

**Author:** Mrs. Humphry Ward (1851-1920)

**Text type:** Prose

**Date of composition:** 1892

**Editions:** 1892, 1893, 1894, 1897, 1900, 1901, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1911, 1913, 1925, 1967, 1968, 1986, 2005.

**Source text:**

Ward, Mrs. Humphry. 1892. *The History of David Grieve*. Vol. I. London: Smith, Elder & Co.

**e-text:**

**Access and transcription:** January 2013

**Number of words:** 95,052

**Dialect represented:** Derbyshire, Yorkshire and Lancashire

**Produced by** Laura Gutiérrez Barrientos

**Revised by** María F. García-Bermejo Giner

**Copyright © 2013– DING, The Salamanca Corpus, Universidad de Salamanca**

# THE HISTORY OF DAVID GRIEVE

BY

MRS HUMPHRY WARD

AUTHOR OF 'ROBERT ELSMERE'

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1892

[All rights reserved]

[NP]

TO  
THE DEAR MEMORY  
OF  
MY MOTHER

[NP]

	CONTENTS OF VOL. I BOOK I	
CHILDHOOD		PAGE 1
	BOOK II	
YOUTH		249

[NP]

BOOK I  
CHILDHOOD

[1]

CHAPTER I

‘Tak your hat, Louie! Yo’re allus leavin summat behind yer.’

‘David, yo go for ’t,’ said the child addressed to a boy by her side, nodding her head insolently towards the speaker, a tall and bony woman, who stood on the steps the children had just descended, holding out a battered hat.

‘Yo’re a careless thing, Louie,’ said the boy, but he went back and took the hat.

‘Mak her tie it,’ said the woman, showing an antiquated pair of strings. ‘If she loses it she needna coom cryin for anudder. She’d lose her yead if it wor loose.’

Then she turned and went back into the house. It was a smallish house of grey stone, three windows above, two and a door below. Dashes of white on the stone gave, as it were, eyebrows to the windows, and over the door there was a meagre trellised porch, up which grew some now leafless roses and honeysuckles.

To the left of the door a scanty bit of garden was squeezed in between the hill, against which the house was set edgeways and the rest of the flat space,

[2]

occupied by the uneven farmyard, the cart-shed and stable, the cow-houses and duck-pond. This garden contained two shabby apple trees, as yet hardly touched by the spring; some currant and gooseberry bushes, already fairly green; and a clump or two of scattered daffodils and wallflowers. The hedge round it was broken through in various places, and it had a casual neglected air.

The children went their way through the yard. In front of them a flock of some forty sheep and lambs pushed along, guarded by two black short-haired collies. The boy, brandishing a long stick, opened a gate deplorably in want of mending, and the sheep crowded through, keenly looked after by the dogs, who waited meanwhile on their flanks with heads up, ears cocked, and that air of self-restrained energy which often makes a sheep-dog more human than his master. The field beyond led to a little larch plantation, where a few primroses showed among the tufts of long, rich grass, and the drifts of last year’s leaves. Here the flock scattered a little, but David and the dogs were after them in a twinkling, and the plantation gate was soon closed on the last bleating mother. Then there was nothing more for the boy to do than to go up to the top of the green rising ground on which the farm stood and see if the gate leading to the moor was safely shut. For the sheep he had been driving were not meant for the open moorland. Their feeding grounds lay in the stonewalled fields round the homestead, and had they strayed

[3]

on to the mountain beyond, which was reserved for a hardier Scotch breed, David would have been answerable. So he strode, whistling, up the hill to have a look at that top gate, while Louie sauntered down to the stream which ran round the lower pastures to wait for him.

The top gate was fast, but David climbed the wall and stood there a while, hands in his pockets, legs apart, whistling and looking.

‘They can see t’ Downfall from Stockport to-day,’ he was saying to himself; ‘it’s coomin ower like mad.’

Some distance away in front of him, beyond the undulating heather ground at his feet, rose a magnificent curving front of moor, the steep sides of it crowned with black edges and cliffs of grit, the outline of the south-western end sweeping finely up on the right to a purple peak, the king of all the moorland round. No such colour as clothed that bronzed and reddish wall of rock, heather, and bilberry is known to Westmoreland, hardly to Scotland; it seems to be the peculiar property of that lonely and inaccessible district which marks the mountainous centre of mid-England — the district of Kinder Scout and the High Peak. Before the boy’s ranging eye spread the whole western rampart of the Peak — to the right, the highest point, of Kinder Low, to the left, ‘edge’ behind ‘edge,’ till the central rocky mass sank and faded towards the north into milder forms of green and undulating hills. In the very centre of the great curve a white and surging mass

[4]

of water cleft the mountain from top to bottom, falling straight over the edge, here some two thousand feet above the sea, and roaring downward along an almost precipitous bed into the stream — the Kinder — which swept round the hill on which the boy was standing, and through the valley behind him. In ordinary times the ‘Downfall,’ as the

natives call it, only makes itself visible on the mountain-side as a black ravine of tossed and tumbled rocks. But there had been a late snowfall on the high plateau beyond, followed by heavy rain, and the swollen stream was to-day worthy of its grand setting of cliff and moor. On such occasions it becomes a landmark for all the country round, for the cottonspinning centres of New Mills and Stockport, as well as for the grey and scattered farms which climb the long backs of moorland lying between the Peak and the Cheshire border.

To-day, also, after the snow and rains of early April, the air was clear again. The sun was shining; a cold, dry wind was blowing; there were sounds of spring in the air, and signs of it on the thorns and larches. Far away on the boundary wall of the farmland a cuckoo was sitting, his long tail swinging behind him, his monotonous note filling the valley; and overhead a couple of peewits chased each other in the pale, windy blue.

The keen air, the sun after the rain, sent life and exhilaration through the boy's young limbs. He leapt from the wall, and raced back down the field, his dogs

[5]

streaming behind him, the sheep, with their newly dropped lambs, shrinking timidly to either side as he passed. He made for a corner in the wall, vaulted it on to the moor, crossed a rough dam built in the stream for sheep-washing purposes, jumped in and out of the two grey-walled sheep-pens beyond, and then made leisurely for a spot in the brook — not the Downfall stream, but the Red Brook, one of its westerly affluents — where he had left a miniature water-wheel at work the day before. Before him and around him spread the brown bosom of Kinder Scout; the cultivated land was left behind; here on all sides, as far as the eye could see, was the wild home of heather and plashing water, of grouse and peewit, of cloud and breeze.

The little wheel, shaped from a block of firwood, was turning merrily under a jet of water carefully conducted to it from a neighbouring fall. David went down on hands and knees to examine it. He made some little alteration in the primitive machinery of it,

his fingers touching it lightly and neatly, and then, delighted with the success of it, he called Louie to come and look.

Louie was sitting a few yards further up the stream, crooning to herself as she swung to and fro, and snatching every now and then at some tufts of primroses growing near her, which she wrenched away with a hasty, wasteful hand, careless, apparently, whether they reached her lap or merely strewed the turf about her with their torn blossoms. When David called her she gathered up the flowers anyhow in her apron, and

[6]

dawdled towards him, leaving a trail of them behind her. As she reached him, however, she was struck by a book sticking out of his pocket, and, stooping over him, with a sudden hawk-like gesture, as he sprawled head downwards, she tried to get hold of it.

But he felt her movement. 'Let goo!' he said imperiously, and, throwing himself round, while one foot slipped into the water, he caught her hand, with its thin predatory fingers, and pulled the book away.

'Yo just leave my books alone, Louie. Yo do 'em a mischief whaniver yo can — an I'll not have it.'

He turned his handsome, regular face, crimsoned by his position and splashed by the water, towards her with an indignant air. She laughed, and sat herself down again on the grass, looking a very imp of provocation.

'They're stupid,' she said, shortly. 'They mak yo a stupid gonner ony ways.'

'Oh! do they?' he retorted, angrily. 'Bit I'll be even wi yo. I'll tell yo noa moor stories out of 'em, not if yo ast iver so.'

The girl's mouth curled contemptuously, and she began to gather her primroses into a bunch with an air of the utmost serenity. She was a thin, agile, lightly made creature, apparently about eleven. Her piercing black eyes, when they lifted, seemed to overweight the face, whereof the other features were at present small and pinched. The mouth had a trick of remaining slightly open, showing a line of small pearly teeth,

[7]

the chin was a little sharp and shrewish. As for the hair, it promised to be splendid; at present it was an unkempt, tangled mass, which Hannah Grieve, the children's aunt, for her own credit's sake at chapel, or in the public street, made occasional violent attempts to reduce to order — to very little purpose, so strong and stubborn was the curl of it. The whole figure was out of keeping with the English moorside, with the sheep, and the primroses.

But so indeed was that of the boy, whose dark colouring was more vivacious and pronounced than his sister's, because the red of his cheek and lip was deeper, while his features, though larger than hers, were more finely regular, and his eyes had the same piercing blackness, the same all-examining keenness, as hers. The yellowish tones of his worn fustian suit and a red Tam-o'-Shanter cap completed the general effect of brilliancy and, as it were, *foreignness*.

Having finished his inspection of his water-mill, he scrambled across to the other side of the stream so as to be well out of his sister's way, and, taking out the volume which was stretching his pocket, he began to read it. It was a brown calf-bound book, much worn, and on its title-page it bore the title of 'The Wars of Jerusalem,' of Flavins Josephus, translated by S. Calmet, and a date somewhere in the middle of the eighteenth century. To this antique fare the boy settled himself down. The two collies lay couched beside him; a stonechat perched on one or other of the great blocks which

[8]

lay scattered over the heath gave out his clinking note; while every now and then the loud peevish cluck of the grouse came from the distant sides of the Scout.

Titus was now making his final assault on the Temple. The Zealots were gathered in the innermost court, frantically beseeching Heaven for a sign; the walls, the outer approaches of the Sanctuary were choked with the dying and the dead. David sat

absorbed, elbows on knees, his face framed in his hands. Suddenly the descent of something cold and clammy on his bent neck roused him with a most unpleasant shock.

Quick as lightning he faced round, snatching at his assailant; but Louie was off, scudding among the bilberry hillocks with peals of laughter, while the slimy moss she had just gathered from the edges of the brook sent cold creeping streams into the recesses of David's neck and shoulders. He shook himself free of the mess as best he could, and rushed after her. For a long time he chased her in vain, then her foot tripped, and he came up with her just as she rolled into the heather, gathered up like a hedgehog against attack, her old hat held down over her ears and face. David fell upon her and chastised her; but his fisticuffs probably looked more formidable than they felt, for Louie laughed provokingly all the time, and when he stopped out of breath she said exultantly, as she sprang up, holding her skirts round her read for another flight,

[9]

'It's greened aw yur neck and yur collar — lovely!

Doan't yo be nasty for nothink next time!'

And off she ran.

'If yo meddle wi me ony moor,' he shouted after her fiercely, 'yo see what I'll do!'

But in reality the male was helpless, as usual. He went ruefully down to the brook, and loosening his shirt and coat tried to clean his neck and hair. Then, extremely sticky and uncomfortable, he went back to his seat and his book, his wrathful eyes taking careful note meanwhile of Louie's whereabouts. And thenceforward he read, as it were, on guard, looking up every other minute.

