra t’ Hall, but Ah suppoahse he forgat. Oh, Rose, hoo happy we s’ll be readin’ this!”

He looked at her with glowing eye, but there was no sympathy in Rose’s face, she was gaping unrestrainedly.

“I tell ye what, George, lad,” she said hurriedly, “I’ve a mind t’ gie ye t’ book. I’ve got to like another sort o’ books this half, an’ I’m not sure they’ll please you; sae ye shall hev t’ Pilgrim to read yourself. Will ye take it as a keepsake?”

The glow faded out of his eyes. “I can’t take yur prize. Rose, but ye’ll come and see me as ye used to,” he spoke timidly, something, he could not name the feeling, seemed to come between him and Rose.

“Come an’ see you! why, George, lad,” she said heartily, “what d’ye mean by sayin’ that? What sud I do all day if I didn’t come to teaze you a bit, ye foolish lad? An’ you can walk

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out wi’ me, now ye’re better; an’ if ye like my books, I’ll read ‘em out to yu; they’re a sort that don’t bear dawdlin’ ovver, they go along like lightnin’.”

George fixed his eyes on her earnestly. “I doubt they’re none so safe as t’ gude old sort,” he said.

“Nivver trouble about t’ books,” said Rose, “I want to tell ye about t’ prizes. Why, Mrs. Trower, t’ squire’s wife, gives ‘em away herself, an’ ther war lots o’ quality besides. Mrs. Trower’s a bonny young lady fra Lunnon, an’ she said ivver sae many pretty things tu me.”

“What do ye mean by pretty things?”

“Oh, I don’t call to mind the words, but they came so pat; an’ the things, well, she sed that bright red an’ gold was t’ right sort of bindin’ for me. Now t’ others was plain bindin’s, an’ plain lasses got ‘em. Sae of course it war easy to see what she meant, an’ then I heeard her say my complexion was wonderful. She said, ‘I sud like to paint it, Mrs. Jones;’ so of course I war pleased.”

“Of course you war,” she looked so bright

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and pretty in her animation that George thought no one could praise her too much. “Yu do look bonny; but, Rose lass, yu wadn’t like ivvery one to praise ye, wad yu now?” He looked at her earnestly, but she seemed puzzled.

“Why not, lad?”

“Ah mean to your face, ye wadn’t like any kind o’ lads to praise ye.”

“Bother! Don’t say ‘Ah,’ George, it’s ‘I’ But you will talk so broad. But I’ll soon learn ye right. My gracious! lad, an’ why not lads to praise me? What else war I made fer? That’s t’ use o’ not havin’ a real sweet-heart, an’ that’s why I don’t mean to take up with one yet awhile;” and she sang in a sweet teasing voice,—

“An’ a’ the lads they lo’e me weel,

And what the waur am I?”

There was a silence. George’s heart was throbbing so violently that he could not speak.

“Well, lad, what have ye to say?” Rose went on, in an excited tone, “Look at me, ‘what

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the waur am I?’ an’ there’s plenty o’ likely lads in Steersley, I can tell ye, to have fun with.”

She waited for his answer.

“Why don’t ye answer?” she said pettishly. “Come, lad, you’re grown sulky whiles I’ve been away.”

“Not sulky. Rose,” he had flushed at her words, now he tried to smile, “I was wonderin’ howivver yu could get on wiv yur learning at school if yu war carryin’ on wiv t’ lads.”

Rose clapped her hands together, and gave a series of little jumps.

"Bless him, what an innocent! why, George, lad, ye're too good to live; ye forgit playtime an' our walks two an' two along t' road, an' t' maid 'at was allays ready te take our letters an' giv 'em; but ther was no harm, lad, don't you be feared, I niver cared for ne'er a one of 'em as much as I care for you." She looked at him affectionately, but a faint flush, rather of vexation than of pleasure, rose in the boy's face.

"Mebbe yey'll think I'm strict an' solemn, lass, but I say that makes it worse, ye may

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not care, but yu may hev made some poor lad right mad wi' luv for yu, an' such ways is wrong, they mak' t' lads speak lightly o' yu too. I sud not like to think o' Doris doin' so, Rose, an' you're as good as Doris."

"Doris!" Rose grew very red, and she tossed her head angrily. "My word, Doris an' I is quite different; Doris is a lady, you know," she said, with a pert mimicry of Mrs. Barugh's manner that vexed him, it was so like. "I'm only a village lass. It's all very well, lad, but I should like you tu read how some ladies carries on i' t' story-books I reads now; my ways is nothing after that, so there. I must go now," she got up gaping. "Gran'mother said I weren't to stop. Give my love to your mother." But she turned round on her way to the door, and shook her finger in his face as he followed her. "Don't tell her nought I've told you, mind ye, lad, not one word." She frowned, and then went away laughing and nodding.

George stretched out both legs and sighed as he looked at them; one was at least half an inch shorter than the other.

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"Ah mun get well," he said resolutely, "if it's only tu look after Rose. She'll get a bad name if she gans on i' that way; she'll be just like a plum wi' t' bloom rubbed off. She's

sound-hearted. Ah know, that Ah'll nivver doubt. Ah cuddent; but ther's no puttin' t' bloom on once it's rubbed off. Eh! Ah must get well."

Again the burning longing filled his eyes. Usually his patience was most remarkable, he had borne severe suffering without a word of complaint; but the sight of Rose had unhinged him.

"She disn't love me as Ah loves her" he said bitterly; "how can she love a cripple?"

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CHAPTER III. A "COO'S" HEART.

FROM Gilbert Raine in the Island of Bornholm, to Philip Burneston, at Burneston Hall:—

"MY DEAR PHILIP,

"I am getting on famously, with my work; the book you sent is full of mistakes—mistakes only to be understood by the hypothesis that the writer never visited the places he describes. Some of the round churches I have seen are wonderfully curious. I send you a detailed account in order ....

"But to come back to England, and first to you. A sentence here and there in your letters has struck me curiously, but being very intent

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on making my observations here, I confess I read hastily, and crammed the letters into my pocket to enjoy when I had more leisure. Yesterday, while I sat taking my lunch in the middle of a hard morning's work at some stones at G—, I began to wonder how you were occupying yourself, and I took out and read your three last letters over again. You

say, ‘I think your idea of educating a wife for oneself excellent, so excellent that I believe I shall adopt it,’ and in each of the other letters you refer seriously to the same project. Perhaps you are only joking, perhaps too I have been living and working seriously here for so many months that I have got to take everything literally, and you are only trying to see how much you can make me swallow. I will hope so, for you know, Phil, I always speak my mind, whether you like it or not. A fellow like me, without any relations to speak of but yourself, may do very much what he likes; but you are in quite another position, you must not be eccentric, you are a match for anyone, that is, if you must marry again, though why a man

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having achieved the chief end of marriage—an heir to his possessions—and having freed himself from the restraints of such a life, should want to give up his freedom a second time, passes my comprehension. Education is a fine thing, but after all there are habits and ways of life which education does not touch; you may put on as much outside varnish as you like, but it is liable to crack, and then the coarse texture shows through the rent. Good-bye, old fellow; don’t be offended, but write again soon, and send me all the news you can, specially about yourself and Ralph. I suppose I shall find the fellow in tails and stick-ups—no, I forgot Eton practices when I wrote that. I’m glad he loves the old place. Tell him we must have cricket at Burneston when I come home”…..

It has been said already that Mr. Burneston was as obstinate on certain points as he was yielding on others. If he had wanted any confirmation in his intentions about Doris Barugh, this letter would have given it.

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He read it through twice with increasing impatience, and then turning round from the breakfast-table, he threw it into the fire.

"I thought Raine was strong-minded, different from other men, in being able to stand to his own opinions, no matter what fire of world's judgment was brought to bear on them. I shall have no tolerance for his eccentricities in future, they are not signs of real originality, merely affectations to save himself the trouble of conforming to rules."

He rose up and left his breakfast unfinished, giving thereby a fruitful topic of wondering comment for the rest of the day to Mr. and Mrs. Hazelgrave as to "what could hev gone wrang wi' t' maister."

During these five years Mr. Burneston's' temper had been far less equable than it had ever been in his life, for although nothing would have made him give up his project, after the first step had been taken, he was a prey to fits of doubt which would not have troubled a stronger and less impulsive nature. He had resolved not to see Doris while she was

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at school, he wished entirely to blot out the past relations between them, and to meet the girl as an equal, and try to win her love. This was the chief source of his disquiet, and it was a puzzle to himself. He was not a romantic man, though he had been entirely fascinated by Doris's first appearance, and impressed by the strange fortuitousness of the words he had heard her singing; but he knew that he could have forgotten her, it had been the singular appositeness of Raine's idea, when he came into his study, that had seemed to make a fate for him out of that chance meeting.

"I did not trouble about being married for myself in Louisa's case," he said; "why should it be more difficult to make a young creature like Doris care for me, a girl who knows nothing of society, she has never even received any attention or admiration? Yes,

that is part of the beauty of this idea, there will be nothing to unlearn or eradicate, she will be so perfectly guileless and simple,"

He went out through the doors leading on to

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the lawn, and then with his hands clasped behind his back, and his hat pulled over his eyes, he walked beside the river.

The five years were just over, and he was in daily expectation that John Barugh would demand his daughter's return. Mr. Burneston had not committed himself by any direct avowal of his intentions; he had told the farmer and his wife that Doris ought to have a good education. She was not, he said, an ordinary girl, and the ordinary education of a country town was not enough for her, and he had promised to provide handsomely for her, if he were allowed to choose a school for her, but on the condition that she was never to be told she owed him anything.

His dread had been that the idea of marriage might suggest itself, and that this would lower the girl's tone of mind, and defeat all his hopes of happiness. He told himself he was not romantic, that he had no idea of inspiring Doris with violent love for him, but he could not bear the idea that she might marry him for his position only.

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"After all," he stopped in his walk, and turned to his house again, "it is quite possible I may be disappointed in her; if so, I certainly shall not marry for the mere sake of taking a wife. I have been the means of getting her a good education, and I will settle such a sum on her as will make her independent of her father and mother, whatever happens."

He had determined on one point in this long meditation. Doris should not make her first appearance after leaving school at Burneston. When she met him again there should be nothing to remind her of the girl swinging on the gate.

He went round the house, and out at the great gates, and then on beside the river, till he reached the foot of the village, where another bridge, a rough one of open planks, with a hand-rail crossed to the meadows opposite.

Joseph Sunley was leaning against one of the posts at the end of the bridge, with a very weary look on his face, but seeing Mr. Burneston, he started forward. "Neea, neea, squire; bud if Ah'd aimed

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Yu'd bin coomin' oop this way, mebbe Ah'd hev bided atop, asteead o' gien' mysel' t' clim back. My legs is nane that strang 'at they war."

"Good day, Joseph." Joseph had been far too much excited to remember any greeting "Were you coming to see me?"

"Weel, I war that; an' it's summat pertickler, 'at mun be spok' aboot, wivoot loss o' tahme, owther. T' things gans on an' on' an' gans fra bad tu warse, just as a coorn grows on t' feeat, an' it's all far want o' settin' streight."

Mr. Burneston felt impatient.

"Well, what is it, Joseph?" he said, carelessly.

"Bon it! squire! it's nut lahke a nail oot o' pleeace, ur a withered tree 'at sud be up-reeated; mebbe in a way, it's a withered shoot 'at sud be lopped off a healthy boddy; bud it's an evil 'at sud hev been stopped seeaner nobbut yu'd been at t' Hall, Maister Burneston." He said this reproachfully.

"Well, I'm here now," the squire answered

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good-humouredly; “so let me hear it at once, Joseph”

“T’ hearin’s nowt—it’s t’ doin’ ‘at is wantin’, unless yu wants tu see divvel-wark spread ower t’ village lahke a curse.” He shook his head, but the effort at mystery in his face weakened the effect of his words.

“Well, Sunley, I can do nothing until I hear something. Speak out, man.” And Mr. Burneston looked impatiently towards the village.

“Weel,” Joseph sighed, “deea yu mahnd t’ awd uncanny lass Prudence, wi’ a creeaked e’e an’ yan shoolder heigher ‘an t’ ither?”

“Oh I yes, I remember her; she’s a queer body. What about her—is she dead?”

Joseph shook his head, and then looked at the squire with slight contempt; this expression was, however, transient, and it was soon lost in the sort of officious mystery with which he had at first accosted Mr. Burneston.

“Neea, neea, sheea’s”—with much emphasis—“nut deead, sike as sheea deean’t dee.” He held up both hands with the palms outwards,

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his face wearing a look of abhorrence, as at some awful spectacle. “It’s t’ ither way wi’ t’ witches—they dunnut dee if they ‘re nut called tu t’ reckonin’ fer mischief—it’s t’ ithers ‘at dees.”

Mr. Burneston laughed. He had heard that a belief in witchcraft still lingered in the village, but secretly he was shocked to find it upheld by such a person as Joseph Sunley.

"Nonsense, Joseph, that's all very well for old women to believe, but men like you and me know better. Just because this wretched old woman has a bad temper and an ugly face, no one likes her, but this very circumstance ought to make you pity her. A sensible man like you." He said the last words extra loud, and though Joseph still frowned, his lips relaxed at the compliment. He laid his wrinkled hand solemnly on Mr. Burneston's shoulder.

"Yu're ower gude tu see it, sir. Parson oop at t'vicarage"—he jerked his head towards the hill—"Lord luv yu he hesn't a mossel o'

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sense i' t' matter; an' Ah says tuv him, 'Parson, yu knaws aboot 'ivven an' yal 'at gans on oop theear, an' mebbe yu ken summat aboot t' ither pleeaee; bud deean't gan fer tu meddle wi' theease yere eearth matters, 'at yu knaw nowt aboot."

Mr. Burneston laughed but he felt impatient.

"Well, Sunley, I'm going up the village,"—Joseph's lips curled again—"and you can walk with me, and we'll talk this matter over. For what cause do you call poor old Dame Wrigley a witch?"

"Yu saay yu're boon' thruft t' village; mebbe yu'r bund tu t' Church Farm? Eh! eh! an' it's Farmer Barugh 'at hes t' best reeght tu call Prudence a witch."

It was so absurd to hear of such an idea being entertained by John Barugh, that Mr. Burneston laughed again, even more heartily than before.

"This is too much of a good thing, Sunley. I can't believe a man like Mr. Barugh would listen to such nonsense."

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Joseph's face quivered with anger; he stopped short, and raised his head stiffly, for in the steep uphill walk he had bent till his nose nearly touched the hand which grasped his stick.

"Eh, Maister Burneston, John Barugh's nut a feeal, an' if he feels hissel' 'witched, he's i' t' reeght tu leeak abrooad an' seea wha it's bin 'at's warked t' mischief. He's lost tweea coos, an' ther's a cawlf deein', an' he knaws, an' Ah knaws, it's t' awd divvelskin 'at's withered 'em fer spite."

Mr. Burneston thought he began to understand; he looked very serious. "Do you mean to inform against this woman. Prudence Wrigley, as having poisoned Mr. Barugh's cows?"

Joseph laughed scornfully.

"Lord luv yu, ye're nowt nu wahser ner t' Parson, squire. T' witch warks wivoot puzzom; sheea"—he looked cautiously up and down the hill, and then at the open doors and windows of two cottages perched on the steep green bank above the road—"bide a bit,"

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he said, and walked on beside his companion.

A little higher up the houses stopped, giving place, on the left, to a lofty hedge on the top of the bank, and on the right to a low stone wall, shutting in a paddock, in one corner of which stood a huge' walnut-tree, its branches, touched by an early frost, shedding gold and green leaves down into the road. In the midst of the grey wall was a large white gate, and Joseph limped quickly up to this, and peered round the enclosure, to make sure that no listener was to be seen.

He then came close up to Mr. Burneston.

“Nobbut yu’ll jist bend yur heead doon, Ah’ll tell yu. Sik as sheea dizzent use puzzom; they’ve gitten it i’ t’ inside on ’em. They gans an’ buys a coo’s heart—Ah knaws Prudence did—an’ they sticks it wi’ pins, an’ they bury it, an’ they seys a foul nomony, an’ in three daays t’ ither coo’s deead as mutton; an’ when they cut t’ poor beast oppen it’s heart’s withered lahke a bit o’ skin an’ full o’ larl hooales. Sae noo yu kens,” he added triumphantly.

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Mr. Burneston looked shocked and incredulous.

“I tell you what, Joseph,” he said earnestly, “you are about the oldest man in the village, and till now I have thought you one of the wisest; this is all nonsense—I tell you, the thing’s impossible; even if the poor creature thinks herself a witch, she can do nothing; she is most likely crazy, and you will drive her quite mad if you spread this ridiculous nonsense about the village; and I tell you, as a magistrate, I shall interfere to protect this woman, it I find anyone molesting her.”

He spoke severely, for Joseph’s eyes were gleaming with a decidedly cruel expression. They had just reached the top of the hill, and Mr. Burneston turned to the farm-yard gate.

The action roused Joseph’s jealousy, and completely upset his self-control.

“An’ Ah sez ‘at it’s magistraates’ boonden duty tu stop t’ witch’s mischief, an’ nobbut t’ draw blood’ll deea’t. Eh, an’ if them ‘at sud dea it weean’t deea’t, then it mun be deean t’ best way it can.”

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But Mr. Burneston paid no heed to this outburst; he pushed open the white gate and went on to the rick-yard, leaving Joseph trembling with passion in the middle of the road.

John Barugh's tall, erect figure and massive red whiskers made him look like one of his stalwart Danish forefathers, as he stood against the light, contemplating the last of his newly-made ricks with some satisfaction, for there had been an exceptionally good harvest; but this satisfaction was soon over; his thoughts went back to their favourite subject of contemplation—his daughter Doris. He was growing very restless to see her. He had given a sad and unwilling consent to the separation; but then it was only to be for three years. At the end of that time Doris had herself asked for two years longer, and her father had not found himself able to refuse consent. "Ah war a feeal to let her gan," he said bitterly; "but yance a feeal Ah mun gan on wi' t' folly." And now at the end of five years it seemed to him that Doris would have grown quite unused to the homely ways of her old home.

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He had never forgiven Mr. Burneston for having as it were cheated his consent out of him, for he knew that if the request had been made to him alone he should have refused it. But Dorothy had been present, and had sided entirely with the squire, and as, except where marriage means complete union, husbands and wives seldom like another person equally, John was conscious of a contradictory feeling to-wards his landlord, whom Dorothy held up as a model of perfection. The sight of Mr. Burneston always recalled to him his own weakness in yielding up his better judgment, and he felt constrained and ill at ease when they met.

He was stiff now in returning the squire's greeting.

"Ah war thinkin' o' comin' awa' tu speeak wi' yu, Maister Burneston," he said coldly.

Mr. Burneston smiled.

"I daresay I am come about the same business. At least I fancied you would be going to fetch your daughter home, and I thought it would be better that she should not come back here at first."