Louie established herself some way up the further slope, in a steep stony nook, under two black boulders, which protected her rear in case of reprisals from David. Time passed away. David, on the other side of the brook, revelling in the joys of battle, and all the more alive to them perhaps because of the watch kept on Louie by one section of his brain, was conscious of no length in the minutes. But Louie's mood

gradually became one of extreme flatness. All her resources were for the moment at an end. She could think of no fresh torment for David; besides, she knew that she was observed. She had destroyed all the scanty store of primroses along the brook; gathered rushes, begun to plait them, and thrown them away; she had found a grouse's nest among the dead fern, and, contrary to the most solemn injunctions of uncle and

[10]

keeper, enforced by the direst threats, had purloined and broken an egg; and still dinner-time delayed. Perhaps, too, the cold blighting wind, which soon made her look blue and pinched, tamed her insensibly. At any rate, she got up after about an hour, and coolly walked across to David.

He looked up at her with a quick frown. But she sat down, and, clasping her hands round her knees, while the primroses she had stuck in her hat dangled over her defiant eyes, she looked at him with a grinning composure.

'Yo can read out if yo want to,' she remarked.

'Yo doan't deserve nowt, an I shan't,' said David, shortly.

'Then I'll tell Aunt Hannah about how yo let t' lambs stray lasst evenin, and about yor readin at neet.'

'Yo may tell her aw t' tallydiddles yo can think on,' was the unpromising reply.

Louie threw all the scorn possible into her forced smile, and then, dropping full-length into the heather, she began to sing at the top of a shrill, unpleasing voice, mainly, of course, for the sake of harrying anyone in her neighbourhood who might wish to read.

'Stop that squealin!' David commanded, peremptorily. Whereupon Louie sang louder than before.

David looked round in a fury, but his fury was, apparently, instantly damped by the inward conviction, born of long experience, that he could do nothing to

[11]

help himself. He sprang up, and thrust his book into his pocket.

‘Nobory ull mak owt o’ yo till yo get a bastin twice a day, wi an odd lick extra for Sundays,’ he remarked to her with grim emphasis when he had reached what seemed to him a safe distance. Then he turned and strode up the face of the hill, the dogs at his heels. Louie turned on her elbow, and threw such small stones as she could discover among the heather after him, but they fell harmlessly about him, and did not answer their purpose of provoking him to turn round again.

She observed that he was going up to the old Smithy on the side of Kinder Low, and in a few minutes she got up and sauntered lazily after him.

‘T’ owd smithy’ had been the enchanted ground of David’s childhood. It was a ruined building standing deep in heather, half-way up the mountain-side, and ringed by scattered blocks and tabular slabs of grit. Here in times far remote — beyond the memory of even the oldest inhabitant — the millstones of the district, which gave their name to the ‘millstone grit’ formation of the Peak, were fashioned. High up on the dark moorside stood what remained of the primitive workshop. The fire-marked stones of the hearth were plainly visible; deep in the heather near lay the broken jambs of the window; a stone doorway with its lintel was still standing; and on the slope beneath it, hardly to be distinguished now from the great primæval blocks out of which they had sprung and to which they were

[12]

fast returning, reposed two or three huge mill-stones. Perhaps they bordered some ancient track, climbed by the millers of the past when they came to this remote spot to give their orders; but, if so, the track had long since sunk out of sight in the heather, and no visible link remained to connect the history of this high and lonely place with that of those teeming valleys hidden to west and north among the moors, the dwellers wherein must once have known it well. From the old threshold the eye commanded a wilderness

of moors, rising wave-like one after another, from the green swell just below whereon stood Reuben Grieve's farm, to the far-distant Alderley Edge. In the hollows between, dim tall chimneys veiled in mist and smoke showed the places of the cotton towns — of Hayfield, New Mills, Staley bridge, Stockport; while in the far north-west, any gazer to whom the country-side spoke familiarly, might, in any ordinary clearness of weather, look for and find the eternal smoke-cloud of Manchester.

So the deserted smithy stood as it were spectator for ever of that younger, busier England which wanted it no more. Human life notwithstanding had left on it some very recent traces. On the lintel of the ruined door two names were scratched deep into the whitish under-grain of the black weather-beaten grit. The upper one ran: 'David Suveret Grieve, Sept. 15, 1863,' the lower, 'Louise Stephanie Grieve, Sept. 15, 1863.' They were written in bold roundhand, and could be read at a considerable distance.

[13]

During the nine months they had been there, many a rustic passer-by had been stopped by them, especially by the oddity of the name *Suveret*, which tormented the Derbyshire mouth.

In a corner of the walls stood something more puzzling still — a large iron pan, filled to the brim with water, and firmly bedded on a foundation of earth and stones. So still in general was the shining sheltered round, that the branches of the mountain ash which leant against the crumbling wall, the tufts of hard fern growing among the stones, the clouds which sailed overhead, were all delicately mirrored in it. That pan was David Grieve's dearest possession, and those reflections, so magical, and so alive, had contrived for him many a half-hour of almost breathless pleasure. He had carried it off from the refuse-yard of a foundry in the valley, where he had a friend in one of the apprentices. The farm donkey and himself had dragged it thither on a certain never-to-be-forgotten day, when Uncle Reuben had been on the other side of the mountain at a shepherds' meeting in the Woodlands, while Aunt Hannah was safely up to her elbows in the washtub. Boy's back and donkey's back had nearly broken under

the task, but there the pan stood at last, the delight of David's heart. In a crevice of the wall beside it, hidden jealously from the passer-by, lay the other half of that perpetual entertainment it provided — a store of tiny boats fashioned by David, and another friend, the lame minister of the 'Christian Brethren' congregation at Clough

[14]

End, the small factory town just below Kinder, who was a sea-captain's son, and with a knife and a bit of deal could fashion you any craft you pleased. These boats David only brought out on rare occasions, very seldom admitting Louie to the show. But when he pleased they became fleets, and sailed for new continents. Here were the ships of Captain Cook, there the ships of Columbus. On one side of the pan lay the Spanish main, on the other the islands of the South Seas. A certain tattered copy of the 'Royal Magazine,' with pictures, which lay in Uncle Reuben's cupboard at home, provided all that for David was to be known of these names and places. But fancy played pilot and led the way; she conjured up storms and islands and adventures; and as he hung over his pan high on the Derbyshire moor, the boy, like Sidney of old, 'sailed the seas where there was never sand' — the vast and viewless oceans of romance.

[15]

## CHAPTER II

Once safe in the Smithy, David recovered his temper. If Louie followed him, which was probable, he would know better how to deal with her here, with a wall at his back and a definite area to defend, than he did in the treacherous openness of the heath. However, just as he was settling himself down, with a sigh of relief, between the pan and the wall, he caught sight of something through one of the gaps of the old ruin which made him fling down his book and run to the doorway. There, putting his fingers to his mouth, he blew a shrill whistle along the side of the Scout. A bent figure on a distant path stopped at the sound. It was an old man, with a plaid hanging from his shoulders. He raised the

stick he held, and shook it in recognition of David's signal. Then resuming his bowed walk, he came slowly on, followed by an old hound, whose gait seemed as feeble as his master's.

David leant against the doorway waiting. Louie, meanwhile, was lounging in the heather just below him, having very soon caught him up.

'What d' yo want 'im for?' she asked contemptuously,

[16]

as the new-comer approached: 'he'd owt to be in th' sylum. Aunt Hannah says he's gone that silly, he owt to be took up.'

'Well, he woan't be, then,' retorted David. 'Theer's nobory about as ull lay a finger on 'im. He doan't do her no harm, nor yo noather. Women foak and gells allus want to be wooryin soomthin.'

'Aunt Hannah says he lost his wits wi fuddlin,' repeated Louie shrilly, striking straighter still for what she knew to be one of David's tenderest points — his friendship for 'owd' Lias Dawson,' the queer dreamer, who, fifteen years before, had been the schoolmaster of Frimley Moor End, and in local esteem 't' cliverest mon abeawt t' Peak.'

David with difficulty controlled a hot inclination to fall upon his sister once more. Instead, however, he affected not to hear her, and shouted a loud 'Good mornin' to the old man, who was toiling up the knoll on which the smithy stood.

'Lias responded feebly, panting hard the while. He sank down on a stone outside the smithy, and for a while had neither breath nor voice. Then he began to look about him; his heaving chest subsided, and there was a rekindling of the strange blue eyes. He wore a high white stock and neckcloth; his plaid hung round his emaciated shoulders with a certain antique dignity; his rusty wideawake covered hair still abundant and even curly, but snow-white; the face, with its white eyebrows, was long, thin, and full of an ascetic delicacy.

[17]

‘Wal, Davy, my lad,’ the old man said at last, with a sort of pompous mildness; ‘I winna blame yo for ’t, but yo interrupted me sadly wi yur whistlin. I ha been occupied this day wi business o’ *gräat* importance. His Majesty King Charles has been wi me since seven o’clock this mornin. And for th’ fust time I ha been gettin reet to th’ *bottom* o’ things wi him. I ha been *probin* him, Davy — probin him. He couldno riddle through wi lees; I kept him to ’t, as yo mun keep a horse to a jump — straight an tight. I had it aw out about Strafford, an t’ Five Members, an thoose dirty deal ins wi th’ Irish devils! Yo should ha yerd it, Davy — yo should, I’ll uphowd yo!’

And placing his stick between his knees, the old man leant his hands upon it, with a meditative and judicial air. The boy stood looking down at him, a broad smile lighting up the dark and vivid face. Old ’Lias supplied him with a perpetual ‘spectacle’ which never palled.

‘Coe him back, ’Lias, he’s soomwheer about. Yo need nobbut coe him, an he’ll coom.’

‘Lias looked fatuously pleased. He lifted his head and affected to scan the path along which he had just travelled.

‘Aye, I daur say he’s not far. — Yor Majesty!’

And ‘Lias laid his head on one side and listened. In a few seconds a cunning smile stole over his lips.

‘Wal, Davy, yo’re in luck. He’s noan so onwillin, we’s’t ha him here in a twinklin. Yo may coe him mony things, but yo conno coe him proud. Noa, as

[18]

I’ve fund him, Charles Stuart has no soart o’ pride about him. Aye, theer yo are! Sir, your Majesty’s obleeged an humble servant!’

And, raising his hand to his hat, the old man took it off and swept it round with a courtly deliberation. Then replacing it, he sat with his face raised, as though to one standing near, his whole attitude full of a careful and pompous dignity.

‘Now then, yor Majesty,’ said ‘Lias grimly, ‘I’st ha to put that question to yo, yance moor, yo wor noan so well pleased wi this mornin. But yo shouldno be soa tender, mon! Th’ truth can do yo noa harm, wheer yo are, an I’m nobbut askin for *informashun*’s sake. Soa out wi it; I’st not use it agen yo. *That — wee — bit — o’ — damned — paper*, — man, what sent poor Strafford to his eend — yo mind it? — aye, ‘at yo do! Well, now’ — and the old man’s tone grew gently seductive — ‘*explain yursel*. We’n had *their* tale,’ and he pointed away to some imaginary accusers. ‘But yo mun trust an Englishman’s sense o’ fair play. Say your say. We ’st gie yo a varra patient hearin.’

And with chin thrown up, and his half-blurred eyes blinking under their white lashes, ‘Lias waited with a bland imperativeness for the answer.

‘Eh?’ said ‘Lias at last, frowning and hollowing his hand to his ear.

He listened another few seconds, then he dropped his hand sharply.

‘What’s ‘at yo’re sayin?’ he asked hastily; ‘ ‘at

[19]

yo couldno help it, not *whativer* — that i’ truth yo had nothin to do wi’t, no moor than myself — that yo wor *forcit* to it — willy-nilly — by them devils o’ Parliament foak — by Mr. Pym and his loike, wi whom, if Godamighty ha’ not reckoned since, their’s no moor justice i’ His Kingdom than yo found i’ yours?’

The words came out with a rush, tumbling over one another till they suddenly broke off in a loud key of indignant scorn. Then ‘Lias fell silent a moment, and slowly shook his head over the inveterate shuffling of the House of Stuart.

‘ ‘Twinna do, man — ‘twinna do,’ he said at last, with an air of fine reproof. ‘He wor your *friend*, wor that poor sinner Strafford — your awn familiar friend, as t’ Psalm says. I’m not takin up a brief for him, t’ Lord knows! He wor but meetin his

deserts, to *my* thinkin, when his yed went loupin. But yo put a black mark agen *yore* name when yo signed that bit paper for your awn skin's sake. Naw, naw, man, yo should ha lost your awn yed a bit sooner fust. Eh, it wor base — it wor cooardly!

'Lias's voice dropped, and he fell muttering to himself indistinctly. David, bending over him, could not make out whether it was Charles or his interlocutor speaking, and began to be afraid that the old man's performance was over before it had well begun. But on the contrary, 'Lias emerged with fresh energy from the gulf of inarticulate argument in which his poor wits seemed to have lost themselves awhile.

[20]

'But I'm no blamin yo awthegither,' he cried, raising himself, with a protesting wave of the hand. 'Theer's naw mak o' mischief i' this world, but t' *women* are at t' bottom o't. Whar's that proud foo of a wife o' yourn? Send her here, man; send her here! 'Lias Dawson ull mak her hear reason! Now, Davy!'

And the old man drew the lad to him with one hand, while he raised a finger softly with the other.

'Just study her, Davy, my lad,' he said in an undertone, which swelled louder as his excitement grew, 'theer she stan's, by t' side o' t' King. She's a gay good-lookin female, that I'll confess to, but study her; look at her curls, Davy, an her paint, an her nakedness. For shame, madam! Goo hide that neck o' yourn, goo hide it, I say! An her faldaddles, an her jewles, an her ribbons. Is that a woman — a French hizzy like that — to get a King out o' trooble, wha's awready lost aw t' wits he wor born wi?'

And with sparkling eyes and outstretched arm 'Lias pointed sternly into vacancy. Thrilled with involuntary awe the boy and girl looked round them. For, in spite of herself, Louie had come closer, little by little, and was now sitting cross-legged in front of 'Lias. Then Louie's shrill voice broke in —

'Tell us what she's got on!' And the girl leant eagerly forward, her magnificent eyes kindling into interest.

‘What she’s got on, my lassie? Eh, but I’m feart your yead, too, is fu’ o’ gauds  
— Wal, it’s but nateral to

[21]

females. She’s aw in white satin, my lassie, — an in her brown hair theer’s pearls, an a blue ribbon just howdin down t’ little luve-locks on her forehead — an on her saft neck theer’s pearls again — not soa white, by a thoosand mile, as her white skin — an t’ lace fa’s ower her proud shooters, an down her luvely arms — an she looks at me wi her angry eyes — Eh, but she’s a queen!’ cried ’Lias, in a sudden outburst of admiration. ‘She hath been a persecutor o’ th’ saints — a varra Jeezebel — the Lord hath put her to shame — but she’s moor sperrit — moor o’ t’ blood o’ kingship i’ her little finger, nor Charles theer in aw his body!’

And by a strange and crazy reversal of feeling, the old man sat in a kind of ecstasy, enamoured of his own creation, looking into thin air. As for Louie, during the description of the Queen’s dress she had drunk in every word with a greedy attention, her changing eyes fixed on the speaker’s face. When he stopped, however, she drew a long breath.

‘It’s aw lees!’ she said scornfully.

‘Howd your tongue, Louie!’ cried David, angrily.

But ‘Lias took no notice. He was talking again very fast, but incoherently. Hampden, Pym, Fairfax, Falkland — the great names clattered past every now and then, like horsemen, through a maze of words, but with no perceptible order or purpose. The phrases concerning them came to nothing; and though there were apparently many voices speaking, nothing intelligible could be made out.

[22]

When next the mists cleared a little from the old visionary’s brain, David gathered that Cromwell was close by, defending himself with difficulty, apparently, like

Charles, against 'Lias's assaults. In his youth and middle age — until, in fact, an event of some pathos and mystery had broken his life across, and cut him off from his profession — 'Lias had been a zealous teacher and a voracious reader; and through the dreams of fifteen years the didactic faculty had persisted and grown amazingly. He played schoolmaster now to all the heroes of history. Whether it were Elizabeth wrangling with Mary Stuart, or Cromwell marshalling his Ironsides, or Buckingham falling under the assassin's dagger at 'Lias's feet, or Napoleon walking restlessly up and down the deck of the 'Bellerophon,' 'Lias rated them everyone. He was lord of a shadow world, wherein he walked with kings and queens, warriors and poets, putting them one and all superbly to rights. Yet so subtle were the old man's wits, and so bright his fancy, even in derangement, that he preserved through it all a considerable measure of dramatic fitness. He gave his puppets a certain freedom; he let them state their case; and threw almost as much ingenuity into the pleading of it as into the refuting of it. Of late, since he had made friends with Davy Grieve, he had contracted a curious habit of weaving the boy into his visions.

'Davy, what's your opinion o' that?' or, 'Davy, my lad, did yo iver hear sich clut-clat i' your life?' or again,

[23]

'Davy, yo'll not be misled, surely, by sich a piece o' speshul-pleadin as that?'

So the appeals would run, and the boy, at first bewildered, and even irritated by them, as by something which threw hindrances in the way of the only dramatic entertainment the High Peak was likely to afford him, had learnt at last to join in them with relish. Many meetings with 'Lias on the moorside, which the old seer made alive for both of them — the plundering of 'Lias's books, whence he had drawn the brown 'Josephus' in his — these had done more than anything else to stock the boy's head with its present strange jumble of knowledge and ideas. *Knowledge*, indeed, it scarcely was, but rather the materials for a certain kind of excitement.

‘Wal, Davy, did yo hear that?’ said ‘Lias, presently, looking round on the boy with a doubtful countenance, after Cromwell had given an unctuous and highly Biblical account of the slaughter at Drogheda and its reasons.

‘How mony did he say he killed at that place?’ asked the boy sharply.

‘Thoosands,’ said Dawson, solemnly. ‘Theer was naw mercy asked nor gi’en. And those wha escaped knockin on t’ yead, were aw sold as slaves — every mon jock o’ them!’

A strong light of anger showed itself in David’s face.

‘Then he wor a cantin murderer! Yo mun tell him so! If I’d my way, he’d hang for ’t!’

[24]

‘Eh, laddie, they were nowt but rebels an Papists,’ said the old man, complacently.

‘Don’t yo becall Papists!’ cried David, fiercely, facing round upon him. ‘My mither wor a Papist.’

A curious change of expression appeared on ‘Lias’s face. He put his hand behind his ear that he might hear better, turned a pair of cunning eyes on David, while his lips pressed themselves together.

‘Your mither wor a Papist? an your feyther wor Sandy Grieve. Ay, ay — I’ve yeerd tell strange things o’ Sandy Grieve’s wife,’ he said slowly.

Suddenly Louie, who had been lying full length on her back in the sun, with her hat over her face, apparently asleep, sat bolt upright.

‘Tell us what about her,’ she said imperiously.

‘Noa — noa,’ said the old man, shaking his head, while a sort of film seemed to gather over the eyes, and the face and features relaxed — fell, as it were, into their natural expression of weak senility, which so long as he was under the stress of his favourite illusions was hardly apparent. ‘But it’s true — it’s varra true — I’ve yeerd tell strange things about Sandy Grieve’s wife.’

And still aimlessly shaking his head, he sat staring at the opposite side of the ravine, the lower jaw dropping a little.

‘He knows nowt about it,’ said David, roughly, the light of a sombre, half-reluctant curiosity, which had arisen in his look, dying down.

[25]

He threw himself on the grass by the dogs, and began teasing and playing with them. Meanwhile Louie sat studying ’Lias with a frowning hostility, making faces at him now and then by way of amusement. To disappoint the impetuous will embodied in that small frame was to commit an offence of the first order.

But one might as well make faces at a stone post as at old ’Lias when his wandering fit was on him. When the entertainment palled, Louie got up with a yawn, meaning to lounge back to the farm and investigate the nearness of dinner. But, as she turned, something caught her attention. It was the gleam of a pool, far away beyond the Downfall, on a projecting spur of the moor.

‘What d’ yo coe that bit watter?’ she asked David, suddenly pointing to it.

David rolled himself round on his face, and took a look at the bluish patch on the heather.

‘It hasna got naw name,’ he said, at a venture.

‘Then yo’re a stoopid, for it has,’ replied Louie, triumphantly. ‘It’s t’ *Mermaid* Pool. Theer wor a Manchester mon at Wigsons’ last week, telling aw maks o’ tales. Theer’s a mermaid lives in ’t — a woman, I tell tha, wi a fish’s tail — it’s in a book, an he read it out, soa *theer* — an on Easter Eve neet she cooms out, an walks about t’ Scout, combin her hair — an if onybody sees her an wishes for soomthin, they get it, sartin sure; an —’

[26]

‘Mermaids is just faddle an’ nonsense,’ interrupted David, tersely.

‘Oh, is they? Then I spose books is faddle. Most on ’em are — t’ kind of books yo like — I’ll uphowd yo!’

‘Oh, is they?’ said David, mimicking her. ‘Wal, I like ’em, yo see, aw t’ same. I tell yo, mermaids is nonsense, cos I *know* they are. Theer was yan at Hayfield Fair, an the fellys they nearly smashed t’ booth down, cos they said it wor a cheat. Theer was just a gell, an they’d stuffed her into a fish’s skin and sewed ’er up; an when yo went close yo could see t’ stuffin runnin out of her. An theer was a man as held ’er up by a wire roun her waist, an waggled her i’ t’ watter. But t’ foak as had paid sixpence to coom in, they just took an tore down t’ place, an they’d ’a dookt t’ man an t’ gell both, if th’ coonstable hadn’t coom. Naw, mermaids is faddle,’ he repeated contemptuously.

‘Faddle?’ repeated ’Lias, interrogatively.

The children started. They had supposed ’Lias was off doting and talking gibberish for the rest of the morning. But his tone was brisk, and as David looked up he caught a queer flickering brightness in the old man’s eye, which showed him that ’Lias was once more capable of furnishing amusement or information.

‘What do they coe that bit watter, ’Lias?’ he inquired, pointing to it.

‘That bit watter?’ repeated ’Lias, eyeing it. A sort of vague trouble came into his face, and his

[27]

wrinkled hands lying on his stick began to twitch nervously.

‘Aye — theer’s a Manchester man been cramming Wigsons wi tales — says he gets era out of a book — bout a woman ’at walks t’ Scout Easter Eve neet, — an a lot o’ ninny-hommer’s talk. Yo niver heerd nowt about it — did yo, ’Lias?’

‘Yes, yo did, Mr. Dawson — now, didn’t yo?’ said Louie, persuasively, enraged that David would never accept information from her, while she was always expected to take it from him.

‘A woman —’ at walks t’ Scout,’ said ’Lias, uncertainly, flushing as he spoke.