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The same thought had come to the father, but he felt irritated by this interference.

"Ah deean't see what fer nut," he said sullenly, turning one shoulder awkwardly towards his visitor.

"Now, if Doris is what I hope and expect," said Mr. Burneston to himself, "she will not like this kind of behaviour."

A slight flush rose to his face.

"Well, Mr. Barugh, you must of course do as you please, but I was thinking of Doris. It seems to me in many ways pleasanter that your reunion should not take place in the midst of your neighbours. Mrs. Barugh said last time I was here that George was flagging again, and I thought of taking a cottage near Steersley, where you could be all to yourselves for a time."

John looked taller and prouder than ever.

"Ah'm obleeged, Maister Burneston, an' that's what Ah'm nut fond o' bein' tu onny man. If Ah wants a cottage at Steersley, Ah s'll get it mysel' athoot troublin' yu, sir. It war aboot summat else 'at Ah war comin' awa' tu t' Hall."

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Mr. Burneston had grown fiery red, but he saw that remonstrance would provoke a quarrel.

"Ah war comin'," said John, squaring his shoulders and stuffing his hands to the bottom of his pockets, "tu speeak aboot t' uncanny awd lass, Prudence Wrigley."

"Let her be," said Mr. Burneston. "For Heaven's sake, don't you join with that cruel old man opposite against the poor creature."

John gave a derisive smile; he could not control his irritation. "Sheea's gitten ye an' all, hes sheea, squire, as weel as t' Parson? Weel, Sattan's a cute chap, seear eneeaf, he knaws hoo tu set his limbs tu wark; bud mark yu this, nobbut Ah looase t' ither coo—an' sheea's been sick sin' t' mornin'—Ah diz this. Ah taks mah biggest cart-whip an' Ah slashes t' awd divvel's feeace across till t' blood sproots, it's t' ooanly cure," he said calmly.

"No, you won't," Burneston said earnestly; "you're too much of a man to strike a woman; now mayn't I come in?" He put his hand

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on the farmer's arm. "I want to have a talk with George. I envy you that lad, Mr. Barugh. I wish Ralph would take after him."

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CHAPTER IV. COMING HOME.

DORIS, in whom the hopes of both these men were so firmly centred, was looking forward to her new life at home, so near at hand, with keen interest, and at the same time with much shrinking.

It was a definite sign of the change wrought in her by culture that she now shrank most from daily intercourse with her mother's artificial attempts at gentility, which, though really softened since Dorothy had lived George's life instead of her own, still lived in a

somewhat exaggerated form in the letters which she sent to her daughter. Doris had no shrinking from her father's roughness. She found full sympathy in his simplicity and his perfect truth—for

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she saw that he never hid his opinions even when they clashed decidedly with her own.

"I shall get on with father, but then I always did, and mother is so kind that I must try not to get vexed with her. George is the one who puzzles me, he seems to have grown downright unreasonable. Rika is right when she says an invalid is sure to have fancies."

Her face was full of wounded feeling. Next to her father and Rika she loved George better than she loved anyone, and though Doris was free from petty conceit, still school-life had taught her that she was some one who had a right to expect deference, and affection too, from her companions. Of the last she had had far more offered than she could possibly accept, and her dislike to demonstrative affection had given to her manner a slight haughtiness with most of her companions.

It has been said that the schoolmistress at Pelican House did not trouble herself about the inner life of her pupils, but she had a rapid perception of outward manner. She observed this haughtiness in Doris, and did not attempt to

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check it. She foresaw a brilliant future for this beautiful, well-mannered girl, and when she saw Doris walk away from some gushing school-fellow, with her head rather higher than usual, Miss Phillimore smiled and thought, "She is learning to govern others" and probably, to use the language of the outside world, manner is one of the essential qualities of a successful ruler.

There was another quality in Doris, to which even Miss Phillimore submitted without being-aware that it had a far deeper source of life than could have been supplied to it at Pelican House.

Spite of this occasional haughtiness, at times almost *brusquerie*—spite of the quiet unimpulsive manner which was sometimes called reserve, and sometimes a singular self-control, there was in Doris an irresistible fascination—the more difficult to strive against because, as it was never assumed or visibly put forth, there was nothing tangible to resist. Her smile was delightful, it seemed so heartfelt, and as it spread over her lovely face, irradiating the

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delicate skin and exquisitely perfect features, no one could stop to realise the strong power of will that in this charming form drew all hearts to itself, and its own way of seeing things.

She was far more conscious of her sway than strong-willed people often are, but she attributed this chiefly to her surroundings.

"You say I shall be so happy," she said to her friend on the last morning; "in some ways no doubt I shall be, but life will not be so peaceful at home as it is here. You are the only person in this house who ever finds fault with me."

They were to leave Pelican House together, and to say good-bye at the railway station, where their respective fathers would meet them; and now in the hour that must elapse before starting they were together in the school-room.

"Doris"—Rika stopped suddenly, and turned round to face her friend—"do you want to stagnate, or to grow into a grand Turk? for you must do one or other, perhaps both, if

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you're not contradicted. People who are never contradicted are odious. Wise fault-finding is very useful. Besides, it is an incomprehensible idea that you, who are always wanting to get cleverer and cleverer, should be content to-stand still. Don't disappoint me, Doris, in these last moments; I can't bear it."

Doris laughed, for Rika's vehemence had brought bright colour rushing to her cheeks, and her eyes had grown dark with excitement. "You torrent," Doris said, "you put me in mind of a volcano. You go about for days dreaming in a kind of black or brown study, and then suddenly you pour out a stream of glowing, burning words that scorch one."

"Well"—Rika looked ashamed of herself—"I really am going to be matter-of-fact for the rest of my days. I mean that—stop, I'm going to give you a bit of my father, I have not wit enough to grow such ideas—well, I mean that life goes on, and we must go on along with it. We may shut our eyes and let ourselves be carried; that is stagnation according to my

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ideas; if not, we are always learning and being acted upon by what we learn. In all conscience, you have done enough with book-learning; you've got enough to last you for life if you keep it bright. Well, then, now you've got to learn life from real people; and nothing will teach you that, and yourself, too, as contradiction will."

"How do you mean teach me myself? A girl must be stupid who does not understand herself."

"I know, so it seems to me; and when I said 80 to my father he laughed, and said I wanted a lantern."

"But, Rika,"—the subject of self-knowledge did not interest Doris; she had a great dislike to sermons, and she thought this sounded like a fragment from Mr. Masham's pulpit—"you are unjust, and also not quite true."

"What do you mean?" in a very impetuous voice.

"I mean, that if people don't agree with me, I am always content to let them go on in the wrong so long as they leave me in peace; live

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and let live, is my motto, but you are never happy till you have persuaded people to agree with you."

"You see"—Rika stood thinking—"I'm not proud; and, perhaps, though you are such an angel, you are a trifle proud. Now give me a 'good kiss, Doris, to wipe out this argument. We can't afford to argue on our last day."

Then, as they stood a moment, with moistened eyes, and circled by each other's arms—

"And you will really give my love to George, and make him fond of me. My heart is quite ready to take in a fifth brother."

"Thank you," then, with most unusual im-pulse, for the coming change in her life had shaken Doris out of all restraint, "What a loving heart you have, dear Rika! I believe you love my father, and mother, and George as much as I love them myself, and I seem to love your people so little, though you talk of them so much."

"That's because I'm a chatterbox."

They walked up and down silently after

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this. Doris's thoughts soon left her friend, to picture life at home, and its difficulties; while Rika, who in the glamour of her intense friendship could not really see a fault in her companion, was saddened out of any looking forward beyond the coming sharpness of separation.

And meantime, in a pretty cottage covered with scarlet leaves, Mrs. Barugh had been busy for the last fortnight making preparations to receive her daughter. Dorothy had at once seen the wisdom of Mr. Burneston's suggestion, and by citing George's health, always better away from Burneston, she had worried her husband into consenting to take a cottage at Steersley. Probably the victory had been made easy to her by Doris, who, when informed of the idea, wrote at once to say she preferred to return to Steersley instead of to Burneston.

It was late afternoon, and Mrs. Barugh stood looking at the neatly-spread tea-table with a nervous, dissatisfied face.

"I doubt about Doris liking to eat her

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tea in the room we sit in" she said fretfully, "she'll have been used to a proper drawing-room."

George was sitting at a little side-table reading out of the red and gold book Rose had given him, and which had become his favourite companion. He looked up with a smile on his pale face, for he too was tired. He had been trying to carry out some of his mother's constantly changing ideas of preparation through the morning, without being able to satisfy her over-wrought notions as to that which would satisfy Doris.

"Mother, you'll be so weary. You'll not be able to look at Doris when she comes. You must sit ye down."

He rose up, and going to her, kissed away the frown that was gathering on her face and put her in an easy chair.

“Come, mother, ye have to do as Ah tells yu now father’s away, an’ you mun do as you’re bid, ye know. Sit down and rest yourself. It’s all reeght.”

George had lost much broadness of dialect,

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but his accent was still marked, and specially to-day, for he felt greatly moved at the near prospect of seeing Doris.

His mother sighed.

“I’m so fearful she’ll think us far beneath her, poor girl. She’ll not care for you, George, if you speak so broad and common,” she sighed. “I wish you’d speak more like me.”

“Niver fear, mother.” His smile brought into his face a strange likeness to Doris, it was so winning. “Ye’re a bit upset now, an’ so can’t see things rightly. She can’t help lovin’ us, yu know, for we’re her own. Nay, nay, mother, if yey’d try an’ read Rose’s book, yey’d see these things clearer; yey’d see it’s not worth while to worrit sae mitch aboot this life after all.”

“It’s all very well, George.” She could not keep the irritable tone out of her voice. “You’re very good, an’ all that, but you’re not real; them things reads well in books, but they don’t do for life.”

“Now, mother,” he patted her shoulders lovingly, “you carry out what t’ book says

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yourself; yey've spent all yur time an' thowght on t' bed-room an' t' sitting-room Doris is to hev; but as to t' passage, beyond that it's clean an' orderly, you've took no thowght about it. Now life's our passage, an' t' rooms is t' place we're getting ready for us in heaven. Sae you see t' book 's reeght efter all."

Dorothy did not answer, and George thought she was pondering his idea; but all at once she started up with a scared look in her eyes.

"They're comin', lad; they're comin'. Don't ye hear the wheels? An' my cap not changed." She ran away upstairs, while George felt as suddenly taken by surprise as if he had not been schooling himself for days past for the meeting with Doris.

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CHAPTER V. SYMPATHIES.

"HOW small—how very small it all is! and how my mother stoops!"

Doris looked round the small square room, with its low ceiling, cheap white curtains, and common-place furnishings, almost before she looked at its occupants.

Her mother and George had received her at the door, and she had returned their hearty kisses warmly; and now came that lull which, with English people, is apt to succeed any unusual outburst of affection, as if we want to give emotion time to subside into an equable flow of feeling, The silence was broken by the father, usually the least talkative member of the Barugh

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family. He had stood gazing at Doris; now he said suddenly—

"Whya, George, lad, thoo's as glum as a deear-nail. Isn't thoo fain tu see Doris?"

"Ay, faythe r," he smiled, and limped nearer the chair where his sister sat, looking at her with loving admiration.

Doris did not want to speak, she would have liked to sit quietly taking in all these new impressions, but her own sense of good-breeding, and this appeal roused her. At present she felt too much a stranger for affection.

"How you have grown, George!" She looked up at the tall, slender lad; he was paler even than usual; his brown eyes were full of feeling, as he smiled in his sister's lovely face.

All the repulsion he had fancied, all the coldness he had feared his manner would betray, had melted in the genuine delight of her presence. He had imagined he should see an artificial, stiff, grandly-dressed young lady, and here, instead, was a lovely, simple girl

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smiling at him as if she were quite at her ease.

"D'ye find him altered, my dear?" Mrs. Barugh spoke to her daughter with great respect, pulling nervously at her cap-strings; though she had paid for the clothes Doris wore, Miss Phillimore had chosen them, and the make of the girl's gown, the set of her shawl, and the style of her simple straw bonnet impressed Dorothy's mind at once. "John's right; she's like a born lady," she said to her-self.

Doris looked earnestly at George's brown eyes still bent on her face.

"Yes, he is altered," she said gravely; "he looks so much older,"—then turning to her mother—"and you are altered too, mother," she said, with her sweet rare smile, "but you look younger than I could have expected."

The tinge of colour that rose in Dorothy's cheeks made the likeness between herself and her daughter very perceptible.

"That's just what Mr. Burneston remarked

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yesterday," she said, in a fluttered voice; "he said—"

"Bother Maister Burneston," said John good-humouredly. "We'll hev t' rest o' t' 'teeal presentlys—t' lass'll need to gan oop-steers to fettle hersel'."

Doris went upstairs and sat down in a chair near her bedroom window. She saw how small everything was, and that the ceiling was very low, but she never glanced at the little details about the room, at which Mrs. Barugh and George had worked so hard.

"How different things are from what one expects !" she said. "I thought mother would vex me, and that father and I should get on well; and now it's father's way of speaking that vexes me, and this little ugly house. I feel as if I must stifle in such small, poky rooms. Mother looks nice, if she wouldn't stoop, and George looks like a gentleman—somehow I feel timid with George. But it's too soon to judge fairly of anything, and it is nice to be like Rika, and have people of one's own to love one."

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Doris's notions of the outside world were somewhat vague. Twice a year there were parties at Pelican House, and in these she had danced with, and had been spoken to by "grown-up" gentlemen and ladies, for every one was attracted by Miss Phillimore's "lovely pupil," who never seemed the worse for the notice she excited. Then at church she saw many people, and in the long Summer holidays Miss Phillimore had taken her sometimes to Cromer, sometimes to Broadstairs, and Doris had found friends

everywhere. She never sought them. Her proud northern nature shrank from any deception, and she felt that with strangers she was a deception, and that if they could see her in her home-surroundings, with her mother in place of Miss Phillimore, these refined acquaintances would not care about her.

There was no outspoken confidence between Doris and her schoolmistress about her home or her parents. Miss Phillimore had asked no questions and made no comments—even on John Barugh's broad accent—for she saw him

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once or twice; and so the girl's natural reserve had deepened and strengthened. Till Rika Masham came to school, Doris had not opened her heart to anyone—even to Rika she merely said her father was a Yorkshire farmer. She had tried to forget her surmise that Mr. Burneston had been the means of sending her to so good a school. The feeling of obligation was galling to Doris, but it came back now; and she wondered how her father could ever have brought himself to submit to it.

"Well, perhaps it is a way landlords have." She roused herself to take off her bonnet and smooth her hair—for she now wore it smoothly brushed behind the little ears that blushed like a delicate sea-shell—it would not lie flat, there was a lovely ripple on the silken masses, especially over the creamy temples, where a blue vein showed through the tender skin. "George said, when he wrote about Rose, that Mr. Burneston was going to pay half her schooling; but Rose and I are different." Then, after a pause, "Perhaps father's richer than I thought.

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and took nothing but advice from Mr. Burneston."

Doris came into the room below, and the sight of the tea-table gave her a fresh shock—she had forgotten the old home customs—it was piled with cake of all kinds, besides cold ham and fowls, and a huge pie. She looked at the plateful her father carved for her, and pushed it gently away.

"I can't eat half this, father; indeed I can't," she said.

"Niver fash theesel', mah lass" John said. He was so happy that he was almost frolicsome this evening. "Eat it or lay't back, it's all yan, bless thee; thoo's seeafe tu be reeght."

George said little; he was studying Doris, and wondering whether she would like Rose. He always felt better in health away from Burneston, but it had been a sacrifice to give up Rose's visits, though lately she had been visiting some of her schoolfellows, and he had seen little of her.

John Barugh noticed the lad's silence and the

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wistful looks he cast at Doris; and, though he grudged to lose a moment of his darling, he understood George's feelings.

"Dorothy," he said, when the meal was over, and the smart little maid had cleared the table, "coom awaay. Ah've summat fer the'." Then in the kitchen he added, "T' lad's flaayed. He weean't speeak tu Doris whahle there's nobbut him an' her aleean. Coom, mah lass, Ah've brought yu a fairin' fra' Lunnon."

It was true; false shame, or perhaps strength of feeling, had kept George dumb. As soon as his father and mother had departed his shy-ness fled. He limped across the room and took a chair beside his sister.

"I'm afraid"—he spoke much less broadly now when he was not excited; his intercourse with Mr. Burneston and with Rose had rubbed away some of his accent, while his reading had changed the old idioms of his forefathers into a nearer approach to standard English—"I'm afraid," he repeated, "that at first you'll find us rough an' unlike what you've been used to."

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"Yes, it's very different." Then, with an effort, "But then you are my own people, and it is so lonely to live among strangers."

George raised his eyebrows, and his young face looked almost stern.

"Then why did ye stay on so much longer than was thought of?"

"Ah! that was different. I had got used to the loneliness, and I felt that, if I came away at the time that had been fixed, I should be only half taught; my learning and music would have been of no use; I should most likely have given them up."

"You would niver give up readin'."

"Oh! no; everyone must read, but reading is not all. I suppose anyone can read, whether educated or not," she said loftily.

George felt humbled, and the old distance seemed to rise between him and Doris. He had grown to consider reading a high acquirement, because it was the only means of culture that came within his reach; and besides this, his reading had taught him the meaning of some of his own feelings. In these years of separation

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from Doris he had often blamed himself for their disputes, or rather silent estrangements, for they both felt too deeply to get their grievances readily into words. Now this pitiless speech, though he exonerated Doris from meaning it unkindly, carried him back to childish days, and revealed the root of the want of sympathy between them.

"No, it's not all,"—he made an effort to smile—"but it is a good deal to a chap that has to keep quiet most of his time, Doris."

"Yes; I was not thinking of you when I spoke," said Doris simply.

She had had no intention to wound; she was so accustomed to look at everything from her own point of view that it could not occur to her to study the feelings of others; and this manifest ignorance restored George's balance.

"School doesn't teach everything, I see," he thought, looking admiringly at his beautiful sister, "or maybe my notion of a lady isn't

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t' right 'un; an' yet there's Mr. Burneston, he quite sorts wiv all I fancy; he's good an' gentle an' 'refined,' as mother calls it; he's proper an' kind too, but he niver speaks a word 'at 'll mak' a lad feel sore when he's out at t' door."

"D'ye mind t' squire, lass?" he said presently.

Doris had gone up to a little bookshelf, and was reading the names on the backs of George's favourites. She did not turn her head; she felt her cheeks had grown red at the words.

"Yes, of course I do; he used often to come to the farm, you know; he's not altered much, I expect." And as she spoke, really and vividly came into her mind that meeting at the gate, and the foolish rhyme, which during her school life, and the complete severance from home scenes, had grown vague, and, when recalled, had made her

wonder why it had so greatly troubled her. Now she seemed to see the golden-starred meadow, and the white parsonage-house nestling down below

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it, and she said over to herself the words—

"May it so happen, and may it so fall,

I may be lady of Burneston Hall."