Then, looking tremulously from his companions to the pool, he said, angrily raising his stick and shaking it at David, 'Davy, yo're takin advantage — Davy, yo're doin what yo owt not. If my Margret were here, she'd let yo know!'

The words rose into a cry of quavering passion. The children stared at him in amazement. But as Davy, aggrieved, was defending himself, the old man laid a violent hand on his arm and silenced him. His eyes, which were black and keen still in the blanched face, were riveted on the gleaming pool. His features worked as though under the stress of some possessing force; a shiver ran through the emaciated limbs.

'Oh! yo want to know abeawt Jenny Crum's pool, do yo?' he said at last in a low agitated voice. 'Nobbut look, my lad! — nobbut look! — an see for yoursen'

[28]

He paused, his chest heaving, his eye fixed. Then, suddenly, he broke out in a flood of passionate speech, still gripping David.

'*Passon Maine! Passon Maine!* — ha yo got her, th' owd woman? Aye, aye — sure enough — 'at 's she — as yo're aw drivin afore yo — hoontit like a wild beest — wi her grey hair streamin, and her hands tied — Ah!' — and the old man gave a wild cry, which startled both the children to their feet. 'Conno yo hear her? — eh, but it's enough to tear a body's heart out to hear an owd woman scream like that!'

He stopped, trembling, and listened, his hand hollowed to his ear. Louie looked at her brother and laughed nervously; but her little hard face had paled. David laid hold of her to keep her quiet, and shook himself free of 'Lias. But 'Lias took no notice of them now at all, his changed seer's gaze saw nothing but the distance and the pool.

'Are yo quite *sure* it wor her, Passon?' he went on, appealingly. 'She's nobbut owd, an it's a far cry fro her bit cottage to owd Needham's Farm. An th' chilt might ha deed, and t' cattle might ha strayed, and t' geyats might ha opened o' theirsels! Yo'll not dare to speak agen *that*. They *might*? Ay, ay, we aw know t' devil's strong; but

she's eighty-one year coom Christmas — an — an. Doan't, *doan't* let t' childer see, nor t' yoong gells! If yo let em see sich seets they'll breed yo wolves, not babes! Ah!

And again 'Lias gave the same cry, and stood half risen, his hands on his staff, looking.

[29]

'What is it, 'Lias?' said David, eagerly; 'what is 't yo see?'

'Theer's my grandfeyther,' said 'Lias, almost in a whisper, 'an owd Needham an his two brithers, an yoong Jack Needham's woife — her as losst her babby — an yoong lads an lasses fro Clough End, childer awmost, and t' coonstable, an Passon Maine — Ay — ay — yo've doon it! yo've doon it! She'll mak naw moor mischeef neets — she's gay quiet now! T' watter's got her fasst enough!'

And, drawing himself up to his full height, the old man pointed a quivering finger at the pool.

'Ay, it's got her — an your stones are tied fasst! Passon Maine says she's safe — that yo'll see her naw moor —

While holly sticks be green,

While stone on Kinder Scoot be seen.

But *I* tell yo, Passon Maine *lees*! I tell yo t' witch ull *walk* — t' witch ull *walk*!'

For several seconds 'Lias stood straining forward — out of himself — a tragic and impressive figure. Then, in a moment, from that distance his weird gift had been re-peopling, something else rose towards him — some hideous memory, as it seemed, of personal anguish, personal fear. The exalted seer's look vanished, the tension within gave way, the old man shrank together. He fell back heavily on the stone, hiding his face in his hands, and muttering to himself.

The children looked at each other oddly. Then David, half afraid, touched him.

[30]

‘What’s t’ matter, ‘Lias? Are yo bad?’

The old man did not move. They caught some disjointed words, — ‘cold — ay, t’ neet’s cold, varra cold!’

‘ ‘Lias! ’shouted David.

‘Lias looked up startled, and shook his head feebly.

‘Are yo bad, ‘Lias?’

‘Ay! ‘said the old schoolmaster, in the voice of one speaking through a dream — ‘ay, varra bad, varra cold — I mun —lig me down —a bit.’

And he rose feebly. David instinctively caught hold of him, and led him to a corner close by in the ruined walls, where the heather and bilberry grew thick up to the stones. ‘Lias sank down, his head fell against the wall, and a light and restless sleep seemed to take possession of him.

David stood studying him, his hands in his pockets. Never in all his experience of him had ‘Lias gone through such a performance as this. What on earth did it mean? There was more in it than appeared, clearly. He would tell Margaret, ‘Lias’s old wife, who kept him and tended him like the apple of her eye. And he would find out about the pool, anyway. *Jenny Crum’s pool*? What on earth did that mean? The name had never reached his ears before. Of course Uncle Reuben would know. The boy eyed it curiously, the details of ‘Lias’s grim vision returning upon him. The wild circling moor seemed suddenly to have gained a mysterious interest.

‘Didn’t I tell yo he wor gone silly?’ said Louie, triumphantly, at his elbow.

[31]

‘He’s not gone that silly, onyways, but he can freeten little gells,’ remarked David, dryly, instinctively putting out an arm, meanwhile, to prevent her disturbing the poor sleeper.

‘I worn’t frettened,’ insisted Louie; ‘yo were! He may skrike aw day if he likes — for aw I care. He’ll be runnin into hedges by dayleet soon. Owd churn-yed!’

‘Howd your clatterin tongue!’ said David, angrily, pushing her out of the doorway. She lifted a loose sod of heather, which lay just outside, flung it at him, and then took to her heels, and made for the farm and dinner, with the speed of a wild goat.

David brushed his clothes, took a stroll with the dogs, and recovered his temper as best he might. When he came back, pricked by the state of his appetite, to see whether ’Lias had recovered enough sanity to get home, he found the old man sitting up, looking strangely white and exhausted, and fumbling, in a dazed way, for the tobacco to which he always resorted at moments of nervous fatigue. His good wife Margaret never sent him out without mended clothes, spotless linen, and a paper of tobacco in his pocket. He sat chewing it awhile in silence; David’s remarks to him met with only incoherent answers, and at last the schoolmaster got up and with the help of his stick tottered off along the path by which he had come. David’s eyes followed the bent figure uneasily; nor did he turn homeward till it disappeared over the brow.

[32]

### CHAPTER III

ANYONE opening the door of Needham Farm kitchen that night at eight would have found the inmates at supper — a meagre supper, which should, according to the rule of the house, have been eaten in complete silence. Hannah Grieve, the children’s aunt, and mistress of the farm, thought it an offence to talk at meals. She had not been so brought up.

But Louie this evening was in a state of nerves. The afternoon had seen one of those periodical struggles between her and Hannah, which did so much to keep life at Needham Farm from stagnating into anything like comfort. The two combatants, however, must have taken a certain joy in them, since they recurred with so much regularity. Hannah had won, of course, as the grim self-importance of her bearing amply showed. Louie had been forced to patch the house-linen as usual, mainly by the temporary confiscation of her Sunday hat, the one piece of decent clothing she possessed, and to which she clung with a feverish attachment — generally, indeed,

sleeping with it beside her pillow. But, though she was beaten, she was still seething with rebellion.

[33]

Her eyes were red, but her shaggy head was thrown back defiantly, and there was hysterical battle in the expression of her sharply tinted nose and chin.

‘Mind yorsel,’ cried Hannah angrily, as the child put down her plate of porridge with a bang which made the housewife tremble for her crockery.

‘What’s t’ matter wi yo, Louie?’ said Uncle Reuben, looking at her with some discomfort. He had just finished the delivery of a long grace, into which he had thrown much unction, and Louie’s manners made but an ill-fitting Amen.

‘It’s nasty!’ said the child passionately. ‘It’s allus porridge — porridge — porridge — porridge — an I hate it — an it’s bitter — an it’s a shame! I wish I wor at Wigson’s — ’at I do!’

Davy glanced up at his sister under his eyebrows. Hannah scanned her niece all over with a slow, observant scrutiny, as though she were a dangerous animal that must be watched. Otherwise Louie might have spoken to the wall for all the effect she produced. Reuben, however, was more vulnerable.

‘What d’ yo want to be at Wigson’s for?’ he asked. ‘Yo should be content wi your state o’ life, Louie. It’s a sin to be discontented — I’ve tellt yo so many times.’

‘They’ve got scones and rhubarb jam for tea!’ cried the child, tumbling the news out as though she were bursting with it. ‘Mrs. Wigson, she’s allus makin em nice things. She’s kind, she is — she’s nice

[34]

— she wouldn’t make em eat stuff like this — she’d give it to the pigs — ’at she would!’

And all the time it was pitiful to see how the child was gobbling up her unpalatable food, evidently from the instinctive fear, nasty as it was, that it would be taken from her as a punishment for her behaviour.

‘Now, Louie, yo’re a silly gell,’ began Reuben, expostulating; but Hannah interposed.

‘I wudn’t advise yo, Reuben Grieve, to go wastin your breath on sich a minx. If I were yo, I’d keep it fur my awn eatin.’

And she calmly put another slice of cold bacon on his plate, as though reminding him of his proper business. Reuben fell silent and munched his bacon, though he could not forbear studying his niece every now and then uncomfortably. He was a tall, largeboned man, with weakish eyes, sandy whiskers and beard, grown in a fringe round his long face, and a generally clumsy and disjointed air. The tremulous, uncertain movements of his hand as he stretched it out for one article of food after another seemed to express the man’s character.

Louie went on gulping down her porridge. Her plate was just empty when Hannah caught a movement of Reuben’s fork. He was in the act of furtively transferring to Louie a portion of bacon. But he could not restrain himself from looking at Hannah as he held out the morsel. Hannah’s answering look was too much for him. The bacon went into his mouth.

[35]

Supper over, Louie went out to sit on the steps, and Hannah contemptuously forbore to make her come in and help clear away. Out in the air, the child slowly quieted down. It was a clear, frosty April night, promising a full moon. The fresh, nipping air blew on the girl’s heated temples and swollen eyes. Against her will almost, her spirits came back. She swept Aunt Hannah out of her mind, and began to plan something which consoled her. When would they have their stupid prayers and let her get upstairs?

David meanwhile hung about the kitchen. He would have liked to ask Uncle Reuben about the pool and 'Lias's story, but Hannah was bustling about, and he never mentioned 'Lias in her hearing. To do so would have been like handing over something weak, for which he had a tenderness, to be worried.

But he rummaged out an old paper-covered guide to the Peak, which he remembered to have been left at the farm one summer's day by a passing tourist, who paid Hannah handsomely for some bread and cheese. Turning to the part which concerned Clough End, Hayfield, and the Scout, he found:—

'In speaking of the Mermaiden's Pool, it may be remarked that the natives of several little hamlets surrounding Kinder Scout have long had a tradition that there is a beautiful woman — an English Hamadryad — lives in the side of the Scout; that she comes to bathe every day in the Mermaid's Well, and that

[36]

the man who has the good luck to behold her bathing will become immortal and never die.'

David shut the book and fell pondering, like many another wiser mortal before him, on the discrepancies of evidence. What was a Hamadryad? and why no mention of Easter Eve? and what had it all to do with the witch and Parson Maine and 'Lias's excitement?

Meanwhile, the thump made by the big family Bible as Hannah deposited it on the table warned both him and the truant outside that prayer-time had come. Louie came in noisily when she was called, and both children lounged unwillingly into their appointed seats.

Nothing but the impatience and indifference of childhood, however, could have grudged Reuben Grieve the half-hour which followed. During that one half-hour in the day, the mild, effaced man, whose absentminded ways and complete lack of business faculty were the perpetual torment of his wife, was master of his house. While he was rolling out the psalm, expounding the chapter, or 'wrestling' in prayer, he was a

personality and an influence even for the wife who, in spite of a dumb congruity of habit, regarded him generally as incompetent and in the way. Reuben's religious sense was strong and deep, but some very natural and pathetically human instincts entered also into his constant pleasure in this daily function. Hannah, with her strong and harsh features settled into repose, with her large hands, reddened by the day's work, lying idle in her lap, sat opposite to him in

[37]

silence; for once she listened, to him, whereas all day he had listened to her; and the moment made a daily oasis in the life of a man who, in his own dull, peasant way, knew that he was a failure, and knew also that no one was so well aware of it as his wife.

With David and Louie the absorbing interest was generally to see whether the prayer would be over before the eight-day clock struck nine, or whether the loud whirr which preceded that event would be suddenly and deafeningly let loose upon Uncle Reuben in the middle of his peroration, as sometimes happened when the speaker forgot himself. To-night that catastrophe was just avoided by a somewhat obvious hurry through the Lord's Prayer. When they rose from their knees Hannah put away the Bible, the boy and girl raced each other upstairs, and the elders were left alone.

An hour passed away. Reuben was dozing peacefully in the chimney-corner; Aunt Hannah had just finished putting a patch on a pair of Reuben's trousers, was folding up her work and preparing to rouse her slumbering companion, when a sound overhead caught her ear.

'What's that chilt at now?' she exclaimed angrily, getting up and listening. She'd owt ta been in bed long ago. Soomthin mischeevous, I'll be bound.' And lighting a dip beside her, she went upstairs with a treacherously quiet step. There was a sound of an opening door, and then Reuben downstairs was startled out of his snooze by a sudden gamut of angry cries, a scurrying of feet, and Hannah scolding loudly —

[38]

‘Coom downstairs wi yo! — coom down an show your uncle what a figure o’ foon yo’n been makkin o’ yorsel! I’st teach yo to burn three candles down awbut to nothink at yo may bedizen yorsel in this way. Coom along wi yo.’

There was a scuffle on the stairs, and then Hannah burst open the door, dragging in an extraordinary figure indeed. Struggling and crying in her aunt’s grip, was Louie. White trailing folds swept behind her; a white garment underneath, apparently her nightgown, was festooned with an old red-and-blue striped sash of some foreign make. Round her neck hung a necklace of that gold filigree work which spreads from Genoa all along the Riviera; her magnificent hair hung in masses over her shoulders, crowned by the primroses of the morning, which had been hurriedly twisted into a wreath by a bit of red ribbon rummaged out of some drawer of odds-and-ends; and her thin brown arms and hands appeared under the white cloak — nothing but a sheet — which was being now trodden underfoot in the child’s passionate efforts to get away from her aunt. Ten minutes before she had been a happy queen flaunting over her attic floor in a dream of joy before a broken, propped-up looking-glass under the splendid illumination of three dips, long since secreted for purposes of the kind. Now she was a bedraggled, tear-stained Fury, with a fierce humiliation and a boundless hatred glaring out of the

[39]

eyes, which in Aunt Hannah’s opinion were so big as to be ‘right down oogly.’ Poor Louie!

Uncle Reuben, startled from his snooze by this apparition, looked at it with a sleepy bewilderment, and fumbled for his spectacles. ‘Ay, yo’d better hike at her close,’ said Hannah, grimly, giving her niece a violent shake as she spoke; ‘I wor set yo should just see her fur yance at her antics. Yo say soomtimes I’m hard on her. Well, I’d ask ony pusson aloive if they’d put up wi this soart o’ thing m — dressin up like a bad hizzy that waaks t’ streets, wi three candles — *three*, I tell yo, Reuben — flarin away, and the

curtains close to, an nothink but the Lord's mussy keepin 'em from catchin. An she peacockin an gallivantin away enough to mak a cat laugh!

And Aunt Hannah in her enraged scorn even undertook a grotesque and mincing imitation of the peacocking aforesaid. 'Let goo!' muttered Louie between her shut teeth, and with a wild strength she at last flung off her aunt and sprang for the door. But Hannah was too quick for her and put her back against it.

'No — yo'll not goo till your ooncle there's gien yo a word. He *shan't* say I'm hard on yo for nothink, yo good-for-nowt little powsement — he shall see yo as yo are!'

And with the bitterness of a smouldering grievance, expressed in every feature, Hannah looked peremptorily at her husband. He, poor man, was much perplexed.

[40]

The hour of devotion was passed, and outside it he was not accustomed to be placed in important situations.

'Louie — didn't yo know yo wor a bad gell to stay up and burn t' candles, an fret your aunt?' he said with a feeble solemnity, his look fixed on the huddled white figure against the mahogany press.

Louie stood with eyes resolutely cast down, and a forced smile, tremulous, but insolent to a degree, slowly lifting up the corners of her mouth as Uncle Reuben addressed her. The tears were still running off her face, but she meant her smile to convey the indomitable scorn for her tormentors which not even Aunt Hannah could shake out of her.

Hannah Grieve was exasperated by the child's expression.

'Yo little sloot!' she said, seizing her by the arm again, and losing her temper for good and all, 'yo've got your mither's bad blude in yo — an it ull coom out, happen what may!'

'Hannah!' exclaimed Reuben, 'Hannah — mind yoursel.'

‘My mither’s *dead*, said the child, slowly raising her dark, burning eyes. ‘My mither worn’t bad; an if yo say she wor, yo’re a *beast* for sayin it! I wish it wor yo wor dead, an my mither wor here instead o’ yo!’

To convey the concentrated rage of this speech is impossible. It seemed to Hannah that the child had the evil eye. Even she quailed under it,

‘Go ‘long wi yo,’ she said grimly, in a white heat.

[41]

while she opened the door— ‘an the less yo coom into *my* way for t’ future, the better.’ She pushed the child out and shut the door.

‘Yo *are* hard on her, Hannah!’ exclaimed Reuben, in his perplexity — pricked, too, as usual in his conscience.

The repetition of this parrot-cry, as it seemed to her, maddened his wife.

‘She’s a wanton’s brat,’ she said violently; ‘an she’s got t’ wanton’s blood.’

Reuben was silent. He was afraid of his wife in these moods. Hannah began, with trembling hands, to pick up the contents of her work-basket, which had been overturned in the scuffle.

Meanwhile Louie rushed upstairs, stumbling over and tearing her finery, the convulsive sobs beginning again as soon as the tension of her aunt’s hated presence was removed.

At the top she ran against something in the dark. It was David, who had been hanging over the stairs, listening. But she flung past him.

‘What’s t’ matter, Louie?’ he asked in a loud whisper through the door she shut in his face; ‘what’s th’ owd crosspatch been slangin about?’

But he got no answer, and he was afraid of being caught by Aunt Hannah if he forced his way in. So he went back to his own room, and closed, without latching, his door. He had had an inch of dip to go to bed with, and had spent that on reading. His

[42]

book was a battered copy of 'Anson's Voyages,' which also came from 'Lias's store, and he had been straining his eyes over it with enchantment. Then had come the sudden noise upstairs and down, and his candle and his pleasure had gone out together. The heavy footsteps of his uncle and aunt ascending warned him to keep quiet. They turned into their room, and locked their door as their habit was. David noiselessly opened his window and looked out.

A clear moonlight reigned outside. He could distinguish the rounded shapes, the occasional movements of the sheep in their pen to the right of the farmyard. The trees in the field threw long shadows down the white slope; to his left was the cart-shed with its black caverns and recesses, and the branches of the apple-trees against the luminous sky. Owls were calling in the woods below; sometimes a bell round the neck of one of the sheep tinkled a little, and the river made a distant background of sound.

The boy's heart grew heavy. After the noises in the Grieves' room ceased he listened for something which he knew must be in the air, and caught it — the sound of a child's long, smothered sobs. On most nights they would not have made much impression on him. Louie's ways with her brother were no more engaging than with the rest of the world; and she was not a creature who invited consolation from anybody. David, too, with his power of escape at any time into a world of books and dreams or simply into the wild

[43]

shepherd life of the moors, was often inclined to a vague irritation with Louie's state of perpetual revolt. The food *was* nasty, their clothes *were* ugly and scanty, Aunt Hannah was as hard as nails — at the same time Louie was enough to put anybody's back up. What did she get by it? — that was his feeling; though, perhaps, he never shaped it. He had never felt much pity for her. She had a way of putting herself out of court, and he was, of course, too young to see her life or his own as a whole. What their relationship might mean to him was still vague — to be decided by the future. Whatever softness

there was in the boy was at this moment called out by other people — by old ‘Lias and his wife; by Mr. Ancrum, the lame minister at Clough End; by the dogs; hardly ever by Louie. He had grown used, moreover, to her perpetual explosions, and took them generally with a boy’s natural callousness.

But to-night her woes affected him as they had never done before. The sound of her sobbing, as he stood listening, gradually roused in him an unbearable restlessness. An unaccountable depression stole upon him — the reaction, perhaps, from a good deal of mental exertion and excitement in the day. A sort of sick distaste awoke in him for most of the incidents of existence — for Aunt Hannah, for Uncle Reuben’s incomprehensible prayers, for the thought of the long Puritanical Sunday just coming. And, in addition, the low vibrations of that distant sobbing stirred in him again, by association, certain memories which were like a clutch of

[44]

physical pain, and which the healthy young animal instinctively and passionately avoided whenever it could. But to-night, in the dark and in solitude, there were no distractions, and as the boy put his head down on his arms, rolling it from side to side as though to shake them off, the same old images pursued him — the lodging-house room, and the curtainless iron bed in which he slept with his father; reminiscences of some long, inexplicable anguish through which that father had passed; then of his death, and his own lonely crying. He seemed still to *feel* the strange sheets in that bed upstairs, where a compassionate fellow-lodger had put him the night after his father died; he sat up again bewildered in the cold dawn, filled with a home-sickness too benumbing for words. He resented these memories, tried to banish them; but the nature on which they were impressed was deep and rich, and, once shaken, vibrated long. The boy trembled through and through. The more he was ordinarily shed abroad, diffused in the life of sensation and boundless mental curiosity, the blacker were these rare moments of self-consciousness, when all the world seemed pain, an iron vice which pinched and tortured him.

At last he went to his door, pulled it gently open, and with bare feet went across to Louie's room, which he entered with infinite caution. The moonlight was streaming in on the poor gauds, which lay wildly scattered over the floor. David looked at them with amazement. Amongst them he saw something glittering.

[45]

He picked it up, saw it was a gold necklace which had been his mother's, and carefully put it on the little toilet table.

Then he walked on to the bed. Louie was lying with her face turned away from him. A certain pause in the sobbing as he came near told him that she knew he was there. But it began again directly, being indeed a physical relief which the child could not deny herself. He stood beside her awkwardly. He could think of nothing to say. But timidly he stretched out his hand and laid the back of it against her wet cheek. He half expected she would shake it off, but she did not. It made him feel less lonely that she let it stay; the impulse to comfort had somehow brought himself comfort. He stood there, feeling very cold, thinking a whirlwind of thoughts about old 'Lias, about the sheep, about Titus and Jerusalem, and about Louie's extraordinary proceedings — till suddenly it struck him that Louie was not crying any more. He bent over her. The sobs had changed into the long breaths of sleep, and, gently drawing away his hand, he crept off to bed.