George laughed loudly, and Doris started and cried out. The reality of it all seemed to scorch her, and she turned round suddenly, so as to break away from the vision which had effaced present surroundings.

"Eh, lass, did I flaay yu?" He got up, and, limping towards her, laid his hand gently on her shoulder. "Why, I'se sorry, Doris, ye look fair skeeared; sit ye down, lass, on t' squab. I laughed t' see yu potterin' at t' old books. D'ye know aught o' this here?" And he pulled Rose's well-read gift from under the sofa-cushion, and gave it to his sister.

" 'Pilgrim's Progress.' " Doris turned over a few pages, and then gaped a little. "I've heard of it, but I don't think I ought to read it, George. Miss Phillimore told us never to read 'Don Quixote,' or 'Pilgrim's Progress,' or the 'Vicar of Wakefield.' She said

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they were common books, quite unsuited to girls."

George's lips curled. "Well, so is Shakespeare an' t' Bible, an' yet they're not common. If ye choose t' read the 'Pilgrim,' I'll mark yu what to read; an' ye'll hev a real loss athoot it, Doris. It's as full o' wisdom as a puddin' is o' plums. Maybe it wad help yu; it hes me, oft an' again."

"Help me!" Her delicate eyebrows curved in wonder, but she was not ruffled by her brother's bluntness. "I fancy one must always get help from superiors, and John Bunyan was an ignorant man."

There was a silence.

"This isn't the old piano." Doris went up to a small pianoforte at the end of the room, and opened it; then her eyes glistened. "Oh, how very kind of father! Has he really bought this for me?"

She touched a few notes carelessly, and a bright flush stole into the boy's pale face. He limped up to her, put his arm round her neck, and kissed her.

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"Sing me a song, honey," he said tenderly; "ye could sing like a lark when ye were a little lass."

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CHAPTER VI. DORIS'S WALK.

THE beauty of the dales round Steersley, and the picturesque little town itself, delighted Doris; in the fresh glow of reunion with her family, and the novelty of all around, she lost the stiffness which the first strangeness had created.

"Thoo's mah ain lass, efter all, 'at Ah thoowt Ah'd nivver see again," said John Barugh, on the third morning after her arrival. "Ah war reeght afeared o' thee, lass, at fost, thoo waz as set-oop as a duchess."

Doris looked at him gravely.

"Only shy, father, I think; you see you were all used to one another, and I was the only stranger."

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"Weel, weel," he patted her soft hair with his broad red hand, " 't war t' sangs, lass, put us i' time wiv yan anither, t' sangs hev put new life intiv mother and me an' George."

And indeed it seemed as if the magic power of her music had melted reserve and distance between the brother and sister. Doris did not yet know how to talk to George so as to win his confidence, but she had found out how to please him and her parents too, and the three sat entranced evening after evening, while she sang song after song, or played little snatches of Mozart or Beethoven. Those evenings came back to her in the after-days of her life.

Her chief longing in these first days was to get out of doors, and her father had gone with her in her walks. George tired so soon, and Mrs. Barugh never walked farther than to church and back: spite of the tiny house and the clever little maid, the notable Dorothy always had something to do indoors.

John Barugh had walked out twice with Doris, swelling with pride as he crossed the square market-place, with its old pump in the

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midst, and saw the landlord of the "Black Eagle" come to his door, which faced the said market-place, to look after the fair creature walking beside her father; but on the fourth day John departed for Burneston without trusting himself to any leave-taking.

"Tak' tent o' mah lass," he said to Dorothy, "an' see sheea deean't want nowt, bud mind yu, Dorothy, nae visitors." He said this stubbornly, and got into his dog-cart, and went back to his farm.

Mrs. Barugh went down to the gate with her husband, and now, instead of going back into the little sitting-room, where Doris and George were reading, she turned into the room they dined in, on the other side of the passage.

"My word, one would think Doris was more John's than mine, he seems to set more store by her than by anyone else." She went up to the small, gaudily-framed looking-glass and settled her cap. "I suppose it's natural; she calls to his mind, poor fellow, what I was twenty years ago." She gave another look in the glass, and

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a little sigh escaped her. "Ah dear! I didn't think then to take up with a man that couldn't speak proper English. Perhaps Doris 'll improve him—though somehow I don't think she'll bide long with us."

Mrs. Barugh nodded her head, and then went off into a reverie on the subject nearest her heart—a subject so sternly forbidden by her husband on the occasions when she had ventured to hint at it, that Dorothy had grown to consider it almost criminal, and seldom now spoke of Mr. Burneston, lest she should say more than she intended.

"It's all a pack o' nonsense o' John," she said at last, pinching and pulling her large worked muslin collar, to make it sit more like those worn by Doris. "Such a face and such a figure as she's got would ha' made her look like a lady anyway, and now she can play and sing and talk as she do—I ask where's the hindrance? John's a good husband, but he's a fool in some ways, he's clivver too, an' he ought to know where a woman's wit comes in useful; ah, if he'd just let me manage, I'd soon see

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the squire courtin' our lass. It's right down stupid of John."

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently, she hated to be forbidden anything, but to be for-bidden to ask Mr. Burneston to come to the cottage was insupportable.

"Mother, I want father." Mrs. Barugh started. There was Doris standing in the door-way. "I'm going to walk alongside the river we crossed yesterday—I'm sure there's beautiful country down in the valley. Where is father, perhaps he'll like a walk?"

"Why, child, how you scared me! Your father's gone back to Burneston, he's wanted at the farm. Why, my dear, he's taken a longer holiday than he's took for many a year, thanks to you."

"It was very kind of him," she said, and she went upstairs.

She had grown used to her father's broad speech, and his great kindness had touched her deeply, but there was a certain sense of freedom in his absence. The tiny house oppressed her, and so did her mother's quiet, common-place

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talk. George was interesting, but he gave her much food for reflection, and the complete change in her life had caused, after the first excitement awakened by it, a powerful reaction and a longing for space in which to dream as she had dreamed till Rika came to Pelican House.

There was this distinction between Doris's craving for solitude and that of a more imaginative dreamer, out of whose reveries creations are evolved—she only wanted to digest and consider this new life. It seemed to her that she was a woman now, and she must plan her future, as when at school she had planned her return home and its consequences. This was over, and home was on the whole more satisfactory than she

had expected, her mother was so much quieter, and George was so superior to her remembrance of him; but yet it seemed to her that all was not over. Some day they would have to go back to Burneston, and what would life be like then? Must she always be content to live alone at home? for she could not associate with the village people. As she

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looked forward to this part of her future, she saw that there lay the sting of the difference between herself and her family. Her mother and George spoke with delight of Mr. Burneston's visits, and she could not endure the prospect of seeing him. Doubtless there would be a charm in listening to his refined talk, and in the sympathy she would find in him; but it would be too galling to be visited as an inferior, and how else could Mr. Burneston regard her?

She turned gladly from this thought to the picture she was occupied in painting of her own future usefulness. She meant to seek out poor ignorant girls and teach them to refine themselves, and try to make them give up the taste for smart, cheap finery which she remarked in Steersley, and imitate her own simple ways; also she would teach them to think less of lovers; it was so very absurd that a man almost a stranger should claim all the thoughts of a woman, and make her forgetful and careless even of her parents. This last idea had been created by George, who argued that the first

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duty of a woman was to become devoted to one man.

Many of these thoughts haunted Doris as she tied her bonnet strings and came slowly downstairs.

"Doris, love,"—her mother came out into the passage and spoke timidly; she was not nearly so much at her ease with her beautiful child as clumsy simple John was—"it's best not to go far off, unless the father's with you, my dear. This isn't Burneston, where all the folks know you; we're strangers here."

"Mother," the girl held her head very proudly, "what's the use of trying to be different from what I am? If there's no one to walk with, I must walk alone. I suppose other farmers' daughters have to do it, and the sooner I begin the better. I shall be ill if you coop me up in-doors. You would be far better yourself if you got more air and exercise, and so would George." Then seeing the look of timid dismay on her mother's pale face, she added gently, "Will you come a little way with me now?"

Poor Dorothy was so touched and flattered by

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this request, that, almost involuntarily, she kissed her daughter.

"I'd like it of all things, my dear, and maybe another day I'll manage it; but George's heart is set on apple-pie to-day, and as to trusting Harriet to make it alone, I'd liefer go without, and George wouldn't touch it—the paste would be leather or chips, and maybe burned as well. You needn't look so troubled, Doris; indeed, my dear, I don't do kitchen work, your father couldn't abide it, let alone that I was never brought up to anything dirty; but standing over pie-crust is a thing no lady need look down on, so I tell you." Her cheeks flushed as she ended.

Doris smiled and went down to the gate. "Good-bye, mother," she nodded, and it seemed to her that in that little outburst her mother had been more real, more like the fretful woman she remembered, than she had seen her since her own return home.

"There is really nothing to be ashamed of in my present life except that I am idle," the girl thought. She tried to be dispassionate, and to

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look at the whole matter as if she herself were detached from it. “I don’t think I’m ashamed of any of them; if I had not been to school I shouldn’t have known any difference, I suppose. Then, if I hadn’t been, I should have lost, oh, how much! Why, I had no more perception of things than a dog or a cat has! I enjoyed nothing but puddings and new frocks. At school I was always looking forward. Well, then, there must be a want of some kind in life, so perhaps in time I may feel satisfied.”

There was a stern contraction in the delicate eyebrows, a firm compression in the exquisitely curved lips, which told that the prospect of her future life gave Doris deeper anxiety than she would acknowledge. But her mind was too strong to indulge in repining, and she looked about her to enjoy the exquisite country she delighted in.

Behind the two old-fashioned inns, with their quaint signs, the square-towered church stood at the corner of three roads: the road leading up from the little town; the high road on the right which led to the Rectory; and facing her

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was the path which ran up past the church and followed the course of the little beck for some way, then it divided, and broadened on the left into another high road, which ran northward, and on the right it went on in a narrow lane to a gate leading into pleasant-looking meadows.

Doris stopped a red-headed boy at the gate, and made out from him as well as she could her way to Steersdale; she had heard of it in her yesterday’s walk, and had resolved to see it without delay. A fresh breeze blew her hair into her eyes as she climbed up the steep meadow which rose in a long green hill on the right. She paused for breath; before her was the wood the boy had spoken of, rising from a stretch of intervening waste

grown over with brown gorse and dark orange brake and long red bramble arms. The wood was bordered by oak-trees, which, though set some way apart, stretched their branches till one met the other. Doris soon crossed the waste, and when she reached the shade of the oak-trees she looked back across the broad stretch of common.

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The tower and roof of the church, with its belt of poplar-trees, gave some token of a village, but the houses lay hidden in the valley from which she had climbed, and only betrayed their whereabouts by wreaths of blue smoke, which blew this way and that as the breeze reached them. In the background lines of pine-trees stretched east and west, and above the dark trees rose the top of the hill, on the right glowing with golden corn, and on the left purple with a stretch of heathy moorland; far as her eyes could reach, rose interminable trees, veils of grey mist showing here and there where the dales came between the wooded hills. These soft mists varied in hue according to distance, and at times seemed to melt into the sky-line. Doris sighed with the fulness of peace such a scene brings, and then as her eyes fell on the foreground on each side of the waste—a foreground of emerald-green meadows and fat yellowing turnip-fields—she turned and resumed her journey.

Her road lay through the wood, and this was suffused with green light, for the trees within

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it were planted closely, and the thin branches intermingled overhead; but soon the light grew whiter, and she found a small gate leading into the high road. Crossing this, she passed through another gate into a lane with grassed banks and hedges gay with honeysuckle. Except these flowers, which made the air sweet around her, and the clumsy buzz of a humble-bee blundering in and out of the heavy-laden blossoms, there

was no sign of life near; there might have been cows in the fields on either hand, but the hedges were too thick to see through. The perfect solitude was delightful to Doris; she wanted to think about George, especially about his manner on the previous evening.

Her mother had spoken of Rose Duncombe, and Doris had answered coldly. She had never liked Rose, and one of the resolutions she had made at Pelican House was that she would not associate with this girl. As she answered her mother she looked at George, and his expression of sudden anger puzzled her.

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She walked on, her eyes bent on the ground, striving to puzzle out the meaning of the vexation in her brother's face, but after her usual fashion, simply from her own point of view. All at once a bright flush flew over her cheeks, her eyes grew brilliant with indignation, and she gave a little stamp as she walked.

"It shan't be. It can't be. If George were to marry a girl like that, I could have nothing to do with him. She's not good enough for him. Oh! it can't be! He only cares for her for old acquaintance sake, and because they played together."

A stile which she had been told to cross stopped her, and she looked round to be sure that her landmarks were correct. Yes, there in front was a meadow rising into a green hill, and at the top, on the left, she saw smoke curling upwards from the farm-house, which she knew must be lying under the shoulder of the hill; but her way lay slightly to the right, over the hill-top. Here were black-faced sheep nibbling busily, and every moment

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a faint tinkle came from a bell among them. A girl in a lilac frock and a sun-bonnet of the same colour was coming slowly down the hill path, leading by the hand a tiny copy of herself; the tiny child lagged behind at the end of its sister's long thin arm.

"Nance," the little voice said fretfully, "Ah's sare weary." Then, as her sister went on with her head bent, taking no heed of her, the child spoke angrily, "Thoo taks nae gaum o' what Ah says, Nance."

"Hod thee gab," said Nance, sententiously, and she went on silently as before.

Doris looked after the children, and an expression of uneasiness crossed her face.

"I was like that girl once," she said, "exactly like her. I never had charge of George, but I remember how I used to vex him by my silent, dreamy ways; but when we played or talked we used to quarrel; surely silence was better than quarrelling, and it is almost the same now. George is good, very good, much better than I shall ever be, or should care to

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be, but he and I cannot see things with the same eyes." She paused for awhile, but the thought kept its place. "Well, Rika and I seldom. agreed, but we never quarrelled; but then Rika can argue so well about things. She has seen and heard so much more than George has, she can give new light on subjects. Rika is so bright and original, and then she never broods over things, one knows exactly what she means. I did not know how much I cared for Rika till I came home."

She sighed deeply. At Pelican House she had felt herself Rika's equal, in some ways her superior; but now she asked which was real, her present estimate of her own position, or the Doris she had seemed to be at Pelican House? the well-dressed, looked-up-to young lady, whose notice was sought by all her school-fellows.

"I cannot ask Rika to come and see me," she said mournfully. "She is poor, poorer than we are, no doubt, and poverty seemed to be inferiority at Pelican House; but then she is a

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lady, and I am sure that everyone who belongs to her is as refined as she is; there is no false-ness about her anywhere."

Even if Rika would excuse and tolerate the roughness of her people, Doris felt that there was an insuperable obstacle to the happiness of their meeting at the farm. Sooner or later Mr. Burneston would visit them, and there would always be the chance of his meeting Rika, and Doris felt bitterly that Rika, with her home-made merino gown, and her untidy, careless ways, would be Mr. Burneston's equal, while she, so much better dressed, in what Miss Phillimore herself had called "such much better style," would have to behave to him as to a superior.

"Clergymen are the equals of everyone," said Doris, "and these Mashams are refined people besides."

She left off thinking, and looked, with a longing for escape from these worries, at the peaceful English landscape, and at a long stretch of moorland bounded by the picturesque range of hills. In front of her lay another wood, enclosed,

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and entered by a large white gate, and as this slammed behind her, Doris wished she could shut out her worries with it. This solitude, for which she had longed, had brought torment instead of soothing to her.

It was a very different wood from the oak copse. Tall ash and beech-trees sent out such massive roots across the track that she had to walk heedfully. A rushing sound close by told her she had at last reached the river, and now the path which had been winding in and out among the trees turned abruptly, and began to descend, and Doris saw through the tree trunks on her right that she was near the edge of the bank overhanging the stream; the sound told her how very high she was above it, but the path in front descended more and more rapidly, and she felt she should soon see the water that rushed along with so hoarse a voice below. She was too dispirited, or she might easily have broken a way through the brushwood and clinging brambles to the edge of the ravine, but

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instead she went on pensively planning her future, under the new light that had come on it.

Should she give up Rika and all her upward longings, and try to content herself with her parents, and George, and the neighbours? “I cannot, I cannot!” she said. “Why should I fling away all that I have gained so hardly? Books may keep up my learning, but they won’t keep up my manners or my speaking; and I can’t give up Rika; I never knew what she was to me before.”

She might leave home and be a governess. More than one of Miss Phillimore’s pupils had been educated with this intention. Why, even Rika herself contemplated taking such a position, should need require her to do so. Doris sighed.

This was not the future she had planned, the future in which she was to influence and help others unaided. Well, could she not as a governess influence and help the childish minds confided to her?

“I would not mind taking care of orphans”

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(the exquisitely-set head was proudly erect), "if I could be entire mistress; but I could not live in another person's house and adopt the ideas I found there—no, that is not the life I have planned."

There was another future—Doris flushed angrily when the thought came; it was perhaps because this other future, viz., marriage, had a way of subtly connecting itself with Mr. Burneston, that the girl shrank with such dislike from the prospect of seeing him.

"Any way but that." She turned her head as if to shake off the idea, but to-day it clung like a burr; generally she found it easy to dismiss. For refuge she went back to the maxims of Miss Phillimore. Doris set far more store by the schoolmistress's scraps of worldly wisdom than her warm-hearted friend did.

"Rika used to laugh at Miss Phillimore; she thought her shallow and a prig, but I learned things from her that I find useful every day, little things that I never knew till she taught me. Yes, mother perhaps meant the same

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thing in what she used to say, before I ever went to school, only"—her lip curled—"poor mother said girls shouldn't think about 'sweet-hearts;' and she was right, though she ought not to have talked so to me at ray age. Miss Phillimore said more than once there was nothing so common and underbred as for a girl to think about getting a husband, or to think about love nonsense of any sort. Well, of course," she smiled, "it is absurd; no one could think of "love nonsense" with a middle-aged man like Mr. Burneston; but I will not think about him at all."

To shake off this unwelcome puzzle she began to run down the steep path, smooth now, for the very tall trees had stopped on the brow above, and she ran on violently till she stopped herself in a green meadow into which the wood suddenly opened.

A bright tinge of colour glowed on the girl's cheeks, and her eyes were glistening as she looked round for the river. Down in this valley the light had begun to fade, and the evening looked later than it really was. Yes, there lay

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the river, dwindled to a tiny brook now, and screened behind a hedge that ran along the opposite side of the narrow strip of meadow. A gap in this hedge showed a plank laid over the stream, and across this Doris found herself in the dale she had so longed to reach.

The stream went winding on between green banks, gravel-edged, for the heat had shrunk the water; down below large stones showed green and brown through it, with here and there grey projecting masses, against which the stream struggled hoarsely. Ash-trees rose from the hedge beside it, a hedge backed by the ever-rising hill she had just descended, and now as she went on the sun began to set behind the wood, and the breeze rippling the water made thereon grey patches which contrasted with the reflection from the glowing sky overhead; the grassy dale broadened as she advanced, and a steeply rising wooded bank on the left made the place a charming green valley which seemed to have no end, and through which the broadening stream

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might, so far as eye could reach, "flow on for ever"

The trees looked dark and massive now, and as the sun sank and the light faded, the grass toned down from the bright emerald of its mid-day hue; it was wonderfully

smooth, like a huge soft carpet, through which the river went on babbling, sometimes by a sudden curve making its way almost to the middle of the dale, and then again retreating to its ordinary channel on the right. It had so shrunk in some places that, though the tops of the banks were a good distance apart, the water ran along below like a silver thread. Doris grew tired of following its meanderings, and at last, when it curved and recurved like an S in the middle of the dale, she scrambled a little way down the bank, and drawing her skirt closely round her, jumped four times in succession across the brook. The last jump was a wide one, and her bonnet fell off as she reached the farther side. She laughed as she replaced it; the exercise had brought back her serenity.

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"What would they say at Pelican House ?" she thought, but her eyes and cheeks glowed, and the breeze sent her hair straggling over her forehead. It had just occurred to Doris that she was taking a very long walk, and that her mother might grow anxious. She looked on to the end of the dale. Framed by the trees, which closed all distant view, was a man on horseback. He was not coming towards her; he seemed to be waiting for some one. "He is too far off to have seen me jump," Doris thought, "but it was foolish of me to behave so like a child;" and again a bright flush rose in her face.

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CHAPTER VII. A MEETING IN THE DALE.

MRS. BARUGH lingered at her gate, looking after Doris, perfectly unconscious of all that was happening down street, as she would have called it; for the High Street, after leaving the market-place, sloped downwards, and passing the cottage, which stood sideways from it, descended somewhat rapidly to the river, out of which came the little beck which flowed through the town. Up street a clergy-man was coming at a quick

pace, which did not seem to suit with his worn face and bent figure. He was scarcely an old man, and yet he was past middle age; he had a thin, red face, which had no pretension to beauty, and

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his hair was very grey, but there was a look of much sweetness in his faded blue eyes, of refinement in his timid mouth. As he drew near the gate Mrs. Barugh's quick ears heard foot-steps, and turning round, she faced the clergy-man. He raised his hat, and she curtseyed, but she made no effort to open the gate.

The clergyman's face flushed, and his lips quivered nervously.

"I—I came to call on your son, madam, and have a chat with him, if you will permit," he said, in so deferential a tone that Dorothy curtseyed again, and a pretty little tinge of colour made her look almost young. "I noticed on Sunday that he is rather lame, and I hear he is fond of reading. I shall be very glad to offer him the use of my small store of books."

"You're very good, sir, I'm sure."

Dorothy forgot all about her gentility in the outburst of her touched feelings. "Will you walk in, sir, if you please? George'll be right pleased to see ye. Though I'm his mother, and

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have perhaps no right to praise him, yet, sir, there's few lads like him."

The clergyman stopped, and looked earnestly at her.

"I am sure of it" he said, "he has goodness in his face;" then, with a little nervous twitch of his mouth, "I had forgotten—I must intro-duce myself as the Rector of Steersley; my name is Hawnby."

Again Dorothy curtseyed, and then she opened the door and announced the rector to George.

The boy's eyes brightened with pleasure as the clergyman shook hands with him and renewed his offer of books.

"It's the greatest kindness you can do him, sir," said Mrs. Barugh, and she hurried out of the room to fetch the ginger-wine and seed-cake, which, in her opinion, were the necessary accompaniments of a visit, whether it was paid at eleven o'clock in . the morning or at four in the afternoon.

George looked at Mr. Hawnby's sweet gentle face, and a thrill, the electric consciousness of a

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long-wanted sympathy, made the boy's heart beat quickly.

"The loan of books is a great kindness, sir," he said shyly, "but not the greatest. I think coming to see a poor crippled lad's wonderful kind, an' I don't know what to say for 't."

A clatter outside made him look out of window.

"It's t' squire," he said.

The rector left his chair and went to the window; a strange gentleman, on horseback was an event in Steersley.

Mr. Burneston at the gate was looking for some one to hold his horse.

"Mebbe you'll excuse me, sir," said George, and he limped out of the room in search of his mother. "Mother" he called out, "here's Mr. Burneston."

Mrs. Barugh nearly let fall the tray she had just arranged to bring into the sitting-room. She forgot the rector in her surprise.

"Lor'! what will John say?" and then came this consoling reflection. John had said she was not to invite Mr. Burneston to call; he had

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not said she might not see him if he came. Oh, what a misfortune that Doris was out! She straightened her cap and hurried to the gate.

"How d'ye do, Mrs. Barugh?" The squire spoke so frankly and cheerfully that Dorothy felt she could not deny him anything, let John say what he would. "So you have your daughter back again; is she at home?"

"No, she's not, Mr. Burneston, and I'm rare vexed; she's gone out for a walk."

"She'll not be long, I suppose," he said carelessly. "I have some business in Steers-ley, and I'll come back again in ten minutes or so."

Mrs. Barugh had been thinking while he spoke, and she answered eagerly,—

"Doris hasn't been gone above a quarter of an hour, Mr. Burneston; she was going to find out Steersdale; she's a famous walker is our Doris."

"Steersdale! why, it's ever so far off: you shouldn't let her go to such a lonely place by herself," he said, pettishly. "I'm afraid I can't

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wait; good day" and raising his hat he rode off.

He was very angry. He had met John . Barugh the day before he started for London to fetch Doris, and ever since his craving to see her had gone on increasing at a rate which showed him how strong a hold she had got on his imagination.

"Nothing but idle curiosity," he said to himself; but the curiosity would not be quieted, and this morning he had ridden over to Steersley to satisfy himself by the sight of Doris.

On his way he had tried to prepare him-self for disappointment. Miss Phillimore had written him a letter full of praise of her "elegant pupil," as she styled Doris; but she had laid so much stress on the girl's "acquirements, which would do credit to anyone," that Mr. Burneston feared he should find her spoiled.

"That schoolmistress has overdone it. If there's anything I hate, it's a clever woman," he said. "Half the charm of a girl lies in her

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little ignorances, and in the way she has of looking up to a man for information. I sent Doris to school to get polished, not to be turned into a blue-stocking. Learning takes all charm from a woman. I believe, after all, I had better have seen her at Pelican House now and then."

But as he reached the cottage his eagerness to see the girl had returned, and he could not restrain his anger when he learned her absence.

"What a fool that woman is! Fancy a girl like Doris wandering alone in such a place as Steersdale!"

He only knew the way thither by the high road, which crossed a bridge over the river, and ended the dale, and he rode off at once in that direction. He had no fear about recognising Doris.

"If Miss Phillimore is to be trusted, whatever else she is, Doris is a lady," he said to himself, as he left the high road and entered the dale.

The river was broader here, but still it was

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evidently much narrower than usual. Gradually the ground rose on each side; on the right the lofty bank was clothed with trees fenced off from the dale by a low grey wooden paling, while beside the river on his left, as Mr. Burneston advanced up the green valley, was a hedge, behind which sloping meadows climbed to the top of a hill, and on this a fence of dried furze and twigs stood out in strong relief against the pale green sky.

All at once there came into the picture the vision of a girl springing from bank to bank. He was too far off to see her face, but the grace and freedom of her movements impressed him at once, and he reined up his horse till she had jumped over the last bend of the brook. Then, as her bonnet fell off, something in the slight erect figure, in the queenly poise of the head, set Mr. Burneston's heart beating quickly, and without pausing an instant, he galloped forward, and sprang to the ground to greet Doris with all the impetuous eagerness of a boy.

"How do you do. Miss Barugh? I must introduce myself, if you have forgotten me. I

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called on your mother this afternoon, and she told me where you had gone."

All this time Doris had stood blushing, first from vexation at her own heedlessness, and now under the squire's admiring gaze. But she made a great effort at composure, and probably her anger at having appeared childish helped her more than she knew.

"I have not forgotten you," she smiled, and raised her eyes to his face; "you are Mr. Burneston."

He thought he had never heard words more sweetly spoken, and for the moment he forgot that he had resolved to consider Doris in a calm, dispassionate manner; he forgot every-thing but the delight of gazing at her exquisite face, and he turned to walk beside her, leading his horse along the dale.

"You have a good memory," he said; then feeling that he must have those eyes once more raised to his own, "Do you find your brother much altered?" he said earnestly.

The long lashes were lifted again, and the wonderful blue-grey eyes fixed on his, the pupils

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dilated with sudden emotion, so that the eyes looked very dark.

"Yes, I find George quite altered, more altered than—than anybody;" then more timidly, as her eyes drooped again, "It was easy to recognise you—you have not changed at all, I think."

He laughed. "Well, I suppose I may con-sider that satisfactory; you have changed in many ways in these five years."

The bright colour flew over her face.

"Yes, I hope so," and there was a stiffness of tone which took him back to the child Doris. They walked on a little while in silence, and then the girl said,—

"Is your son quite well?" As she spoke a flash of angry feeling passed out of her face, and was seen by his ever-watchful eyes. It startled him. Why should she be angry when she spoke of Ralph? She had scarcely seen him, she could not dislike him, and the

squire's thoughts went on to a possible future. And yet, the solution of her frown was simply self-centred; Doris could hardly keep from calling

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him "sir" when she spoke, and her anger against herself was vehement.

"Yes, Ralph is quite well, thank you; he is still at Eton, but he will be home at Christmas—at least I am not sure." Mr. Burneston spoke dreamily; it had just occurred to him that Ralph might as well spend Christmas with his aunt and cousins in Scotland. "It is rather dull for him, poor fellow, at Burneston, all alone; though he and your brother saw a good deal of one another last holidays."

"I should think he finds George too quiet," said Doris. She spoke easily, seemingly without interest, but also without shyness.

"Well, but do you think people need be alike to suit one another? Your brother's silence is just the thing to suit a lively fellow like Ralph, and then George is more indulgent than quiet fellows often are, and my boy is a young scape-grace." Even while he spoke, the squire almost smiled to find himself treating Doris as an equal, and eager that she should think well of him.

"What a pity!" she said simply.

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Mr. Burneston felt jarred and yet fascinated. He did not care to hear Ralph blamed, and yet he admired the freshness of nature which could make Doris independent of the fear of giving offence. He walked on in silence.

Doris was glad of the silence; notwithstanding her calm manner, she was inwardly flurried. She had been taken so completely by surprise that she had been obliged to

answer in a hurry, and her thoughts never moved very rapidly. She wished Mr. Burneston would leave her, and then she should regain composure. She felt in a nervous and most unusual state under his eyes. “I like to hear him talk” she said, “I always did; but he used to make me feel shy when I was a child, and it is the same thing now; it is hateful to feel shy at nine-teen.”

“Have you been here before?” he said abruptly.

“No. I wish I had come sooner; the country is charming. I should like to stay here for hours.”

He looked grave.

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“It is too far for your brother, is it? I suppose he is glad to have you as a companion in his walks, when you do not go so far.”

“Yes, but he is so lame, he can only go up to the old castle, or maybe to the terrace in the park.”

“And you care for longer walks? Well, then, do you know I think Mr. Barugh or your mother should come with you? This is a lonely place without a companion—too lonely, I think, for a young girl to walk in.”

Doris looked quickly at her companion, and her spirit rose against what seemed to her quite unjust interference.

“Father is gone back to the farm, and mother does not like walking,” she said stiffly, “and I have always gone where I like in the country.”

Mr. Burneston laughed, and Doris felt completely at fault. She had been so accustomed to rule those around her by a quiet stiffness, or rather coldness, of speech and manner—not only natural to her, but used knowingly as a means

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of government—that this want of heed, or rather submission, surprised her.

She felt a sudden interest in Mr. Burneston; he reminded her of Rika. She had not thought he could do anything so unusual as to laugh at any one openly; but she was not courageous enough to ask him why he laughed.

"I must talk to Mrs. Barugh about it," he said; then, feeling that he was not sure of the mother's authority after such a long separation, "I think you had better not come here again alone," he said; "next time your father comes over he will bring you here, no doubt, if you wish."

Doris had recovered herself. She felt so entirely free of Mr. Burneston's authority, that his assumption of this fatherly part amused her.

"I don't think father minds my going so far alone," she smiled. "I loitered to-day, looking about me, or I might have been home by now." Then feeling a sudden resolve to take her own position with Mr. Burneston, "You

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see," she said, blushing at the words, "I am only a farmer's daughter, and girls like me must go about alone, or they must stay at home."

He felt as if some one had struck him a sudden blow, and he answered impetuously,—

"I beg your pardon, you make a great mistake. If your father had wished you to adopt the ways and habits of—of an ordinary farmer's daughter, he would not have sent you to Pelican House: that has changed everything. Tell me honestly. Miss Barugh"—his colour rose, and his eyes grew very earnest—"what you wish—to return to the companions you had before you went to school, or to associate with educated people?"

"I had no companions before, except Rose Duncombe."

She spoke proudly. It was insupportable to walk beside this man and submit to be questioned and advised on her secret trouble, hitherto unshared with anyone. She looked very angry, her cheeks burning with mortification and resentment.

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"Ah, no," he smiled, "I forgot you were new-comers in Burneston; but I am sure Rose Duncombe will not suit you now, and yet you must have friends." Then, after a pause, he said gently, "Will you let me consider myself one of your friends? will you let me advise you?"

"Thank you—you are very kind." She was in such a tumult of feeling that she answered mechanically.

"It is something gained that she did not refuse" he said to himself. "She looks like a tempest. What could make her so angry? With all her simplicity, she is very difficult to get on with. However, shyness is apt to make people unlike themselves, and she is shy with me, of course."

They walked on again in silence to the end of the dale by which Mr. Burneston had entered it. As they reached the high road he stopped.

"I will say good-bye here. I am not going back through Steersley. Then we are to be friends?" he smiled so genially as he held her

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hand, that Doris smiled back again with a radiance that glowed in the squire's mental vision all the way back to Burneston, even after he had reached the old manor-house beside the river.

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CHAPTER VIII. ON THE ALERT.

THERE is a truth which everyone may not have realised, because as Truth lives at the bottom of a well, only those whose faith is earnest enough will ever brave the risk of seeing her face to face; but thousands who just peep over the well's edge think they have gone to the bottom, from the persuasion they hold that a glimpse is as good as a full view. The truth I am now meaning is, that time has not the same apparent duration to all of us, though it acts on all. Days which in crowded cities and among busy workers seem to fly as they pass, and yet to fly carrying with them work achieved or preconceived purposes accomplished—indeed,

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fulfilled progress of all kinds, empty of nothing but of that wonderful old-world charm of leisure which, like the lichen on ancient stone-work, gives to country life its special idyllic beauty—such days, sweeping by with seeming swiftness, carrying with them rest and health, and so much of life's best energies, how full they seem now they are gone! how long we are in reviewing them! And yet, in the sweet peace of country existence, free from the manifold interruptions of town life, when day after day only the actual routine of life has to be lived, when there is full time for the minutest duty, and abundant leisure for recreation be-sides, how slowly such days go by, with a delicious long-drawn-out sweetness that seems a foretaste of heaven! How short they are as we look back, because seemingly we have done nothing in them! We cannot see, without a much closer, more earnest investigation, all they have done for us. Link by link, hour by hour, habits have been forming, affections have been developing into loves, dislikes have been strengthening into hatreds, and all has gone on

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secretly and strongly, because uninterruptedly. There have been few external distractions to weaken or stunt the growth of a passion or a purpose.

So days had gone on to weeks, and Mr. Burneston found that his visits to the Steersley cottage had become a necessity of his existence. He did not think or argue how these visits were to end, but he knew secretly that if he were to follow the bent of his inclination he should ride over to Steersley every day. He had surprised himself by the freedom with which he had first spoken to Doris, and he thought he had been premature. When he saw her again she was far more distant.

Ostensibly his visits were paid to George, but Doris was always present, and poor Mrs. Barugh found herself so left out of the lively conversations the squire kept up with the young people that after a time she felt huffed, and usually took her work into the other room. Dorothy began to find life dull at Steersley. She had few of her wonted occupations, and she wanted John to tease and scold. There was fresh

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sickness among the cows at the farm, and he only came over for Sunday, and then he was a visitor, and had to be made much of. On week-days George was always with Doris, and the talk of these two did not amuse Dorothy; it was tantalizing to live so shut up alone. Steersley was different from Burneston. There were neighbours here whose acquaintance she would have been proud to make, but the squire's visits held these neighbours aloof.

One day she hinted to Mr. Burneston that Mrs. Selby, the wife of the Steersley attorney, and Mrs. Cotswold, the wife of Lord Moorside's agent, were pleasant people, and well inclined to be sociable.

"Please don't make any new acquaintances without consulting me, Mrs. Barugh," he said hastily, "I shall be jealous if you do. I shall think my friendship is not enough for you; and you really know nothing about these people; they may be mere gossips."

His word was law to Dorothy. She smiled and bridled in a glow of satisfaction at being advised by Mr. Burneston, but in her heart she

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felt isolated, or, as she said, "moped." Her longing for gentility had been gratified by the squire's notice, but she knew that this very notice had alienated the people of Burneston from her; they were jealous of the favouritism shown by him to strangers. Poor Dorothy! her "society" was something like the guinea given by Mrs. Primrose to her daughters; and although she had suggested Mrs. Selby and Mrs. Cotswold, she felt that she should be quite con-tent to take up with Mrs. Gilling at the Black Eagle, or Mrs. Byland, the wife of the carpenter of Steersley, just to be able to open her mouth on what was happening.

Mrs. Byland lived opposite; and when Dorothy retired from the trio in the drawing-room, as she persisted in calling it, she spent much of her time at the window, looking for a glimpse of her neighbour over the way.

It was delightful to have an elegant-looking, lady-like daughter, who could sing and play and talk as Doris did, but the luxury was robbed of half its importance when it had to be kept solely for home use, and when there was no one to talk it over with.

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To-day she had become so much absorbed by her speculations as to the result of the squire's visits that she did not hear the street door open and shut. She only roused herself to see Mr. Burneston wave his hand and ride away, and George standing at the

gate looking after him. She was shocked at herself, and kept on lamenting as she sat looking out of window.

"My mercy I to think of my so behaving to a visitor, and such a visitor, of all people! Whatever would John say? It 'ud give him a fine peg over me—that it would. I wish that cow 'ud just live or die outright, so as I could get a word with John. There's no speakin' to George; he turns up his eyes an' calls me worldly, before he knows what I rightly mean. And, after all, men's wits is not of much account, unless it's all plain sailin'. It's been one o' the mischiefs o' my life, that I've seldom met with a 'cute woman I could talk over things safely with; though I'm not sure of its being a mischief; sharp women is apt to be like razors—sharper than safe. Why, what on earth I Oh, my mercy! Yes, it's her, and no mistake."