[46]

#### CHAPTER IV

IT was Sunday afternoon, still cold, nipping, and sunny. Reuben Grieve sat at the door of the farmhouse, his pipe in his hand, a 'good book' on his knee. Beyond the wall which bounded the farmyard he could hear occasional voices. The children were sitting there, he supposed. It gave him a sensation of pleasure once to hear a shrill laugh, which he knew was Louie's. For all this morning, through the long services in the 'Christian

Brethren' chapel at Clough End, and on the walk home, he had been once more pricked in his conscience. Hannah and Louie were not on speaking terms. At meals the aunt assigned the child her coarse food without a word, and on the way to chapel and back there had been a stony silence between them. It was evident, even to his dull mind, that the girl was white and thin, and that between her wild temper and mischief and the mirth of other children there was a great difference. Moreover, certain passages in the chapel prayers that morning had come home sharply to a mind whereof the only definite gift was a true religious sensitiveness. The text of the sermon especially — 'Whoso loveth not his brother,

[47]

whom he hath seen, how shall he love God, whom he hath not seen?' — vibrated like an accusing voice within him. As he sat in the doorway, with the sun stealing in upon him, the clock ticking loudly at his back, and the hens scratching round the steps, he began to think with much discomfort about his dead brother and his brother's children.

As to his memories of the past, they may perhaps be transformed here into a short family history, with some details added which had no place in Reuben's mind. Twenty years before this present date Needham — once Needham's — Farm had been held by Reuben's father, a certain James Grieve. He had originally been a kind of farm-labourer on the Berwickshire border, who, driven southwards in search of work by the stress of the bad years which followed the great war, had wandered on, taking a job of work here and another there, and tramping many a score of weary miles between, till at last in this remote Derbyshire valley he had found a final anchorage. Needham Farm was then occupied by a young couple of the name of Pierson, beginning life under fairly prosperous circumstances. James Grieve took service with them, and they valued his strong sinews and stern Calvinistic probity as they deserved. But he had hardly been two years on the farm when his young employer, dozing one winter evening on the shafts of his cart coming back from Glossop market, fell off, was run over, and killed. The widow, a young thing, nearly lost her

[48]

senses with grief, and James, a man of dour exterior and few words, set himself to keep things going on the farm till she was able to look life in the face again. Her sister came to be with her, and there was a child born, which died. She was left better provided for than most women of her class, and she had expectations from her parents. After the child's death, when the widow began to go about again, and James still managed all the work of the farm, the neighbours naturally fell talking. James took no notice, and he was not a man to meddle with, either in a public-house or elsewhere. But presently a crop of suitors for the widow began to appear, and it became necessary also to settle the destiny of the farm. No one outside ever knew how it came about, for Jenny Pierson, who was a soft, prettyish creature, had given no particular sign; but one Sunday morning the banns of James Grieve, bachelor, and Jenny Pierson, widow, were suddenly given out in the Presbyterian chapel at Clough End, to the mingled astonishment and disgust of the neighbourhood.

Years passed away. James held his own for a time with any farmer of the neighbourhood. But, by the irony of fate, the prosperity which his industry and tenacity deserved was filched from him little by little by the ill-health of his wife. She bore him two sons, Reuben and Alexander, and then she sank into a hopeless, fretful invalid, tormented by the internal ailment of which she ultimately died. But the small

[49]

farmer who employs little or no labour is lost without an active wife. If he has to pay for the milking of his cows, the making of his butter, the cooking of his food, and the nursing of his children, his little margin of profit is soon eaten away; and with the disappearance of this margin, existence becomes a blind struggle. Even James Grieve, the man of iron will and indomitable industry, was beaten at last in the unequal contest. The life at the farm became bitter and tragic. Jenny grew more helpless and more

peevish year by year; James was not exactly unkind to her, but he could not but revenge upon her in some degree that ruin of his silent ambitions which her sickliness had brought upon him.

The two sons grew up in the most depressing atmosphere conceivable. Reuben, who was to have the farm, developed a shy and hopeless taciturnity under the pressure of the family chagrin and privations, and found his only relief in the emotions and excitements of Methodism. Sandy seemed at first more fortunate. An opening was found for him at Sheffield, where he was apprenticed to a rope-maker, a cousin of his mother's. This man died before Sandy was more than halfway through his time, and the youth went through a period of hardship and hand-to-mouth living which ended at last in the usual tramp to London. Here, after a period of semi-starvation, he found it impossible to get work at his own trade, and finally drifted into carpentering and cabinet-making. The

[50]

beginnings of this new line of life were incredibly difficult, owing to the jealousy of his fellow-workmen, who had properly served their time to the trade, and did not see why an interloper from another trade, without qualifications, should be allowed to take the bread out of their mouths. One of Sandy's first successes was in what was called a 'shop-meeting,' a gathering of all the employes of the firm he worked for, before whom the North-countryman pleaded to be allowed to earn his bread. The tall, finely grown, famished-looking lad spoke with a natural eloquence, and here and there with a Biblical force of phrase — the inheritance of his Scotch blood and training — which astonished and melted most of his hearers. He was afterwards let alone, and even taught by the men about him, in return for 'drinks,' which swallowed up sometimes as much as a third of his wages.

After two or three years he was fully master of his trade, an admirable workman, and a keen politician to boot. All this time he had spent his evenings in self-education, buying books with every spare penny, and turning specially to science and

mathematics. His abilities presently drew the attention of the heads of the Shoreditch firm for which he worked, and when the post of a foreman in a West-end shop, in which they were largely interested, fell vacant, it was their influence which put Sandy Grieve into the well-paid and coveted post. He could hardly believe his own good fortune. The letter in which he announced it to his father

[51]

reached the farm just as the last phase of his mother's long martyrdom was developing. The pair, already old — James with work and anxiety, his wife with sickness — read it together. They shut it up without a word. Its tone of jubilant hope seemed to have nothing to do with them, or seemed rather to make their own narrowing prospects look more narrow, and the approach of the King of Terrors more black and relentless, than before. Jenny lay back on her poor bed with the tears of a dumb self-pity running down her cheeks, and James's only answer to it was conveyed in a brief summons to Sandy to come and see his mother before the end. The prosperous son, broadened out of knowledge almost by good feeding and good clothes, arrived. He brought money, which was accepted without much thanks; but his mother treated him almost as a stranger, and the dour James, while not unwilling to draw out his account of himself, would look him up and down from under his bushy grey eyebrows, and often interpose with some sarcasm on his 'foine' ways of speaking, or his 'gentleman's cloos.' Sandy was ill at ease. He was really anxious to help, and his heart was touched by his mother's state; but perhaps there was a strain of self-importance in his manner, a half-conscious inclination to thank God that his life was not to be as theirs, which came out in spite of him, and dug a gulf between him and them. Only his brother Reuben, dull, pious, affectionate Reuben, took to him, and showed that patient and wondering admiration of

[52]

the younger's cleverness, which probably Sandy had reckoned on as his right from his parents also.

On the last evening of his stay — he had luckily been able to make his coming coincide with an Easter three days' holiday — he was sitting beside his mother in the dusk, thinking, with a relief which every now and then roused in him a pang of shame, that in fourteen or fifteen more hours he should be back in London, in the world which made much of him and knew what a smart fellow he was, when his mother opened her eyes — so wide and blue they looked in her pinched, death-stricken face — and looked at him full.

'Sandy!'

'Yes, mother!' he said, startled — for he had been sunk in his own thoughts — and laying his hand on hers.

'You should get a wife, Sandy.'

'Well, some day, mother, I suppose I shall,' he said, with a change of expression which the twilight concealed.

She was silent a minute, then she began again, slow and feebly, but with a strange clearness of articulation.

'If she's sick, Sandy, *doant grudge it her*. Women 'ud die fasster iv they could.'

The whole story of the slow consuming bitterness of years spoke through those fixed and filmy eyes. Her son gave a sudden irrepressible sob. There was a faint lightening in the little wrinkled face, and the lips made a movement. He kissed her, and in that last moment

[53]

of consciousness the mother almost forgave him his good clothes and his superior airs.

Poor Sandy! Looking to his after story, it seems strange that any one should ever have felt him unbearably prosperous. About six months after his mother's death he married a milliner's assistant, whom he met first in the pit of a theatre, and whom he

was already courting when his mother gave him the advice recorded. She was French, from the neighbourhood of Aries, and of course a Catholic. She had come to London originally as lady's-maid to a Russian family settled at Nice. Shortly after their arrival, her master shot his young wife for a supposed intrigue, and then put an end to himself. Naturally the whole establishment was scattered, and the pretty Louise Suveret found herself alone, with a few pounds, in London. Thanks to the kind offices of the book-keeper in the hotel where they had been staying, she had been introduced to a milliner of repute in the Bond Street region, and the results of a trial given her, in which her natural Frenchwoman's gift and her acquired skill came out triumphant, led to her being permanently engaged. Thenceforward her good spirits — which had been temporarily depressed, not so much by her mistress's tragic ending as by her own unexpected discomfort — reappeared in all their native exuberance, and she proceeded to enjoy London. She defended herself first against the friendly book-keeper, who became troublesome, and had to be treated with

[54]

the most decided ingratitude. Then she gradually built herself up a store of clothes of the utmost elegance, which were the hopeless envy of the other girls employed at Madame Catherine's. And, finally, she looked about for serviceable acquaintances.

One night, in the pit of Drury Lane Theatre, while 'The Lady of Lyons' was going on, Sandy Grieve found himself next to a dazzling creature, with fine black eyes, the smooth olive skin of the South, white teeth, and small dimpled hands, hardly spoilt at all by her trade. She had with her a plain girl-companion, and her manner, though conscious and provocative, had that haughtiness, that implied readiness to take offence, which is the *grisette's* substitute for breeding. She was, however, affable to Sandy, whose broad shoulders and handsome, well-to-do air attracted her attention. She allowed him to get her a programme, to beguile her into conversation, and, finally, to offer her a cup of coffee. Afterwards he escorted the two to the door of their lodging, in

one of the streets off Theobald's Road, and walked home in a state of excitement which astonished him.

This happened immediately before his visit to the farm and his mother's death. During the six months after that event Sandy knew the 'joy of eventful living.' He was establishing his own business position, and he was courting Louise Suveret with alternations of despair and flattered passion, which stirred the now burly, full-blooded North-country man to his depths. She let

[55]

him escort her to her work in the morning and take her home in the evening, and she allowed him to give her as many presents of gloves, ribbons, bonbons — for which last she had a childish passion — and the like, as he pleased. But when he pressed her to marry him she generally laughed at him. She was, in reality, observing her world, calculating her chances, and she had several other strings to her bow, as Sandy shrewdly suspected, though she never allowed his jealousy any information to feed upon. It was simply owing to the failure of the most promising of these other strings — a failure which roused in Louise one of those white heats of passion which made the chief flaw in her organisation, viewed as a pleasure-procuring machine — that Sandy found his opportunity. In a moment of mortal chagrin and outraged vanity she consented to marry him, and three weeks afterwards he was the blissful owner of the black eyes, the small hands, the quick tongue, and the seductive *chiffons* he had so long admired more or less at a distance.