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Mrs. Barugh's delicate mouth opens to its widest, and her faded eyes have brightened, and are staring over the way, as if they mean to spring from their sockets, to follow the spare, active woman who is entering Mrs. Byland's house. If Doris had not been in the next room, Mrs. Barugh must have called out to George, and have asked for his sympathy in her curiosity; but she was not at her ease before Doris. The girl's quiet simplicity seemed to be always rebuking her mother's strain after "genteel ways," and Dorothy had the constant fear that her child thought her vulgar.

"That was Mrs. Emmett; I'd swear to her; there's not such another looking woman in these parts. What can she want prowling here, I'd like to know? She's spying after Mr. Burneston. I wouldn't have Doris know for any-thing. Sly old toad!"

Mrs. Barugh altered her position, and placed herself behind the white lace curtain, so that she could see without being seen. Her quick wits at once jumped to the right explanation

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of the housekeeper's presence at Steersley. "She's come to spy after her master; she wants to see where the squire goes, and she'll make some mischief, as sure as eggs is eggs," said the anxious mother. "Well, perhaps, after all, it's a mercy that I didn't get neighbourly with Mrs. Byland, for—" Dorothy smoothed out the faded lilac gauze cap-strings which hung on each side of her delicate face (in those days, though only old ladies tied their cap-strings under the chin, cap-strings were a necessary part of the head-gear)—"I should have told her everything—just filled her mouth ready for this old spy. I believe John's right; he's always kep me from makin' friends, because he says I tell too much to everyone. Well, Mrs. Byland can only tell what she's seen; but she's a regular Paul Pry, always watching at the window, just like a woman without children; they're a rare lazy lot."

She longed intensely to be in the opposite house listening to the talk between Mrs. Byland and her visitor, and yet she felt helpless; «he could do nothing. Mrs. Emmett had a

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right to visit any friend she might have in Steersley, so Dorothy stood watching and fuming behind her muslin screen, with two fingers pressed against her quivering lips.

On the previous day Faith Emmett's nerve's had received a severe shock. Ten years ago her cousin Hezekiah Byland, who had been engaged to her for eight years, having grown tired of waiting for his elderly cousin, had married a handsome, dark-eyed country girl; but as Faith was much older than he was, and had moreover often refused to leave the Hall to become his wife, her fellow-servants held Byland acquitted, and told Mrs. Emmett she ought to let bygones be bygones, and make friends with the young wife.

Faith bore the desertion silently, and as long as her cousin lived in York it was easier to bear it; but when, previous to settling in Steersley, he wrote asking leave to present his Peggy to his "much-loved and respected cousin," the smouldering fire blazed up in Faith Emmett's soul.

"The coward!" she said; "the mean lad

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to suppose I waste a thought on him or his!"

But this was only an outburst. Faith summoned her dignity, and wrote a courteous invitation to the recreant Hezekiah; and then, dressed in an old velvet gown given by her mistress, she awaited her visitors.

The grandeur of everything and the stately courtesy of Mrs. Emmett's manners, the way in which she seemed to be a part of the old house itself, her sway over the household, and her lofty patronage, quite overpowered Peggy. She blushed and giggled, answered in the wrong-place, and finally threw her glass of port wine over Benjamin Hazelgrave's best trousers, which he had put on to do honour to the housekeeper's guests.

Hezekiah Byland had never seen his wife behave so awkwardly, and, being proud and slow-witted, he was vexed, and told her to "mind herself," at which the luckless Peggy, being overwrought and frightened, burst into tears, and these, under the cold, surprised glances of Faith, and her lofty pity, ended in hysterics and a sudden leave-taking.

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"A gude riddance, teea," Mr. Hazelgrave had said. "Your cousin sud ha' stuck tiv his first bargain, Mistress Emmett. This missis he's gitten is nobbut a haveril."

Since this visit Faith had heard nothing of her cousin, but this morning had come a letter from Peggy.

It began by an affectionate invitation to Steersley, and an assurance of cousinly regard. Peggy said that her dear cousin, Mrs. Emmett, had been brought to her remembrance by the sight of Squire Burneston, who was now a constant visitor at Steersley, courting a bonny young lass from London.

When Doris went away from Church Farm, the Burneston people had heard from Joseph Sunley, who managed to know everything that happened to his neighbours, that John Barugh had committed the extravagance of sending his lass to a London boarding school, and that to save expense—this was Joseph's version—Doris was not to come home for holidays. "Penny wahse an' pund feealish," Joseph said, and went on to argue that the lass would have

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been better and happier had she been sent to school with Rose Duncombe.

Faith Emmett had taken little heed of this gossip till one Sunday the sexton said in her hearing that the squire made fools of the Barughs by the notice he bestowed on them. The house-keeper had always despised Dorothy, who had scrupulously avoided her, and her contempt deepened when she learned her master's favouritism.

The sudden departure of the Barughs for Steersley had made, of course, food for fresh gossip, but Faith did not trouble about this, except to rejoice at their absence.

Peggy's letter struck her to the heart; for a moment she was capable of murdering the "bonny young lass" who had dared to attract the squire, and then she laughed at herself.

"It's a trick o' Peggy to fright me, but I's not sik a feeal as she thinks. I's boon to Steersley to-day, an' I'll see wi' my ain eyes what she meeans."

She had not heard of Doris's return. Even

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if she had heard of it, so wild an idea as the truth would not have presented itself; but she went into the village and asked Ephraim Crewe to drive her over next day to Steersley.

Peggy Byland had expected this result. For some time past she had been burning to show the arrangements of her smart house to some of her husband's people, by whom ■ she considered herself snubbed. She had lost her shyness, and had gained much in self-importance, since she had lived in Steersley, where her handsome face and showy dress attracted far more notice than they had done at York, where she and her husband had lived in an out-of-the-way corner, "fair wasted," she said. Therefore when she wrote to her husband's cousin, the wish to tease was mingled with the hope of provoking her to visit Steersley. When Faith's knock came at the door Peggy was sitting in her smart parlour in her best black silk gown, and the gold chain she had made Hezekiah buy for her, so that she might look, as she said, like a lady.

The maid showed in the visitor, and then

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Peggy rose, her great black eyes sparkling under their thick straight brows, and her colour brighter than ever, as she went forward with outstretched hands to greet Mrs. Emmett.

"Now this is reeal kind on ye, Ah's seear it is. Ah hopes ye're not tired by coomin' oot so far fra home, Mistress Emmett?"

But even while she tried to speak as boisterously as possible to show her perfect independence, Peggy's heart sank under the cold scrutinising glances of Faith's yellow eyes—glances all the more stabbing from the covert way in which they shot from under their long dark lashes.

Faith took the chair set for her with cold self-possession. She did not even ask for Hezekiah; she was resolved that Mrs. Byland should understand that her visit was due only to the importance which she, the housekeeper of Burneston, attached to reports affecting the credit of the Hall.

"What for did ye mean by sendin' sike a feeal's tale to me, Peggy Byland?" she said

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sternly; "writing names in a post letter, an' mebbe it hes been opened! I'm sham'd on ye."

Peggy's carmine cheeks grew purple.

"Don't ye mak' no mistaks, Mistress Emmett; there's mair mistaks than haystacks i' t' warld. Ah reckons t' squire, as ye calls him, hes a reeght tu pleease hisseP, an' t' lass hes a bonny face o' her ain. Ah believes she's leeakin' oot o' t' winda noo."

Peggy rose, rustling her skirts, and pointed out the cottage.

"Do ye mean to say"—Faith's face had grown rigid—"that t' squire visits at sike a poor owlish place as yon? Mebbe he's gude to 'em—he's rare an' gude, is t' squire. Ye sud mind your tongue when ye speak agaan t' qualaty, Peggy. Coortin', yu said! coortin', in sike a place as yon! T' ways o' t' qualaty isn't t' same as fooalks like yoursel'."

Peggy tossed her head. Faith's provocation had given her the courage she wanted. As she said to her husband afterwards, "Ah war fair raageous. Ah warn't tu be sed by ony awd lass."

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"Weel, mebbe he kens 'em; but they're nut poor. An' when Ah sent t' letter Ah didn't expect ye kenned 'em; but Hezekiah said i' t' mornin' they're Burneston fooalk, an' t' naame's Barugh"

She kept her eyes on the window, in the hope that Doris and her brother would come out, as they often did, for a walk. She did not see the change in her visitor's face. Faith turned suddenly pale, her yellow eyes dilated till she looked like a cat ready to spring; but even then she was watchful over her words. The strange part of this woman was that her outbursts were deliberate, and calculated to produce a certain effect, while her real impulses were as strongly controlled as they were violent.

"They're not awd Burneston folk," she said coolly; "new-comers—t' farmer, an' t' missis, an' a lame lad?"

She gave a quick, interrogative look at Peggy, who nodded, and then spoke eagerly—

"Eh, there's more then t' fayther, an' t'

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muther an' t' lad. They com fost, an' mebbe two weeks efter comes a lass, an' Ah expects she's their lass by t' ways on 'em; but she's a lady fer all that."

The withering rage and scorn that possessed Faith are indescribable. She looked at tall, broad-chested Peggy, and felt that she could shake her into fits; but she still kept a seeming calm. Peggy was looking curiously at her, and Faith forced herself to smile.

"Mebbe it's Doris, t' lass fra scheeal—an' ye call her a lady! Fahne feathers maks fahne birds, Peggy. She's nobbut a farmer's lass." She gave a scornful glance at Mrs. Byland's gold chain. "Nae doobt it's t' Lunnon gown gives a look tew her; but Doris 's

not a lady, Peggy. Them that's allays wi' t' qualaty kens t' difference, where sike a yan as yersel' wadn't find it." She ended so loftily that Mrs. By-land's courage forsook her.

"Weel"—she spoke doubtfully—"Ah can't say but ye're reeght; but Mr. Burneston hes corned tweea tahms sin' Sunday, an' we're at Frahday noo."

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Faith grew paler, but her face remained still. "How's your man, Peggy?" she said. "I can't bide wi' yu no longer; ye mun just say to Hezekiah 'at I'd bizness at Steersley, an' I looked in on yu."

She refused hospitable Peggy's offers of a meal, and even cake and wine had no power to stay her; she departed professedly to transact her business in Steersley, really to seek Ephraim Crewe and his cart at a farm about half a mile out of the little town.

She did not try to verify Peggy's story; she felt that it was true. There had always been something in Mr. Burneston which had eluded her vigilance, and now she felt sure he was disgracing himself. The removal of the Barughs, the long absence of Doris, all sorts of tokens and foreshadowings, dimly seen before, came upon her with sudden vividness. Did Mr. Burneston mean to marry this girl, and set her up over the heads of her betters? She felt dizzy as the thought came.

"If he'd meant worse he'd not ha' waited

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while she cam' fra Lunnon," and she trembled with suppressed fury.

But as she sat silently beside Ephraim Crewe, Faith forced her anger into the background, and set herself to see what could be done. Master Ralph had a will of his

own, if he could be brought to sustain it; and he was as proud as need be; if he knew the truth, he would not tolerate Doris Barugh in his mother's place.

"There's his cousin," she said doubtfully; but she had not much faith in Gilbert Raine's conventional notions. Mr. Burneston had no other near relative, and Faith knew little about his friends, except the hunting and shooting companions, who came once a year to the old Hall.

No, she must trust to Ralph, and she resolved to write to him; she knew he would not betray her. She should simply tell the boy there was a report that the squire was going to marry a young girl, the daughter of one of his own tenants, and point out the mischief this would make, and tell him also that

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it might be too late to stop the marriage if he waited to interfere till the Christmas holidays came.

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BOOK II. COURTSHIP.

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CHAPTER I. GILBERT RAINE IN HIS DEN.

GILBERT RAINE was an early riser, and often hard at work in his study before the post came in. In levelling ground on which he meant to build cottages, he had come upon some Roman brickwork, and by unremitting digging during the last few days, he and his two gardeners had succeeded in exposing the foundations of part of a Roman house. He

was busy writing an account of this discovery for one of the learned societies of which he was a member—so busy that when the post came in he suffered his letters to lie unopened beside him. He looked thinner, and, if possible, more eccentric than when he was last at Burneston. His hair hung in dark elf locks over his bright,

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restless eyes, and the wrinkles on his forehead had deepened, so that when he raised his eyebrows, as he did now, he looked much older than he really was. He wore very little hair on his face; and while he held a letter close to his near-sighted eyes, he pulled at his scanty whiskers with his left hand till his cheeks grew red with the rough treatment. "What on earth—" Then he turned to the first page, and read the letter again.

"MY DEAR GILBERT,

"You always said I was to write to you when I was in trouble, and I don't know what can be done about my father. I hear he is going to make a low marriage. Now, you know I don't want a step-mother at all; they're always a mean, mischief-making lot; even if it was a lady, it would be bad enough. What can my father be thinking of? It seems to me he may be off his head, or some one's taking him in; so will you go down to Burneston and look after him? If you won't, please tell me, and I shall go off post-haste, and get expelled in

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consequence. But you are such a dear old chap, I know you will go. We ought, between us, to prevent my father from disgracing the family.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"RALPH AYLMER BURNESTON"

Gilbert Raine left off pulling his whiskers, and grasped his chin tightly, while he once more read Ralph's letter.

"Then I was right, after all," he thought; "and those allusions in Phil's letter pointed to this intention; that's to say"—he crumpled the letter vigorously in his brown, sinewy hand—"if there is a word of truth in it; I believe it is only gossip. I'll bet anything that old housekeeper is at the bottom of it all, and she has set on the boy to get me to interfere. Well, then, shall I interfere? Why should I make myself Faith's tool, and perhaps ridiculous into the bargain?"

He stood thinking, screwing up his brown face till it was seamed all over with wrinkles, while he frowned and closed his eyes. He was so dark,

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and gaunt, and keen-looking that, but for the manly, candid expression of his bright eyes, seeing him in this den, with its queer counter-like tables, high stools with black leather seats studded round with brass nails, and walls formed of shelves and pigeon-holes, you might have taken him for an old alchemist or magician.

The tables were laden with books, pamphlets, papers, bits of tiles, &c.; and the mantelshelf was a chaos of ancient fragments—the toe-bone of a mummy, relics from an Indian temple, a stone from one of the lost cities of Central America, a bit of granite from the Menhirs at Erdeven, a Roman statuette from the south of France, coins from the Pyramids, with sundry other things—all heaped one on another in a state of dusty confusion, that called loudly for the housemaid and a pair of bellows.

All at once Raine roused from his revere, and walked hastily out of his den, across the black and white chessboard floor of the entrance to the dining-hall, a long, bare room, with a dark, polished floor, uncarpeted, except by a

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Persian rug in front of the fireplace; on the left were six tall windows with small panes set in white window-frames, and on the right a huge wide chimney with an open hearth, guarded by enormous brass dogs. All round the upper part of the oak-panelled walls framed by the wood were portraits of Gilbert Raine's ancestors, dating as far back as Queen Elizabeth.

It looked very cheerless to see the meagre breakfast—a small coffee-pot, a roll, butter, and an egg—set at the end of a long, narrow table, capable of dining a score of persons. Eating was an occupation Raine did not give his mind to, and he ate his breakfast in a cheerless, ungenial fashion, alternately sitting and walking up and down from end to end of the long room with his mouth full, as he thought out his dilemma.

Austin's End was a fine old mansion, with a great square oak staircase, with richly-carved balusters and standards, and up this staircase the wind came rushing on this cheerless September morning to the many galleries and passages upstairs, into the large old-fashioned

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guest-rooms, making the old tapestry wave on the walls, till the nymphs and trees thereon depicted seemed to be courtesying in concert to the wounded knight lying outstretched above the scroll-work border. But the bare aspect of the rooms, and galleries, and halls made one shiver even in July. Except the aforesaid faded tapestry upstairs, the family portraits in the dining-hall, and a few large blue and white china jars on the staircase, suggestive of rose-leaves strewn therein long ago by fair fingers, there was nothing in the house to relieve the universal dark oak and whitewash. There were treasures in the shape of antiques and curios, locked up in old oak cabinets and chests about the house, but Raine had never yet found time to arrange these stores, he was always seeking fresh discoveries, without an idea of digesting those in his possession.

Before he had been a quarter of an hour in the dining-hall he rang the bell.

“Tell Buxton I’m going to Burneston,” he said.

Then he went up to his gaunt comfortless

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bedroom, with its bare, uneven floor, and packed his own bag.

“Whether it is Faith’s mischief or not,” he thought, “I must stand by Philip. He’s the best friend I’ve ever had, and I am the only creature in the world he’ll take advice from.”

But more than once, as he journeyed north-ward, he remembered that his cousin had taken no notice of the remonstrances he had written from Bornholm, and he sighed as he called to mind how very obstinate Philip Burneston could be.

So many years ago it was a long journey from Austin’s End to Burneston, and Raine did not reach the Hall till the next afternoon. “I must be very careful in what I say.” This was his final resolution, as he drove slowly over from the railway station at Wolden, some fifteen miles distant from Burneston.

What a time it was since he had seen the old place! He began to reproach himself for his long neglect, and the seemingly important

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matters which had kept him at home dwindled into trivialities in memory before the idea that, if he had not left his cousin so much to himself, Burneston might not have got into this entanglement.

Faith was in the hall when he arrived. She made a deep courtesy, while Mr. Raine asked Benjamin for his cousin.

"T' maister's gone ridin' alone, sir. Mebbe he's nut far off."

"Ah! I'll go and look for him presently. How d'ye do, Mrs. Emmett? Have you heard from Master Ralph lately? You'll be having him back at Christmas."

He glanced sharply at the yellow eyes, but they looked perfectly unconscious of mystery.

"Yes, sir, we hope so," and then she added a few words about his room, and Benjamin conducted him to the dining-room.

Raine thought he was glad his cousin was out. The strong dislike to interference which had come upon him as he read Ralph's letter returned with yet more power, and he asked himself what right he had to speak to Philip

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Burneston on such a specially private matter unless he consulted him. Benjamin stood behind his chair wondering at Mr. Raine's silence, for Gilbert always had a joke or a kind word for the old servants, some of whom had known him all his life.

"Do you know which room I'm to have?" he said at last, and Benjamin summoned Mrs. Emmett.

"Yey'll like your own room, sir, best," she said quietly; "it's always fettled, an' it's bin waitin' longer than usual."

She turned to lead the way up the old dark staircase, and, pausing on the first landing, went up three shallow steps into a gallery on the left, and threw open the door of a small room with an oriel window, in which were two easy-chairs and a writing-table strewn with papers.

"It's just as ye left it, sir, we's touched nought. Master Ralph said that t' papers was not to be stirred."

Gilbert Raine sighed as he looked round. There was something very comfortable and

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pleasant-looking in the square Indian carpet and the pale blue and drab hangings; the books and pictures, too, seemed like old companions, and the newly-lighted logs were sputtering and sparkling noisily in the wide grate.

A moment's vision of Austin's End with these beautifying comforts, and with some one to direct and order all, and take domestic cares from his mind passed before him, and then he shrugged his shoulders and screwed up his eyes.

"No, no, let well alone. At least, I have freedom, especially from heartache; and women have a knack of causing that."

He whistled and stooped over his bag, which he never allowed anyone to unpack. No one seeing the boyish glee with which Gilbert Raine enjoyed trifles, and his careless way of looking at life, would have guessed how sorely a woman had once made his heart ache. It had happened in his youth; he was twenty-two and the girl was twenty-five. She was engaged to a man in India, but she thought herself free to listen to the clever talk of the young

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Oxford man and receive his admiration. He was only a boy, she said, and he was the only congenial companion she could find among the guests' in a large country house. So she rode with him, and talked and laughed with him, and let him repeat poetry to her on long delicious summer evenings beside the river that ran through the grounds; and

one evening she was quite taken by surprise when the poor unconscious fellow asked her, with passion in his eyes and voice, if she could ever love him.

“Oh! why did you do this?” she asked. “I was so happy in your friendship, and I had meant to keep you for a friend always.” But Gilbert was desperately in earnest. He would not be put off so; and she had to humble herself and avow her engagement, and then endure the lad’s scornful reproaches.

Poor fellow! he could leave her in anger, but the effort nearly broke his heart—it made a man of him, and also a woman-hater, or rather woman-despiser; for since he had come into his uncle’s property many a mother and daughter had tried in vain to make Gilbert Raine take a

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wife. But that first impression, so sweet and then so bitter, could not be obliterated; he had never seen anyone so charming as that girl; and if she could be false, who could be true?

He soon went out in search of his cousin, and meeting Jock, one of Mr. Burneston’s collies, in the hall, he took him with him; but, though they made a long circuit, they could not find the master. All at once, as they paused on the hill-top beside the church, the dog pricked up his ears and went forward, barking joyously. In a few minutes Mr. Burneston had ridden up to his cousin.

“Why, Gilbert, old fellow, this is capital. I thought it was you, and yet I couldn’t believe it.”

But after the greeting was over, Mr. Raine thought Philip was unusually silent. He began to hope that after all he might not have to begin this difficult subject. Burneston had always come to him spontaneously with his troubles, and he looked troubled now.

As they passed the two cottages, Joseph

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came to the door and gave Raine a hearty welcome, but the squire went on scarcely turning his head.

"Well," Gilbert said as the silence continued, "what has been happening in Burneston, Phil? Have you burned Dame Wrigley yet, or has she given up riding on a broom-stick?"

"It is curious you should ask that to-day. The poor old wretch has been left in peace since young George Barugh took her under his protection." An inquisitive look came into Raine's keen eyes as the squire flushed at the name. "But now there is fresh sickness among the cows, and old Sunley is more violent than ever; I am afraid he would like to see Patience worried to death."

"Bloodthirsty old villain; and he'll see it done, too, Phil. He looked as tough as an ash stick when we passed him just now. Why don't you get the woman away?"

"She won't go."

"Can't you get the young fellow you spoke of, George Barugh, to influence her?"

"I never thought of it, and he is not in

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Burneston now; he is away with his people."

He rode on, getting out of the range of those observant eyes.

"Gone are they? They were the people on the hill, I think. Have you a new tenant then at Church Farm?"

Gilbert Raine's long legs had soon brought him beside his cousin again, and the downward road through the village was so steep that the horse went slowly.

"I didn't say they had left the farm." Burneston spoke irritably. "I wish they had." This was muttered to himself. "Mrs. Barugh has taken George to Steersley for a time for—for change of air."

"I forget—is he the only child? I don't seem to know much about these Barughs."

Mr. Burneston twitched his bridle, and then spoke angrily to his horse. He had a vexed consciousness that his cousin, instead of playing with the collie or speaking to the children at the cottage doors, was observing him closely.

"There are two children, a boy and a girl."

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And then without any intention, except that of changing the subject, "Have you heard lately from Ralph?" he said.

Raine was, as he said, a blunderer. He had no idea of introducing a subject adroitly. In his anxiety to have done with restraint, he forgot his cautious resolutions; it seemed to him that he had better speak, and here was the opening he needed.

They had reached the bottom of the village, and turned to the right beside the river, over which lay a brooding mist.

"Yes, I heard from him this morning." He stopped, but Mr. Burneston did not help him with a question. His cousin's uneasy manner had warned him that something had to be told. "The truth is," Raine went on hurriedly, "his letter brought me here."

"Really! Anything very important the matter?" very drily spoken.

How strange it is that when we are vexed with those we understand best, we often take the worst possible method of making them do what we wish! Philip Burneston wished to

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silence his cousin, and he showed his displeasure to that end, while he knew, or might have known by experience, that opposition was sure to rouse Gilbert Raines's determination.

A bright flush rose on the dark wrinkled face, and a slight frown deepened the creases round the eyes and mouth.

"Yes, Phil; the boy is anxious about you. It's no good use beating about the bush; the truth is, some one has told him you are going to be married."

Mr. Burneston laughed, but he spoke fret-fully.

"People are very clever. I certainly have not promised to marry anyone."

Raine gave a sigh of relief. "Thank God!" he said, gravely. "I thought it was possibly gossip. The story was that you were going to marry some girl who is—well, who is out of your own position."

Burneston rode on in silence till they reached the great gates which shut in the stable yard and the entrance.

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"Wait till we get in, Gilbert," he said. "I should have told you sooner or later, so I may as well get it over."

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CHAPTER II. LOVE IS LORD OF ALL.

MRS. BARUGH felt ill-used and irritable. She had, as she expressed it, been "led a life" by her husband and her son.

When John Barugh returned to Steersley and heard of the squire's visits, he broke out in stubborn anger. It required Dorothy's utmost care and tact to prevent him from showing his displeasure before Doris.

At last the storm quieted; and when he understood that the meeting in Steersdale had been accidental, and that Mr. Burneston always came over to Steersley, as Dorothy asserted, on business, John softened, and was obliged to confess that it was but natural the squire should

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call in when he was there to see George, as he had done at the Church Farm.

"Thoo mun keep t' lass fra seein' him ivvery tahme 'at he cooms," said simple John.

As he was starting to go back to Burneston he said to his wife,

"Rase Duncombe is wantin' to see oor Doris, an' Ah'v sed tu t' lass sheea may com."

"Oh no, John, don't say so. Doris can't abide Rose, they never suited; it'll be a sad mistake for her to come."

But John was in a hurry to be off.

"Bon it!" he said, "what harm can t' lass deea? Bud settle it atween yersels," and he went.

Dorothy gave a sigh of relief. She respected her husband and loved him after her fashion, but just now she did not want him; she was free for a week, perhaps for a fortnight, from his supervision; and she went back into the little sitting-room with a smile on her face.

But at the sight of George standing in the middle of the room, looking taller than usual,

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and pale with anger, she stopped in dismay, and gave a little cry of fear.

"Why, lad, why, what is it? Are ye ill? What's got ye to look so at your mother?"

"Whisht, mother! don't be a silly, an' steek t' door." Then, recollecting himself, he pointed to a seat, and tried to control his passionate anger. "Mother!" the tears springing in poor Dorothy's eyes softened his rebuke more than she knew. "Ah heard all ye said; yur talk fair caps me; is there no such a thing as t' right an' t' wrang, or are we to make what Doris likes and dislikes our rule i' life?"

But Dorothy had begun to cry. George had never before rebuked her so sternly.

"I can't bear it, I can't," she sobbed. "I do all I can to please the lot of you, and it's one twitting me here, and t'other scolding there, and now you lecturing, George, about nothing; it's too hard; so there."

George's mouth twitched. He shrank from giving his mother pain, but he could not shrink from what seemed to him positive duty.

"Ah'm sorry to grieve ye, mother." He stood

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before her as if he were the offender; but he went on firmly. “But it’s for Rose Ah speak. Rose was good an’ kind to me when Ah was nobbut a poor helpless sufferer, an’ are we to gi’ her t’ cold shoulder now? More than that, Doris an’ Rose waazn’t friends when they war little lasses; but mebbe t’ ane’s as much changed as t’ ither now.”

Dorothy tossed her head.

“Never, lad, never; can’t ye feel a difference as well as see it? Rose is—”

“Stop, mother; deean’t say what Ah cannut listen to. Rose is my friend, an’ Ah winnot hearken to a word o’ blame about her fra’ you or any ither body. If she an’ Doris deean’t fancy one another, let ‘em keep apart. But it’s hard on Rose an’ me, an’ Ah say gi’ ‘em t’ chance. An’, mother,” he said earnestly, “for my sake ye’ll be kind to t’ lass whenivver she cooms.”

And Mrs. Barugh felt how much harder it was to resist the sway of her quiet invalid son than that of her more irascible husband. John was long suffering; but when his anger was

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roused it was tremendous, and defeated its object.

“It’s the worst of being so good, lad,” Dorothy said as her son kissed her. “You’re so often right that you can never think ye’re wrong. Well, I s’pose I must take the long wi’ the short, and let you have your will; but don’t say a word to Doris.”

Her earnest hope was that, as she knew Rose had other friends in Steersley, the girl’s visit would be short, and would happen during Doris’s frequent walks.

For Doris, who had become very lively and companionable, had lately gone back to the silent abstracted moods of her childhood. Mrs. Barugh noted this, and drew her own conclusions; but George was puzzled and disappointed.

He had been growing stronger every day, and he often walked with Doris; but she was more dreamy and listless alone with him than in her mother's presence.

To-day, as they sauntered on the velvet turf within the grey ruins of Steersley Castle, he said suddenly, "What ails ye, lass; is it love?"

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"George!" She blushed and looked annoyed, and then, recovering herself, she laughed. "Oh, George, what nonsense! Don't you remember I was often like this? My friend Rika Masham said she had cured me; but I don't know. I wish you could see Rika, George; it would be nice for you to have a friend like her."

George flushed, but Doris's eyes were on the grass at her feet. "I hev you an' Rose," he said with an effort—for he rarely spoke of Rose to his sister. "I think a lad hes enough wiv two o' ye."

Doris raised her head, and her lips curved in a slight smile.

"But I can't help thinking if you knew Rika you would like her very much; she's so bright, so joyous, so full of mischief, she makes one feel so young."

George forgot his vexation. His brown eyes twinkled merrily.

"Young—that's gude for you, lass. Mebbe you'll be wanting a cap like mother's soon. Make hay while t' sun shines; you'll never be younger than ye are now."

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"I'm getting old; I really am getting old, George," she said; "I'm nearly twenty."

But after this she roused, and talked of Rika and her school-life till they reached the cottage.

"Please, miss, there's a visitor." Doris's heart beat with she scarcely knew what anticipation; but George went on eagerly, opened the parlour, and saw, as he expected. Rose Duncombe seated beside his mother.

Rose jumped up, shaking out her skirt with excitement, and rustling in the consciousness of a new, stiffly-lined gown and a showy scarlet shawl.

George's smile of glad welcome was slightly subdued as he watched the two girls shake hands. Rose was much prettier than Doris, he thought; her eyes were so sweet, her hair so bright and golden, and her colour as fresh as a rose. But, although he thought his sister's dress was too staid and quiet for a girl, it seemed as if Rose was a parroquet beside her. The village girl flamed with blue and pink and scarlet, and her hearty laugh and boisterous

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greeting jarred on him as it had never done before. But this feeling was only transient; he saw that Rose grew shy, and that Doris was stiff, almost haughty, and in a moment his allegiance came back.

"My word, you hev grown tall!" Rose tried to cover the awe she felt of Doris by a familiar manner which sounded pert. Doris was even more disgusted than she had expected to be, for she had not counted on Rose's assumption of equality. She thought school would have made the girl affected and silly; but this off-hand freedom took her by surprise, and made her own manner constrained.

"I suppose my nose is out o' joint wi' you, lad," Rose laughed at George, "now 'at ye've set up a real sister. D'ye find him changed, Doris? My word, ye've changed yerself; I shouldn't ha' known yu!"

"You are not much altered," said Doris in a polite, cold voice. She was angry with herself for being so irritated; but every word the smart rosy-cheeked damsel said took her back years—took her back to the farm kitchen and

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to herself, in her lilac pinafore and sun-bonnet. She felt that she hated Rose Duncombe.

"Not much altered!" Rose was violently mortified. "That's what *you* think, is it?" then she looked at Dorothy with flushing cheeks, and spoke very fast. "She's not changed in some ways, Mrs. Barugh. She's just as short-spoken as ivver, I see, an' she cocks up her chin as like—" Doris gave a slight shiver of disapprobation, and George looked troubled. "But nivver fash yersel', Doris; I'll take mysel' off. I don't need to force my company where it's not wanted; there's plenty only too glad on it." She turned her back completely on Doris, her eyes sparkling and her face hectic with passion. "Never you mind, lad; I'll come and see yu when yu gits back to t' farm; she'll"—jerking her head towards Doris—"hev settled down by then. Good-bye, lad; I've a heap of friends to go an' see at Steersley, though I begun wi' ye. Good day."

All this was spoken in breathless haste, while the listeners were dumb with surprise; and, squeezing George's hand, and nodding to Mrs.

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Barugh, Rose ran away -without taking any leave of Doris.

"Oh, Doris! what hev you done?" George spoke at once and angrily, for he had seen tears in Rose's bright eyes.

"Done!"—Doris drew herself up with dignity—"I really do not understand. I do not wish to vex you, George, but Rose Duncombe seems to me a very ill-mannered young woman. She certainly has not changed for the better."

"It's easy for them 'at hesn't gitten strong feelin's to keep cool and quiet. You know nothing about feeling, Doris; all you think of is manner. How would you like to be snubbed by one of your equals? and Rose Duncombe"—he looked at her sternly—"is much more your equal than Mr. Burneston is."

"Ah. my lad, don't"—Mrs. Barugh placed herself between the brother and sister, for George's vehemence frightened her; she could not understand it—"why should you bring the squire's name up at all? What can he have to do with Rose?"

Doris walked away to the other end of the

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room. She did not give a thought to George's wounded feelings; she only felt that this kind of rude quarrel was wholly ruffling and unsettling; during all the five years she had spent at Pelican House she had never been so much moved out of her habitual self-control.

"It all comes from their want of breeding," the poor girl thought; "and what will become of me? Shall I sink to this, to quarrel and be rude, like Rose, and grow altogether coarsened?"

But George was speaking in a steady, deter-mined voice, that compelled her to listen. "Mother," he said, "mebbe you didn't take notice; but it was varra hard on Rose. The lass have comed over here with a heart full of affection to welcome an old friend, an' t' old friend treats her like a stranger. I'm sorry I spoke so sharp, Doris. Mebbe you didn't mean harm; mebbe them's London manners. If that's so, I says I likes t' old ways best.

But I'm grieved for Rose; she's vexed with hersel', poor lass. She war fair set on Doris."

Doris looked very grave.

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"I am sorry too, George, but you know I never was Rose's friend, and I do not think I should get on with such a hasty person. Pray do not let us talk about her."

"No, my dear," Mrs. Barugh spoke soothingly, "it is not to be supposed you would get on with poor Rose. I'm sure she's a kind, good-hearted girl as ever lived, and she's been an amusement to George when I couldn't be with him; but she's had none of your advantages, my dear, and George won't think so much of her now he has you."

"Mother," George blushed like a girl, "dinnot find fault with Rose, I cannot bear it. Mebbe she's wantin' in many ways. She's old-fashioned an' countrified. Well, so's I, but she's gotten a heart, an' she's nivver said an unkind word since I knew her, an' I'm not goin' to gi' her up to please Doris."

"You are unjust, George. I do not ask you to give up Rose." Doris spoke calmly, but she looked pained. In her heart she was shocked at her brother's persistence.

"Why should I?" he said sternly. "She

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braids o' us; she's o' t' class we war born among, Doris. Eh, deean't yey go for to cheat yersel', lass, yer friend Rika, as yey calls her, Ml cock up her neb at yey when she sees what sort yu are, an' as for t' squire, he just cooms t' see us as his tenants."

"You're out there, my dear." Mrs. Barugh bridled and looked as nearly angry as she could be with her beloved son. "We're not Mr. Burneston's tenants here: it's one thing for him to come and see us at Church Farm, lad, and quite another for him to come here: it's plain he looks on us as friends, or he'd stay away."

"I nivver meant he didn't think us friends, mother—what I means is equals. D'ye think, mother, t' squire wad bring one o' his own friends to see you, or ask you to t' Hall nobbut to see Mistress Emmett; an' I fancys Doris wad be as ill-pleased wi' Mistress Emmett as she is wi' Rose Duncombe."

"George"—Doris came back and stood be-side him—"don't let us talk any more about this. We can't see things from the same point of view; only I think you ought to remember that I never did like Rose."

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"An' All says," George spoke passionately and broadly, "ye're wrang. Yey've changed by yer learnin', an' so hes t' ither lass, an' yey just sits in judgment on her wivout gi'in' her a chance o' pleasin' yu. But nivver fear, Ah deean't want to force Rose on yu, Doris; sheea an' Ah's coompany for ane anither; but mahnd off! Ah winnut hear a word again t' lass fra yan o' yu"

He limped out of the room. He was himself troubled by his own agitation, which he found quite beyond control—in speaking he had returned to the words of his childhood—and he wanted to prevent further strife.

Directly the door closed, Mrs. Barugh broke out in lamentation.

"Oh dear, oh dear, this world's a trial and a stumbling-block; George and me have never had a word in our lives before. I do wish you could have seemed more friendly to the lass, Doris, just for George's sake. You see, he looks on her as his friend, and so he takes any fault-finding to himself."

Doris made no answer. She was walking up and down the room, her fair forehead puckered

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by a frown, and her delicate lips firmly pressed together.

“Don’t you see what it is, mother?”—she stopped short in her walk and looked reprovingly at Dorothy.

“No, my dear. What d’ye mean? I—”

“Well, then, mother, I think you ought to have seen, for this cannot have come all at once. At least”—her cheeks flushed a little—“I fancy not. George loves Rose Duncombe.”

“My goodness, child!” Mrs. Barugh turned so pale that Doris spoke more gently.

“I’m sure of it. He would not excite himself in that way if he did not feel very strongly, and, besides, he has said other things.” She was thinking of what George had said in the Park that morning.

“Oh, Doris, I can’t think it. How could a poor lame lad like George take a wife? He’d have nothing to live on, and we’d be forced to have her to live with us. Oh, George, lad,” she almost wailed, “no wife’ll ever love ye as yer mother does.”

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She sat down crying, and smothered her face in her handkerchief. It was the most miserable moment she had ever known. George, her own George, to whom at least she thought she was all in all, had given his love to Rose, and here was Doris, her own

child, too, and yet so much a stranger to her family that she was not grieving at the loss of her brother's love, but only angry that he had given it so unworthily.