Their marriage lasted six years. At first Louise found some pleasure in arranging the little house Sandy had taken for her in a new suburb, and in making, wearing, and altering the additional gowns which their joint earnings — for she still worked intermittently at her trade — allowed her to enjoy. After the first infatuation was a little cooled, Sandy discovered in her a paganism so unblushing that his own Scotch and Puritan instincts reacted in a sort of superstitious fear. It

[56]

seemed impossible that God Almighty should long allow Himself to be flouted as Louise flouted Him. He found also that the sense of truth was almost non-existent in her, and her vanity, her greed of dress and admiration, was so consuming, so frenzied, that his only hope of a peaceful life — as he quickly realized — lay in ministering to it. Her will soon got the upper hand, and he sank into the patient servant of her pleasures, snatching feverishly at all she gave him in return with the instinct of a man who, having sold his soul, is determined at least to get the last farthing he can of the price.

They had two children in four years — David Suveret and Louise Stephanie. Louise resented the advent of the second so intensely that poor Sandy became conscious, before the child appeared, of a fatal and appalling change in her relation to him. She had been proud of her first-born — an unusually handsome and precocious child — and had taken pleasure in dressing it and parading it before the eyes of the other mothers in their terrace, all of whom she passionately despised. But Louie nearly died of neglect, and the two years that followed her birth were black indeed for Sandy. His wife, he knew, had begun to hate him; in business his energies failed him, and his employers cooled towards him as he grew visibly less pushing and inventive. The little household got deeper and deeper into debt, and towards the end of the time Louise would sometimes spend the whole day away from home without a word of explanation. So great was his nervous terror — strong, broad fellow that

[57]

he was — of that pent-up fury in her, which a touch might have unloosed, that he never questioned her. At last the inevitable end came. He got home one summer evening to find the house empty and ransacked, the children — little things of five and two — sitting crying in the desolate kitchen, and a crowd of loud-voiced, indignant neighbours round the door. To look for her would have been absurd. Louise was much too clever to disappear and leave traces behind. Besides, he had no wish to find her. The hereditary

self in him accepted his disaster as representing the natural retribution which the canny Divine vengeance keeps in store for those who take to themselves wives of the daughters of Heth. And there was the sense, too, of emerging from something unclean, of recovering his manhood.

He took his two children and went to lodgings in a decent street near the Gray's Inn Road. There for a year things went fairly well with him. His boy and girl, whom he paid a neighbour to look after during the day, made something to come home to. As he helped the boy, who was already at school, with his lesson for the next day, or fed Louie, perched on his knee, with the bits from his plate demanded by her covetous eyes and open mouth, he got back, little by little, his self-respect. He returned, too, in the evenings to some of his old pursuits, joined a Radical club near, and some science lectures. He was aged and much more silent than of yore, but not unhappy; his employers, too, feeling that their man had somehow recovered himself,

[58]

and hearing something of his history, were sorry for him, and showed it.

Then one autumn evening a constable knocked at his door, and, coming in upon the astonished group of father and children, produced from his pocket a soaked and tattered letter, and showing Sandy the address, asked if it was for him. Sandy, on seeing it, stood up, put down Louie, who, half undressed, had been having a ride on his knee, and asked his visitor to come out on to the landing. There he read the letter under the gas-lamp, and put it deliberately into his pocket.

‘Where is she?’ he asked.

‘In Lambeth mortuary,’ said the man briefly — ‘picked up two hours ago. Nothing else found on her but this.’

Half an hour afterwards Sandy stood by a slab in the mortuary, and, drawing back a sheet which covered the burden on it, stood face to face with his dead wife. The black brows were drawn, the small hands clenched. What struck Sandy with peculiar horror was that one delicate wrist was broken, having probably struck something in

falling. She — who in life had rebelled so hotly against the least shadow of physical pain! Thanks to the bandage which had been passed round it, the face was not much altered. She could not have been long in the water. Probably about the time when he was walking home from work, she —— He felt himself suffocating — the bare whitewashed walls grew dim and wavering.

[59]

The letter found upon her was the strangest appeal to his pity. Her seducer had apparently left her; she was in dire straits, and there was, it seemed, no one but Sandy in all London on whose compassion she could throw herself. She asked him, callously, for money to take her back to some Nice relations. They need only know what she chose to tell them, as she calmly pointed out, and, once in Nice, she could make a living. She would like to see her children, she said, before she left, but she supposed he would have to settle that. How had she got his address? From his place of business probably, in some roundabout way.

Then what had happened? Had she been seized with a sudden persuasion that he would not answer, that it was all useless trouble; and in one of those accesses of blind rage by which her clear, sharp brain-life was at all times apt to be disturbed, had she rushed out to end it all at once and for ever? It made him forgive her that she could have destroyed herself — could have faced that awful plunge — that icy water — that death-struggle for breath. He gauged the misery she must have gone through by what he knew of her sensuous love for comfort, for bien-être. He saw her again as she had been that night at the theatre when they first met, — the little crisp black curls on the temples, the dazzling eyes, the artificial pearls round the neck, the slight traces of powder and rouge on brow and cheek, which made her all the more attractive and tempting to his man's eye — the pretty foot, which he

[60]

first noticed as she stepped from the threshold of the theatre into the street. Nature had made all that, to bring her work to this grim bed at last!

He himself lived eighteen months afterwards. His acquaintances never dreamt of connecting his death with his wife's, and the connection, if it existed, would have been difficult to trace. Still, if little David could have put his experiences at this time into words, they might have thrown some light on an event which was certainly a surprise to the small world which took an interest in Sandy Grieve.

There was a certain sound which remained all through his life firmly fixed in David's memory, and which he never thought of without a sense of desolation, a shiver of sick dismay, such as belonged to no other association whatever. It was the sound of a long sigh, brought up, as it seemed, from the very depths of being, and often, often repeated. The thought of it brought with it a vision of a small bare room at night, with two iron bedsteads, one for Louie, one for himself and his father; a bit of smouldering fire in a tiny grate, and beside it a man's figure bowed over the warmth, thrown out dark against the distempered wall, and sitting on there hour after hour; of a child, wakened intermittently by the light, and tormented by the recurrent sound, till it had once more burrowed into the bed-clothes deep enough to shut out everything but sleep. All these memories belonged to the time immediately following on Louise's suicide. Probably, during

[60]

the interval between his wife's death and his own, Sandy suffered severely from the effects of strong nervous shock, coupled with a certain growth of religious melancholy, the conditions for which are rarely wanting in the true Calvinist blood. Owing to the privations and exposure of his early manhood, too, it is possible that he was never in reality the strong man he looked. At any rate, his fight for his life when it came was a singularly weak one. The second winter after Louise's death was bitterly cold; he was overworked, and often without sleep. One bleak east-wind day struck home. He took to

his bed with a chill, which turned to peritonitis; the system showed no power of resistance, and he died.

On the day but one before he died, when the mortal pain was gone, but death was absolutely certain, he sent post-haste for his brother Reuben. Reuben he believed was married to a decent woman, and to Reuben he meant to commend his children.

Reuben arrived, looking more bewildered and stupid than ever, pure countryman that he was, in this London which he had never seen. Sandy looked at him with a deep inward dissatisfaction. But what could he do? His marriage had cut him off from his old friends, and since its wreck he had had no energy wherewith to make new ones.

‘I’ve never seen your wife, Reuben,’ he said, when they had talked a while.

[62]

Reuben was silent a minute, apparently collecting his thoughts.

‘Naw,’ he said at last; ‘naw. She sent yo her luve, and she hopes iv it’s the Lord’s will to tak yo, that it ull foind yo prepared.’

He said it like a lesson. A sort of nervous tremor and shrinking overspread Sandy’s face. He had suffered so much through religion during the last few months, that in this final moment of humanity the soul had taken refuge in numbness — apathy. Let God decide. He could think it out no more; and in this utter feebleness his terrors of hell — the ineradicable deposit of childhood and inheritance — had passed away. He gathered his forces for the few human and practical things which remained to him to do.

‘Did she get on comfortable with father?’ he asked, fixing Reuben with his eyes, which had the penetration of death.

Reuben looked discomposed, and cleared his throat once or twice.

‘Wal, it warn’t what yo may call just coomfortable atween ’em. Naw, I’ll not say it wor.’

‘What was wrong?’ demanded Sandy.

Reuben fidgeted.

‘Wal,’ he said at last, throwing up his head in desperation, ‘I spose a woman likes her house to hersel when she’s fust married. He wor childish like, an mighty trooblesome times. An she’s allus stirrin’,

[63]

an rootin’, is Hannah. Udder foak mus look aloive too.’

The conflict in Reuben’s mind between his innate truthfulness and his desire to excuse his wife was curious to see. Sandy had a vision of his father sitting in his dotage by his own hearth, and ministered to by a daughter-in-law who grudged him his years and his infirmities, as he had grudged his wife all the troublesome incidents of her long decay. But it only affected him now as it bore upon what was still living in him, the one feeling which still survived amid the wreck made by circumstance and disease.

‘Will she be kind to *them*?’ he said sharply, with a motion of the head towards the children, first towards David, who sat drooping on his fathers bed, where for some ten or twelve hours now he had remained glued, refusing to touch either breakfast or dinner, and then towards Louie, who was on the floor by the fire, with her rag dolls, which she was dressing up with smiles and chatter in a strange variety of finery. ‘If not, she shan’t have ’em. There’s time yet.’

But the grey hue was already on his cheek, his feet were already cold. The nurse in the far corner of the room, looking up as he spoke, gave him mentally ‘an hour or two.’

Reuben flushed and sat bolt upright, his gnarled and wrinkled hands trembling on his knees.

‘She *shall* be kind to em,’ he said with energy.

[64]

‘Gie em to us, Sandy. Yo wouldna send your childer to strangers?’

The clannish instinct in Sandy responded. Besides, in spite of his last assertion, he knew very well there was nothing else to be done.

‘There’s money,’ he said slowly. ‘She’ll not need to stint them of anything. This is a poor place,’ for at the word ‘money’ he noticed that Reuben’s eyes travelled with an awakening shrewdness over the barely furnished room; ‘but it was the debts first, and then I had to put by for the children. None of the shop-folk or the fellows at the club ever came here. We lived as we liked. There’s an insurance, and there’s some savings, and there’s some commission money owing from the firm, and there’s a bit investment Mr. Gurney (naming the head partner) helped me into last year. There’s altogether about six hundred pound. You’ll get the interest of it for the children; it’ll go into Gurneys’, and they’ll give five per cent, for it. Mr. Gurney’s been very kind. He came here yesterday, and he’s got it all. You go to him.’

He stopped for weakness. Reuben’s eyes were round. Six hundred pounds! Whod have thought it of Sandy? — after that bad lot of a wife, and he not thirty!

‘An what d’ yo want Davy to be, Sandy?’

‘You must settle,’ said the father, with a long sigh.

‘Depends on him — what he turns to. If he wants to

[65]

farm, he can learn with you, and put in his money when he sees an opening. For the bit farms in our part there’d be enough. But I’m feeart’ (the old Derbyshire word slipped out unawares) ‘he’ll not stay in the country. He’s too sharp, and you mustn’t force him. If you see he’s not the farming sort, when he’s thirteen or fourteen or so, take Mr. Gurney’s advice, and bind him to a trade. Mr. Gurney ’ll pay the premiums for him and he can have the balance of the money — for I’ve left him to manage it all, for himself and Louie too — when he’s fit to set up for himself. — You and Hannah ’ll deal honest wi ’em?’

The question was unexpected, and as he put it with a startling energy the dying man raised himself on his elbow, and looked sharply at his brother.

‘D’ yo think I’d cheat yo, or your childer, Sandy?’ cried Reuben, flushing and pricked to the heart.