"Mother"—Doris spoke in the proud, resolute tone that had so awed some of her school-fellows at Pelican House—"you must leave off crying, and you must think. George is so young that it's nonsense to take such a thing to heart. It could never have happened if he had lived anywhere else and seen other companions as well as Rose, and I think it is all on his side. I am not sure that she cares for him. She seems too much at her ease."

"Not care for him! My goodness, child, you're dreamin'!" Mrs. Barugh wiped her eyes hastily and sat upright in her wonder. "D'ye mean to tell me, Doris, that such a lass

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as Rose wouldn't be proud of your brother George's love? Not care for him! Why, who is there in all Burneston, or for that matter in Steersley either, fit to hold a candle to my lad?"

Doris smiled. "It's not that, mother, but George is too quiet for such a 'girl as Rose. She's not one who will care to sit still in-doors. She is vain and silly, I am sure she is, and she has the common sort of nature that would seek to be admired. I can't bear to think George loves her."

"He's seen no one else—he hasn't seen girls enough, that's it," Mrs. Barugh sighed; "but it's too late now, Doris; if it's as you say, it won't do to be finding fault with her to George; it will only make him worse. There's not a morsel of use in crossing a man's love; you'll only steady it. Oh, Doris, you've made me sadder than I ever was before. Oh! George, lad, how can ye take up with a girl like that instead of your mother! She'll never love ye half so dearly. Oh, my lad, my lad!"

She covered her eyes with her hands. Her

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motherly grief did not touch Doris. She stood thinking with a very anxious face.

"Mother," she said at last, "it will be better for us never to go back to Burneston. Such a girl as that will soon forget George, supposing that you are right; and if she does not love him, will it not be much kinder and wiser to keep George out of her way?"

Mrs. Barugh shook her head miserably.

"You don't know your father, child. He can't abide changes—the trouble I had to get him to leave Pickerby! And though he's never, as one may say, taken to the Church Farm, still he's begun to lay out money there, and I doubt if he'd be willing to leave before he has got it's value returned."

"But you don't cling to Burneston, mother?" She did not wait to be answered. A sudden hope of escape, the outcome of her long reveries—reveries which, beginning in fear, always ended with the certainty of future mortification in life at the Church Farm—made Doris strangely earnest. "I own to you that I shrink from going back there. Yesterday you told me that

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George's health was so much better away from Burneston. Surely my father will not sacrifice us all for the sake of a few pounds." Mrs. Barugh looked utterly miserable.

"I'm sure I don't know, Doris. Your father has been at great expense for you, and then there's this cottage and the giving notice, and all. Why, child, a man can't step out of one farm and get into another as easy as he changes his boots."

"I suppose not." Then, while a rush of colour flew over her face, making her frown with vexation, "But with Mr. Burneston, as landlord, it might be easier, mother." She threw

her head back and spoke very coldly. “I don’t think Mr. Burneston wants us back at the Church Farm.”

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CHAPTER III. A THANKLESS OFFICE.

MR. BURNESTON was silent until he and his cousin were seated in the library; even then he seemed unwilling to return to the interrupted conversation.

He sat whistling and playing with a paper-cutter, which he had taken off the table.

“Yes” he said at last. “I wish that poor old Wrigley would go away, it might save mischief.”

Gilbert Raine had been feeling more shy and ill at ease than he had ever felt in his life; it was a relief to be able to speak of something else than the subject in his mind.

“Why don’t you see about it I But it’s new

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to see you worried, Phil; except now and then when Ralph was troublesome, or one of the hunters came to grief, you took life so easily.”

“And so I shall again, old fellow; just now I can’t.”

There was silence after this. Raine fidgeted and made a most hideous scraping by moving his chair on the uneven oak floor. At last he told himself he was a coward.

“Phil,” he cleared his throat, and there was a comical twinkle in his bright eyes, “when we were little chaps, we used to tell our troubles to one another. I suppose this story I’ve heard is true then?”

Mr. Burneston rested his elbow on the back of his chair, and shaded his face with his hand.

"True in some ways, but not in saying the—the person in question is my inferior."

"Thank God!" said Raine with energy, and he settled himself for a comfortable talk. "Let's hear all about it, old fellow," he said; the relief was so great that he felt cheerful. "I hoped

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you would have kept your freedom, but I suppose you can't get on alone"

Mr. Burneston looked uneasy. "I speak as I feel," he said pettishly; "the world, of course, will not agree with me; it remains to be seen, Gilbert, whether you can venture to have an opinion of your own, or whether you are influenced by Mrs. Grundy."

"I think I have shown the contrary. I generally snap my fingers at the old lady." But Raine was troubled by this beginning.

"Well, it's soon said. We were speaking of the Barughs just now. The daughter, Miss Barugh, is very refined, highly educated, and—in short, if she will have me, I mean to marry her."

Raine sat stupefied for an instant; then forgetting all restraint, he said eagerly,—

"Then you've not asked her yet? for God's sake, don't, Phil."

Mr. Burneston got up from his lounging position, and went and-stood against the mantelshelf, with his hands behind his back.

"Gilbert," he said quietly, "did you ever

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know me give up anything when once I had made up my mind?"

"Perhaps not; but hitherto the question has been about something which did not touch the welfare of your whole future life, and Ralph's also."

"Am I to give up my whole happiness, then, to avoid a possible annoyance to Ralph? Nonsense. Don't you see that in three or four years Ralph will have his own friends and live his own life, without the slightest reference to me? We have scarcely a sympathy in common—"

Raine sighed.

"Pardon me, Phil; but I must think a good deal of that is your own fault."

A flush was rising in Mr. Burneston's face. "You mean," he spoke quickly, "because I left him. Well then, I think you are wrong. I was unhinged and restless, and I always have disliked boys. If I had stayed at home, probably the boy would have hated me now, at least, he cannot feel that I am harsh or stern—in fact, we are very good friends when we meet."

"But do you think he will submit patiently

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to a step-mother out of the village? Now stop, Phil, I am only speaking from Ralph's point of view. How will constant domestic strife and petty squabbles suit with your fastidious notions of refinement, culture, and so on."

"To begin with, if you knew Miss Barugh, you would see that one of her great charms is the absence of all pettiness or feminine frivolity. She has not been brought up in her own home; she is—"He broke off with an irritable laugh. "I really don't know why I enter into the question; almost every man left as I am marries again, and if I am

satisfied, what does it matter? It is I who marry the girl. And certainly Miss Barugh wants no defence. She is just the wife I want. I intend to live quietly at Burneston; you know I always disliked Lon-don and society; except you, I have scarcely a relation in the world, and after a bit Ralph will be quite satisfied."

Raine sat musing. It was so impossible to him to believe that Philip Burneston of all men could be hopelessly in love with a farmer's daughter, that he could not bear to give up the matter as settled.

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"Don't do it, old fellow," he broke out impetuously; "you'll be so sorry if you do. That sort of polish is like varnish or veneer—it only hides, it cannot efface. Now could you bear to have sons and daughters of a different breed from Ralph? Fancy how he'd look down on such brothers and sisters—a row of little farmers, with wide mouths and big feet."

Mr. Burneston had looked very angry, but he laughed as his cousin ended.

"We have argued the subject once before, when, as you may remember, you put this idea in my head, Gilbert," he said ironically. "I do not mean this as a reproach; on the contrary, I am thankful to you, it has given me something to live for. I believe I shall be very happy, though I am prepared for an outcry at starting."

"You think nothing of example then. Suppose a woman in your position married Joseph Sunley, or a young man of his class, do you think the precedent would be a good one?"

Mr. Burneston looked grave again. "No, of course not; nor are the cases parallel; it is

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absurd to put it in that way. I don't say my own conduct is good for others to follow; but I don't set myself up as a pattern. Besides I am not doing this in a hurry, I have thought it well out; and I have not committed myself, and if I see any reason to suppose I am mistaken, I shall not ask Miss Barugh to marry me."

"Then is it quite fair to go on raising expectations which perhaps, after all, won't come to anything?"

"What, are you driving at?" Burneston said impetuously; he turned round and faced his cousin, and he saw the keen anxiety in Raine's face. "What do you want me to do?" he said more gently.

"Well, as you ask me, I'll tell you. Don't see Miss Barugh for three months or so. Come down with me to Austin's End, or we'll go away abroad somewhere together; and then when you come back you will see with clearer eyes, and you will, besides, have had time to think it over calmly and dispassionately."

"And find that some one else with more courage has won her. No, Gilbert." He looked

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as hard as the mantelpiece behind him.

"I should say there is no fear of that: there are very few men in your position who would dream of marrying Miss Barugh, and with her notions and the education you speak of she would not accept a young farmer. No, no, she'll wait for you. My dear Phil, do open your eyes; do you suppose the girl will give up the chance of being mistress of Burneston Hall?"

"She does not dream of being my wife," said Philip angrily; "you don't understand her a bit; how should you? You know nothing about women. Certainly, you never met such a woman as—" he was going to say "Doris," but he checked himself, "Miss Barugh." Perhaps his voice had taken an angrier tone because he remembered so vividly the child

swinging on the gate and her song. “And if she does look forward to it,” he thought, “it’s only natural; and it is my own fault;” but this excuse did not take away the sting of Raine’s accusation.

Gilbert was growing tired of his position.

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“Well,” he said, “I have done my duty as a friend, I came for your sake and Ralph’s, and I seem to have done no good. I had better have left it alone.” He got up and walked to the window whistling.

Burneston always found it difficult to be long angry with anyone, fie loved peace so much that he was ever willing to make the first advance; his wife had understood this, and had profited by the knowledge.

“Look here, Gilbert, we won’t quarrel about it,” he said, “of course I get vexed easily about this affair. I don’t want to deceive you, it’s true I love this girl more than I ever loved an-one, but I am not besotted; come over with me to-morrow to Steersley, and judge for your-self. If after seeing her you say she is not fit to be my wife, then—I don’t say I’ll give the thing up, but I promise to think it over again, to be prudent, and not to pledge myself to any hasty engagement.”

“Very well,” but Raine spoke unwillingly. He could not see how, by looking at this girl, he was to ascertain her merits.

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“I’m too late,” he thought, “the mischief’s done; what unutterable folly this love is!”

They separated after this; and though they met soon after at dinner, and seemed as friendly as ever, each was conscious that they had grown farther apart than they had ever been before in their lives.

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CHAPTER IV. "OH, HELL, TO CHOOSE LOVE BY ANOTHER'S EYE."

GILBERT RAINE woke next morning with the consciousness of an unpleasant weight on his spirits, which, like a bad taste in the mouth, took away the flavour of the day before him. But as he threw his window wide open, a keen crisp touch in the air was exhilarating, and the silvered grass and tree-twigs showed there had been a white frost. One of the mercies most carelessly and thanklessly received is that of change of temperature to a worried mind, and as the keen air found its way in freely, an elastic freshness pervaded Gilbert's mind, and went downstairs with him to meet his cousin.

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It seemed as if Mr. Burneston had forgotten his annoyance, he was smiling and cheerful as usual, and had a half conciliatory manner which puzzled his cousin. He really cared for Gilbert Raine's good opinion, and, more than for that, as has been said, he cared for living in peace. He was resolved not to increase his cousin's prejudice against Doris by showing any vexation, he felt so sure all prejudice must vanish in her presence.

"Shall you be ready to ride this morning?" he said. "I have ordered Punch for you. Pie used to be a favourite of yours."

"Thank you, old fellow." Raine began to see that his cousin was really anxious to propitiate him; and he felt hopeful for the result of his advice. He was fond of riding

Punch, nearly the best horse in the Burneston stables; but he was such a careless rider that he had seldom been offered the chance of mounting him.

He was rather put out by the hurry Mr. Burneston was in. Gilbert had discovered one or two old books in the library relating to some

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work he had in hand, and would have liked an hour's look at them before starting; but he was hurried, and bustled, and not left in peace till he found himself riding beside his cousin on the high road to Steersley.

Mr. Burneston had determined not to take his cousin to the cottage, nor to introduce him to Mrs. Barugh. By this time he had grown acquainted with Doris's habits, and he knew that, at the hour at which he counted on reaching Steersley, he should find her taking a walk with George in Lord Moorside's park, or seated reading among the ruins of the old castle of Walter de l'Espec. He had more than once found the brother and sister thus occupied, and he thought he should like Raine to see them too, where her surroundings would be in keeping with Doris's perfect beauty. One thing he had not counted on—the absence of George.

Ever since Rose's visit there had been an unspoken but decided coldness between the brother and sister. George told himself that he was in the right to hold fast by old friends,

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and to keep in his own station; beyond this, he thought he was teaching Doris a salutary lesson, for he disliked and disapproved the pleasure she seemed to find in Mr. Burneston's visits.

"I likes t' squire," he said to his mother, "he's very kind, an' I'm reeght glad to hear him talk an' see his kind cheerful face; but when he's gone, I'm t' same as ivver I was, while Doris sits glum, an' when I speak she gives a start as if I'd stuck a pin in her."

Mrs. Barugh smiled with an apparent mystery that irritated George. "Perhaps Mr. Burneston's talk makes her think," she said. "It's an uncommon advantage for you and her too to get such talks about things with such a gentleman."

"I'm none sure o't," said George. "Mebbe it's pleasant, but it's safer not to get to like things out o' reach, mother. Mebbe Doris'll end by thinkin' hersel' t' same as t' squire."

He looked so stern that Dorothy suppressed the first answer that came to her lips.

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"My word! you have taken to lecturing, lad, and it don't suit you," she said; "go out in the sunshine, it will do you good. Go after Doris; she's at the Castle, I fancy, for she took a book with her."

George muttered an answer, but he stayed in-doors. Something, he could scarcely tell what, seemed to be creeping into his life. As he sat thinking, he roused to a consciousness that he was being mastered by Doris, and when he had quenched the stubborn resistance which this thought brought, there came another revelation. George had thought himself a sufferer denied the amusements and enjoyments of his fellows, he had pitied himself, but as he looked back, grudging his former liberty, it flashed upon him that he had been spoiled into self-will. "Ah'm selfish, that's what it is, Ah'm got to cling to my ways an' my likings till Ah'm stubborn at being crossed. What for sud Ah feel vexed when Doris talks about her friend Rika? T' lass means nae harm, an' she's free to love her friend as Ah loves Rose. Nay,

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Ah'm wrang, Doris takes likin's cooler than Ah diz."

George was right. Doris felt that there was a coldness between herself and her brother, but she did not suffer from it. Her thoughts were now always so filled with Mr. Burneston's visits, and the memory of the talks that went on in them, that she had no time to waste on George.

"After all," she thought, as she sat down beneath the castle-wall, and looked through the falling yellow leaves at the village at her feet, "life at Burneston will be pleasant enough, if he comes to see us there." Here she stopped with a sigh. Only yesterday Mr. Burneston had again said he hoped they would not be in a hurry to go back, and before that he had told George that it might entirely restore his health if he left Burneston, and went to live near the sea. Did he want to get rid of them? It was a puzzle.

"I am growing idle," she went on. "I must remember to ask Mr. Burneston for the books Miss Phillimore recommended me to read. I

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shall go back if I don't keep up my studies, if I get interested in books I shall feel more settled. I think too much about Mr. Burneston's visits;" but she went on thinking of them.

She liked him very much. By talking chiefly to George when he came, he had managed to set her completely at her ease, and he so carefully restrained any expression of admiration, that she had no excuse for suspecting it, and although she often found him looking earnestly at her, she did not suspect it. She delighted in his visits because his refined speech and cultivated ideas were at once a link to the past she prized so highly, and a help against the future she dreaded; but the tumult of excited feeling and gratified vanity aroused by the meeting beside the brook had soon subsided. She thought of Mr. Burneston now as a valued middle-aged friend; it would not have occurred to her to think o£ him as a lover, he was so much older than she was; and, besides, Doris had

taught herself long ago that she could never marry, now that education had taught her to shrink

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from her equals. It would be the price she had to pay for the advantages she had had, but she knew nothing of love, and she did not look on life without it as a sacrifice.

She had not heard any footsteps, but the click of the gate of the little green plot in which she sat made her look up, and she saw Mr. Burneston and his friend.

"Good morning, Miss Barugh." And then Mr. Burneston presented as his cousin the tall dark gentleman, whose keen, searching glance made the colour rise on Doris's cheeks. "Where is your brother? Is he ill?" the squire asked, for he saw an amused smile on Gilbert's lips.

"No; but he does not always come with me—at least not lately." Doris spoke stiffly, she had a consciousness of being silently observed. "I thought he did; perhaps the hill tries him." And then Mr. Burneston stopped; he could not think of anything more to say.

"Do you sketch, Miss Barugh?" Raine said

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"There is plenty of subject here, I fancy; and this is a very good point."

"No; I don't draw at all." Doris raised her eyes, and looked gravely at Mr. Raine, and then she looked away. It was intolerable that he should keep those bright, keen, black eyes fixed on her face. She wondered that a friend of Mr. Burneston should be so rude.

"That's a pity; sketching is a great resource in the country. As you don't draw," he went on, "perhaps you're fond of reading?"

"Very." But Doris looked still graver.

"Novels and tales, I suppose, with plenty of romance, and so on."

"I have read very few novels. I like history."

Gilbert was provoked. "Ah, you have solid tastes, I see. Do you like the country?" he said flippantly.

Doris smiled, and the radiance in her face thrilled through her questioner. "She is beautiful!" he said to himself. "I can't deny that."

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"Yes," she answered. "At least I like Steersley, and I don't care about Burneston;—those are the only country places I know."

"You don't like Burneston, don't you? Why, what's amiss with it?"

His teasing tone amused Doris, it reminded her of Rika; but it wounded Mr. Burneston. It seemed to him that Gilbert had been catechising Doris like a child, and that he talked to her as if she were an ordinary farmer's daughter.

"Miss Barugh is right; there is not much to see in Burneston; the country is ugly thereabouts."

"I did not like it when I was a child," said Doris.

"Why not?" Raine asked eagerly.

Doris was puzzled by his questioning; she did not care to give her reasons to this inquisitive man.

"I think because I had no playfellows, and because there was no sea there. We came to Burneston from near the sea."

"You've been away some time at school, I

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think. Perhaps you would like Burneston now?"

Raine spoke mischievously; he really wanted to provoke Doris out of what he thought was an assumption of sedateness. Mr. Burneston could hardly keep in his impatience.

"No, I don't think I should," said Doris calmly. She looked at the squire, wondering at his silence; and it seemed to him that she appealed against Gilbert's impertinence.

"My cousin thinks a great deal of Burneston, I must tell you," he said, by way of apology.

"Not more than you do, old fellow." Raine looked slyly at Doris.

She blushed ever so little; she felt that she had been rude to depreciate Burneston before the squire.

"There is much in early association," she said. "I was too short a time at Burneston to give it a fair trial."

"Did you like school better than home, then?" said Raine.

Doris grew crimson. "For some things,

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yes." She spoke so haughtily that Mr. Burneston thought he had better end the interview.

"Well," he said, "we are keeping you from your book. Good morning, Miss Barugh; perhaps we shall find your brother as we go through the market-place."

Raine made a profound bow, and was taken aback by the grace and self-possession with which Doris returned it; he had not succeeded in making her feel shy; he felt foiled and vexed with himself, and was not in a patient humour. Doris was a little annoyed by his brusqueness, but his originality amused her; she had never seen anyone like him.

Mr. Burneston did not speak till they found their horses again at the lodge gates.

"Well?" he said, as they rode out of Steersley.

"She's a very fair creature," said Gilbert Raine heartily. "I must own that much."

"Her beauty is the least of her attractions, but of course you gave yourself no opportunity of judging."

"You're wrong there; I proved her temper

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and her temperament; she's as cold as a bit of granite, and as proud as Lucifer."

"Any girl would have been irritated by your manner."

"Not if she were thoroughbred. This one has all her horns out, and suspects mischief where none is meant. It won't do, Phil; she is too raw and untrained for you, my boy, if you want to keep a quiet house."

"What do you mean? I consider her manner quite charming. She behaved beautifully just now." Burneston spoke in a huff.

"Well, then, shall I tell you something else, usually a consideration in matters of this kind? She does not care two straws for you. If you ask her, and she says 'Yes,' it is because she means to be mistress of Burneston."

Mr. Burneston turned half round on his saddle, with a very set look on his face.

"Look here, Gilbert; you know how I hate quarrels; you're teasing me now; don't say anything more, or I may say more' than you'll like; Miss Barugh just now behaved as well as possible; my mind's made up, and you only waste

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words." Presently he said cheerfully, "Come, come, old fellow, you had better make up your mind to be my best man at the wedding."

Raine felt very angry. He considered all women inferior beings, not fit to be trusted; and it seemed to him that this one, a mere farmer's daughter too, had placed herself on an equality with him. She would be hateful as mistress of Burneston. It was a selfish way of looking at the matter, but he could not help it.

"No; I can't be that, old fellow," he said earnestly, "and I must be consistent. I can't bear to think of that girl as your boy's step-mother. Don't let us quarrel." Mr. Burneston was frowning in a most unusual manner. "I must just say this, for the sake of old times, don't do anything in a hurry. No good can come of an unequal match—only divisions and heartburnings; and I fear, in this case, sorrow and disappointment to you."

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CHAPTER V. A PROPOSAL.

IT seemed as if the return of Doris had been trying to the temper of all her friends. Rose came home with a face swelled with crying; and when at last she succeeded in making Mrs. Duncombe hear her grievances, the deaf grandmother gathered that Doris was "a set-up dowdy, wiv not so much as a flower to her bonnet," and "as sour as a apple in May," with other disparaging comments, all of which were duly enjoyed by Mr. Sunley as he sat smoking at his cottage door. The evening was chilly, and he had "happed" an

old worsted comforter round his neck. He would have preferred the enjoyment of a pipe beside his own snug little fireplace, but so rare an event as Rose's return

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from a day's pleasuring was not to be disregarded; and there be sat listening with all his might, nodding and making comments on the passionate sentences which the girl jerked out in the intervals of taking off her bonnet and shawl, rolling up the strings of the one, and flattening out the creases of the other with her plump pink hand. His face grew more and more content as he listened.

"Eh, eh. It's t' way wiv yaal t' lasses: ane cannt abide t' ither if sheea's bonnier," he said. "John Barugh's lass war a bonny lahtle lass, an' mebbe sheea's mitch bonnier noo. Sheea mun be, else Rase wadn't sharpen her tongue agin her. Poor Rase! sheea's as sharp as a briar, bud sheea's nobbut a feealish lass! Scheeal ain't takken that oot o' her."

John Barugh had been extra reserved when his old neighbour had asked after Doris. He had indeed been thoroughly unsociable, spending much of his time with his sick cows, and brooding so over the question of their bewitchment, that he had little time or thought to spend on Doris, except when be went to the

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Steersley cottage. A vague feeling of uneasiness crept over him when he remembered Mr. Burneston's visit, but he did not care to revive his disagreement with Dorothy, and had not recurred to the subject. He was therefore entirely ignorant of the frequency of the squire's visits, or of the notice they were attracting.

"T' squire hes'n't been tu t' farm sin t' missis an' t' sick lad gaanged tu Steersley," Joseph said, quite unconscious that if there had been anyone near his words were audible. "Ah cud nivver tell what he cud finnd i' t' tawk o' t' missis. It fair capt mu. Ah

thowt John wad hev been mair neeaghberly athoot her, bud isted he's as glum as a door-neel. Eh, maister, how's all wi' ye?" he shouted, as the tall red-whiskered man came in sight within the white gate of the pig-yard.

"T' coo's deein'." John spoke sullenly, and there was a lowering, gloomy look in his eyes, as he opened the gate and came across the road.

"Eh, neeaghber, yu deean't say it. Ah tell

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yu what it is, lad, yu mun draw bluid fra' t' witch, an' draw it sune. Ah's staggonated at sike deeings. Bon it! wheea can stay ye, nobbut yu've a moind t' reet yersel'. T' coo's yer ain—nut t' parson's ner t' squire's. Dheh's gude, bud dheh's reeght fond in sike a case. If Ah'd been left t' reckon wi' t' awd divvel, yer coo wad hev thraavun reeght an' proper."

He clenched both fists, and his shaggy grey brows met in a savage frown.

John stood silent, looking straight before him, his face even sterner in expression than the old man's beside him. "Ah wad deea that," he said at last.

"Ah wad hev deean it athoot yu axin' mu tweea tahmes, Joseph Sunley; bud it's t' lad George. He wonnot hev t' awd lass harmed, an' he allays axes efter her."

Joseph stuck his pipe in his pocket, and then clasping each knee with a brown wrinkled hand, he looked up scoffingly in the farmer's face.

"Wheea spoke o' harmin'? Ah's seear 'at t' spillin' a drop o' devvil's bluid wad be a blessin'

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tiv t' witch isteead o' hairm. Sheea's reeght full o' divvilry, an' it 'ud be a marcy tu set some o' it free—mebbe else she'll host wiv it. Bud it's yer ain coo, neeaghber; Ah've nowt tu deea wiv it—it's yer ain coo."

Mrs. Duncombe's flat round face and stout pillow-shaped figure came into the doorway of the next cottage.

"Gude day, Maister Barugh," she said. "Oor Rase hes been to Steersley to-day."

Barugh was glad of the interruption.

"Hes shu noo? An' hoo hes shu fun' 'em t Did sheea see Doris?"

He roared this out loudly, but Mrs. Duncombe only nodded her head, as if she did not quite hear him. She had not understood all the purport of Rose's complaints, but she had gathered that the girl was angry with Doris, and she had no mind to let the farmer know this. She did not want to quarrel with the Barughs, who were kind and neighbourly in the way of skim-milk and vegetables, and even to the extent of a bit of pork now and then.

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But Rose's ears were sharp; and, though she had gone upstairs, she heard John's question. She put her head out of the bedroom window above.

"Gude evenin' to ye, Maister Barugh. I've been to Steersley, an' I've seen Mrs. Barugh an' Doris, but I didn't stay with 'em. Doris is such a grand lady. My word, she's fair nunty, she is; I was shy like, an' I comed away," she ended with a loud laugh.

John Barugh had smiled as the pretty rosy-cheeked damsel looked down at him, but he frowned again as she spoke of Doris. It seemed to him a sort of profanation that Rose should so speak of his daughter.

"Ye deean't ken her, lass," he said reprovingly. "Doris is a lady noo, bud sheea's reeght gude fer all that."

Then he nodded to Mrs. Duncombe and Joseph, and moved slowly back to the farm-yard.

Silence fell on the little group till he had passed through into the rick-yard and was out of sight.

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Then Rose burst into a peal of laughter so loud and harsh that her grandmother heard it; she looked up and shook her head reprovingly.

"A lady!" Rose cried out. "My song! Doris a lady! Eh, ye sud hev seen my school-mistress; she was a lady, I reckon. Yey could tell it by her clothes. I don't believe Doris hes got so much as a silk gown to her back. She a lady, indeed! Why, she never said so much as, 'I'm glad to see you. Rose Duncombe.' She's a poor, pale, dowdy, audfarrand, set-up thing; an' that's not what I call a lady. So there now!"

She drew in her head, and shut down the window with a bang.

Sunley laughed and slapped his knees with his hands.

"Woonkers! Sheea's a doonreeght lass, yon. Sheea disn't miss t' neel," he said. "Sheea clouts it fair. Nae luv lost atween her an' Doris, eh, neeaghber?" But Mrs. Duncombe shook her head feebly and sighed. She knew something or some one was wrong, but she had only a hazy idea of life altogether. She heard

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a fragment here and a fragment there, but she had no wits to put them together, so that her mind was something like her patchwork counter-pane, full of unconnected bits, which it was impossible to fit harmoniously.

John Barugh had taken away a far more definite idea of Rose's meaning. He was angry at first, and called the girl hard names to himself; but next day, and on the days after, he pondered the difference between Doris and Rose, and he grew more and more troubled. Doris seemed happy with him and her mother and George, but was she really happy, or was it only her good manners that kept her from showing disgust to them and their ways; and how would it be when they all settled down at Burneston, and Doris and Rose would be subject to the chance of meeting every day? John dreaded his next visit to Steersley; he dreaded to hear that there had been a quarrel with Rose Duncombe, and though she was pert to speak so of Doris, he was fond of the bright, pretty girl who had been so kind to George.

He usually went over on Saturday afternoon,

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but on this Friday the other sick cow was, to his surprise, recovering, and he thought he would surprise Dorothy next day by reaching Steersley for dinner at one o'clock. The place was very lonesome and dreary in the absence of its neat mistress, and Sally, the old woman who minded the house in Mrs. Barugh's absence, cleaned it from morning till night, till the smell of wet wood and soap grew over-powering.

It took John some time to put a thought into action, and while he stood twisting a bit of straw in his blunt red fingers, hesitating about his next day's journey, he saw Mr. Burneston coming from the glebe-field into the rick-yard. The squire had not often come that way since he saw Doris swinging on the gate of the glebe-field, but to-day he took a pleasure in the remembrance; he even lingered at the gate while the collie, who

had been following her master, sprang forward, barking joyously when she saw the farmer.

"Weel, then—weel, then, awd lass." John stooped to pat her black head as she sprang up

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to caress him. "Thoo's nut yan 'at forgits awd friends."

Mr. Burneston had come forward, and he heard the last words. "Do you mean that for me, Mr. Barugh?" he smiled pleasantly as he held out his hand. "But I'm not so neglectful as you think. I hear of you whenever I go to Steersley. I heard of you only yesterday from Mrs. Barugh. How well George looks! It's plain Burneston does not suit him."

This speech jarred John on more than one point; first, by giving him the knowledge that Dorothy had concealed Mr. Burneston's visits from him, and next by the implied interference about George.

"Mebbe it's t' chaange, nut t' air," he spoke sullenly; "t' lad's allays better fer a chaange; it is sae wiv yung fooalks."

"I think the change benefits Mrs. Barugh too, she looks wonderfully bright since she has been at Steersley; the air seems to suit her."

One of John's shoulders was visibly nearer his ear than the other.

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"Yu's wrang there, squire; it isn't t' air. Mah missis fin's ower mich tu deea i' t' hoose tu gan gaddin' efter air; sheea's allays weel at t' farm noo."

"Ah, just so." Mr. Burneston looked about uneasily, and then he clasped both hands on the knob of his stick, and looked earnestly at the farmer, "I want to speak very seriously to you, Mr. Barugh; shall we go indoors?"

John felt as awkward as he could, and his capacity for awkwardness was large; his hospitality checked the churlish answer he wanted to give, for an undefined shrinking warned him that Mr. Burneston's visit was bringing a shadow to his hearth.

"Coom indoors, then," he tried to speak heartily and went on first, but there was no welcoming smile on his face when he added, "Sit ye doon, squire; we're noane sae weel tented noo 'at t' missis is at Steersley;" he gave an uneasy glance at the empty grate, which shone brightly, but looked cold.

For a moment the two men sat silent in the shining wooden high-backed arm-chairs on each side of the empty grate.

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"I have, as you have doubtless heard," Mr. Burneston began—he took it for granted that his visits to Steersley had prepared the farmer for this interview—"seen a good deal of your daughter since she came home, and—" He paused; the sound of a smothered execration disturbed him; but John was only frowning a little more heavily, and the sunburnt red of his cheeks was a trifle deeper than usual. Mr. Burneston went on, "I greatly admire her; and I think it right to tell you before I speak to her that I hope she will be my wife."

John swung round in his chair so as nearly to overturn it, but he steadied himself by a vigorous grasp at its wooden arms.

"Yer wife, squire! Di' yu meean yu bin axin' mah lass tu wed yee?" he rose up with stern wrath burning in his face.

Mr. Burneston felt angry too; he cursed the farmer's denseness, for evidently his carefully prepared preface had not been heeded.

"I said just now," in a stiff voice, "that I think it right to tell you my intention before I speak to Miss Barugh."

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"An' Ah says neea, neea, Maister Burneston. Ah winnot hev yu to say nowt tu mah lass," John spoke stubbornly, anger and bitterness throbbing in every vein, till he hated the soft courtly gentleman who sat asking for what he prized most on earth—as if it were a bit of cake.

"But you won't say it," Mr. Burneston's sympathy helped him to guess at John's feelings: "I know you too well to believe that you will interfere with my happiness, and possibly too with your daughter's."

John straightened his tall, broad figure till he and his red whiskers seemed to glower through the long low room.

"Maister Burneston, ye're qualaty," he said doggedly, "bud Ah'd scorn tu deea what ye've bin deeain. Yu coom an' tawks mu ower whiles Ah sends t' lass to scheeal, mah lass 'at war t' pride o' mah life! an' sehs yu, let her bide at scheeal, no coomin' yam, yu sehs; an' noo yu gans an' steeals her luv aways fra mey that hes t' best reet tiv 't, wivout a word, ur sae mich as axin' mah leeave—by God! it's a burning shame;" he clenched his fist and struck it heavily on the tall chair back.

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Mr. Burneston flushed to his temples, but he did not look cowed or ashamed. He made an effort to speak coolly. "We'd better sit down again, Mr. Barugh; you're angry, and

you don't see things as they really are. Now do listen quietly. I have been over to Steersley as I used to come here, and Mrs. Barugh always seemed glad to see me. Why should I have spoken to you beforehand? I could not be sure that I should become attached to your daughter."

John recovered himself a little; he would not sit down, but he wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. "Does Doris care fer yu?" he asked abruptly.

"I cannot tell—I hope so."

"Yer'e nut seear? Then, in God's name, man, leeave her aleean. Keep awa fra Steersley, an' Ah'll taak t' lass whoor sheea'll seea an' hear nowt aboot yu."

"This is folly;" and then Burneston smiled, and told himself he was as foolish as the farmer. "Try to look at the thing calmly, Mr. Barugh. Your daughter is certain to marry

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some one; she is far too attractive to be left in peace. Well, then, as she must take a husband, why do you object to me? You ought to know me fairly well by this time. I love your daughter as a man should love the girl he means to make his wife; and I will spend my life in making her happy. Will you leave the decision to her? Give me leave to ask her, and I promise you to submit to the answer she gives."

There was silence. Mr. Burneston was surprised to find that he could hear his own heart beat in the intense anxiety he felt. This opposition was so utterly unlocked for.

At last John spoke hoarsely. "Ah's a plain man," he said; "bud Ah deean't seea what gude ivver cam' o' sike'n a marriage as yur wantin'. Yu sud tak t' wife lahke yersel', an' Doris wad be happier if sheea taak' t' husband fra fooalks lahke oorsels. It's a mistak', Maister Burneston, fra beginnin' tu t' end, y're ganin' agaan yer ain welfare, an' if yu'll be guided yu'll keep awa fra Steersley, an' leeave Doris aleean."

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Mr. Burneston took John's unwilling hand and shook it heartily. He had understood the farmer's nature far too well to say one word about any advantage that would accrue to Doris as mistress of Burneston; but he was greatly impressed by the simplicity and disinterestedness which could set so little value on worldly distinction.

"It's too late for me to do that" he said earnestly. "I never loved any woman as I love her, and no one else could make me so happy. I must try to win her; let me have your good-will in the matter, and remember that I consider your daughter fully my equal, and quite suited to be my wife."

John stood struggling with his pride; he felt that Doris as she was would be happier with such a man as the squire than in her own home; he knew it, and Mr. Burneston's words only stung the knowledge in with keener force, but it was too painful to acknowledge. He could not own that it was for himself that he longed so hungrily and jealously to keep his darling at home, nor could he bring himself to give a

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hearty consent to his landlord's wooing—he could not get out a word.

"Well, then," Mr. Burneston's smile was winning in its sweetness, "I am going on at once to Steersley. I am not ashamed to tell you, her father, that I cannot rest until I know my fate. Can I take any message from you?"

He stood waiting; he was not vexed with John's boorish silence. It was only natural, he thought. His admiration for the farmer's disinterestedness gave him a new and warmer feeling for him. He prized Doris so highly, that he knew it must be very hard for John to give her up, and yet he could never have guessed at the mighty struggle that was wrenching at the father's heart. At last Barugh spoke—

"Yu mun gan, Ah cannot staay yu, bud Ah cannot bid yu God speed. Ah'd liever thenk yu fer settin' mah ricks o' fire. Deng it! Ah cannot staay yu, an' that's as mich as Ah can tell yu noo."

John followed his visitor to the door, but be left him to cross the yard alone. He turned back to the parlour with a smothered oath.

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"It's mah ain fondness 'at Ah sud curse," he said. "Ah wer nobbut a wake feeal; Ah knew it war wrang, an' jist fer tu keep t' hoose quiet Ah let her gan tu skeeal. Ah've arn'd all Ah gitten."

He turned to the high mantelshelf, and pressed his hand against his forehead.

There was no outward sound, no groan or sigh, but in the unbroken silence he was reviewing a load of sorrow and bitterness—the five past years of his life, the more sorrowful, the more bitter, because reflection offered no salve for the past, no hope for the future.

John Barugh seldom communed with himself, but just now these five past years stood out in distinct periods to their first beginning—back even to that first day when he had been fool enough to show Doris to the squire, and then he stood suddenly upright.

Like the spell of a witch, or the memory of a curse, there came before him the blushing, shame-stricken face of his child, and sounding clearly in the stillness, "the feeal's rahme"—of her confession—

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"May it so happen, an' may it so fall

’At Ah may be lady of Burneston Hall.”

“Curse him!” he said fiercely; “he’s planned it fra teean end tu t’ither.”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.