Sandy sank back again, his sudden qualm appeased. ‘No,’ he said, his thoughts returning painfully to his son. ‘I’m feeart he’ll not stay wi you. He’s cleverer than I ever was, and I was the cleverest of us all.’

The words had in them a whole epic of human fate. Under the prick of them Reuben found a tongue, not now for his wife, but for himself.

‘It’s not cliverness as nil help yo now, Sandy, wi your Mäaker! and yo feeace t’ feeace wi ’un!’ he cried. ‘It’s nowt but satisfacshun by t’ blood o’ Jesus!’

Sandy made no answer, unless, indeed, the poor

[66]

heart within made its last cry of agony to heaven at the words. The sinews of the spiritual as well as the physical man were all spent and useless.

‘Davy,’ he called presently. The child, who had been sitting motionless during this talk watching his father, slid along the bed with alacrity, and tucking his little legs and feet well away from Sandy’s long frame, put his head down on the pillow. His father turned his eyes to him, and with a solemn, lingering gaze took in the childish face, the thick, tumbled hair, the expression, so piteous, yet so intelligent. Then he put up his own large hand, and took both the boy’s into its cold and feeble grasp. His eyelids fell, and the breathing changed. The nurse hurriedly rose, lifted up Louie from her toys, and put her on the bed beside him. The child, disturbed in her play and frightened by she knew not what, set up a sudden cry. A tremor seemed to pass through the shut lids at the sound, a slight compression of pain appeared in the grey lips. It was Sandy Grieve’s last sign of life.

Reuben Grieve remembered well the letter he had written to his wife, with infinite difficulty, from beside his brother’s dead body. He told her that he was bringing the children back with him. The poor bairns had got nobody in the world to look to but

their uncle and aunt. And they would not cost Hannah a penny. For Mr. Gurney would pay thirty pounds a year for their keep and bringing up.

With what care and labour his clumsy fingers had

[67]

penned that last sentence so that Hannah might read it plain!

Afterwards he brought the children home. As he drove his light cart up the rough and lonely road to Needham Farm, Louie cried with the cold and the dark, and Davy, with his hands tucked between his knees, grew ever more and more silent, his restless little head turning perpetually from side to side, as though he were trying to discover something of the strange, new world to which he had been brought, through the gloom of the February evening.

Then at the sound of wheels outside in the lane, the back door of the farm was opened, and a dark figure stood on the threshold.

‘Yo’re late,’ Reuben heard. It was Hannah’s piercing voice that spoke. ‘Bring ’em into t’ back kitchen, an let ’em take their shoes off afore they coom ony further.’

By which Reuben knew that it had been scrubbing-day, and that her flagstones were more in Hannah’s mind than the guests he had brought her. He obeyed, and then the barefooted trio entered the front kitchen together. Hannah came forward and looked at the children — at David white and blinking — at the four-year-old Louie, bundled up in an old shawl, which dragged on the ground behind her, and staring wildly round her at the old low-roofed kitchen with the terror of the trapped bird.

[68]

‘Hannah, they’re varra cold,’ said Reuben — ‘ha yo got summat hot?’

‘Theer’ll be supper bime-by,’ Hannah replied with decision. ‘I’ve naw time scrubbin-days to be foolin about wi things out o’ hours. I’ve nobbut just got straight an cleaned mysel. They can sit down an warm theirsels. I conno say they feature ony of *yor*

belongins, Reuben.’ And she went to put Louie on the settle by the fire. But as the tall woman in black approached her, the child hit out madly with her small fists and burst into a loud howl of crying.

‘Get away, nasty woman! *Nasty* woman — ugly woman! Take me away — I want my daddy, — I want my daddy.’

And she threw herself kicking on the floor, while, to Hannah’s exasperation, a piece of crumbling bun she had been holding tight in her sticky little hand escaped and littered all the new-washed stones.

‘Tak yor niece oop, Reuben, an mak her behave’ — the mistress of the house commanded angrily. ‘She’ll want a stick takken to her, soon, I can see.’

Reuben obeyed so far as he could, but Louie’s shrieks only ceased when, by the combined efforts of husband and wife, she had been put to bed, so exhausted with rage, excitement, and the journey, that sleep mercifully took possession of her just after she had performed the crowning feat of knocking the tea and bread and butter Reuben brought her out of her uncle’s hand and all over the room.

[69]

Meanwhile, David sat perfectly still in a chair against the wall, beside the old clock, and stared about him; at the hams and bunches of dried herbs hanging from the ceiling; at the chiffonier, with its red baize doors under a brass trellis work; at the high wooden settle, the framed funeral cards, and the two or three coloured prints, now brown with age, which Reuben had hung up twenty years before, to celebrate his marriage. Hannah was propitiated by the boy’s silence, and as she got supper ready she once or twice noticed his fine black eyes and his curly hair.

‘Yo can coom an get yor supper,’ she said to him, more graciously than she had spoken yet. ‘It’s a mussy yo doant goo skrikin like your sister.’

‘Thank you, ma’am,’ said the little fellow, with a townsman’s politeness, hardly understanding, however, a word of her north-country dialect — I’m not hungry.

— You’ve got a picture of General Washington there, ma’am;’ and, raising a small hand trembling with nervousness and fatigue, he pointed to one of the prints opposite.

‘Wal, I niver,’ said Hannah, with a stare of astonishment. ‘Yo’re a quare lot — the two o’ yer.’

One thing more Reuben remembered with some vividness in connection with the children’s arrival. When they were both at last asleep — Louie in an unused room at the back, on an old wooden bedstead, which stood solitary in a wilderness of bare boards;

[70]

David in a sort of cupboard off the landing, which got most of its light and air from a wooden trellis-work, overlooking the staircase — Hannah said abruptly to her husband, as they two were going to bed, ‘When ull Mr. Gurney pay that money?’

‘Twice a year — so his clerk tow’d me — Christmas an Midsummer. Praps we shan’t want to use it aw, Hannah; praps we might save soom on it for t’ childer. Their keep, iv yo feed em on parritch, is nobbut a fleabite, an they’n got a good stock o’ cloos, Sandy’s nurse tow’d me.’

He looked anxiously at Hannah. In his inmost heart there was a passionate wish to do his duty to Sandy’s orphans, fighting with a dread of his wife, which was the fruit of long habit and constitutional weakness.

Hannah faced round upon him. It was Reuben’s misfortune that dignity was at all times impossible to him. Now, as he sat in his shirt-sleeves and stocking-feet, flushed with the exertion of pulling off his heavy boots, the light of the tallow candle falling on his weak eyes with their red rims, on his large open mouth with the conspicuous gap in its front teeth, and his stubbly hair, he was more than usually grotesque. ‘As slamp an wobbly as an owd corn-boggart,’ so his neighbours described him when they wished to be disrespectful, and the simile fitted very closely with the dishevelled, disjointed appearance which was at all times characteristic of him, Sundays or weekdays. No

[71]

one studying the pair, especially at such a moment as this — the *malaise* of the husband — the wife towering above him, her grey hair hanging loose round her black brows and sallow face instinct with a rugged and indomitable energy — could have doubted in whose hands lay the government of Needham Farm.

‘I’ll thank yo not to talk nonsense, Reuben Grieve,’ said his wife sharply. ‘D’yo think they’re *my* flesh an blood, thoose childer? An who’ll ha to do for em but me, I should loike to know? Who’ll ha to put up wi their messin an their dirt but *me*? Twenty year ha yo an I been married, Reuben, an niver till this neet did I ha to goo down on my knees an sweep oop after scrubbin-day! Iv I’m to be moidered wi em, I’ll be paid for ’t. Soa I let yo know — it’s little enough.’

And Hannah took her payment. As he sat in the sun, looking back on the last seven years, with a slow and dreaming mind, Reuben recognised, using his own phrases for the matter, that the children’s thirty pounds had been the pivot of Hannah’s existence. He was but a small sheep farmer, with very scanty capital. By dint of hard work and painful thrift, the childless pair had earned a sufficient living in the past — nay, even put by a bit, if the truth of Hannah’s savings-bank deposits were known. But every fluctuation in their small profits tried them sorely — tried Hannah especially, whose temper was of the brooding and grasping order. The *certainty* of

[72]

Mr. Gurney’s cheques made them very soon the most cheerful facts in the farm life. On two days in the year — the 20th of June and the 20th of December — Reuben might be sure of finding his wife in a good temper, and he had long shrewdly suspected, without inquiring, that Hannah’s savings-bank book, since the children came, had been very pleasant reading to her.

Reuben fidgeted uncomfortably as he thought of those savings. Certainly the children had not cost what was paid for them. He began to be oddly exercised this Sunday morning on the subject of the porridge Louie hated so much. Was it his fault or Hannah's if the frugal living which had been the rule for all the remoter farms of the Peak — nay, for the whole north country — in his father's time, and had been made doubly binding, as it were, on the dwellers in Needham Farm by James Grieve's Scotch blood and habits, had survived under their roof, while all about them a more luxurious standard of food and comfort was beginning to obtain among their neighbours? Where could you find a finer set of men than the Berwickshire hinds, of whom his father came, and who were reared on 'parritch' from year's end to year's end?

And yet, all the same, Reuben's memory was full this morning of disturbing pictures of a little London child, full of town daintiness and accustomed to the spoiling of an indulgent father, crying herself into fits over the new unpalatable food, refusing it day after day, till the sharp, wilful face had grown pale and

[73]

pinched with famine, and caring no more apparently for her aunt's beatings than she did for the clumsy advances by which her uncle would sometimes try to propitiate her. There had been a great deal of beating — whenever Reuben thought of it he had a superstitious way of putting Sandy out of his mind as much as possible. Many times he had gone far away from the house to avoid the sound of the blows and shrieks he was powerless to stop.

Well, but what harm had come of it all? Louie was a strong lass now, if she were a bit thin and overgrown. David was as fine a boy as anyone need wish to see.

David?

Reuben got up from his seat at the farm door, took his pipe out of his pocket, and went to hang over the garden-gate, that he might unravel some very worrying thoughts at a greater distance from Hannah.

The day before he had been overtaken coming out of Clough End by Mr. Ancrum, the lame minister. He and Grieve liked one another. If there had been intrigues raised against the minister within the 'Christian Brethren' congregation, Reuben Grieve had taken no part in them.

After some general conversation, Mr. Ancrum suddenly said, 'Will you let me have a word with you, Mr. Grieve, about your nephew David — if you'll not think me intruding?'

'Say on, sir — say on,' said Reuben hastily, but with an inward shrinking.

[74]

'Well, Mr. Grieve, you've got a remarkable boy there — a curious and remarkable boy. What are you going to do with him?'

'Do wi him? — me, sir? Wal, I doan't know as I've iver thowt mich about it,' said Reuben, but with an agitation of manner that struck his interrogator. 'He be varra useful to me on t' farm, Mr. Ancrum. Soom toimes i' t' year theer's a lot doin, yo know, sir, even on a bit place like ours, and he ha gotten a good schoolin, he ha.'

The apologetic incoherence of the little speech was curious. Mr. Ancrum did not exactly know how to take his man.

'I dare say he's useful. But he's not going to be the ordinary labourer, Mr. Grieve — he's made of quite different stuff, and, if I may say so, it will pay you very well to recognise it in good time. That boy will read books now which hardly any grown man of his class — about here, at any rate — would be able to read. Aye, and talk about them, too, in a way to astonish you!'

'Yes, I know at he's oncommon cliver wi his books, is Davy,' Reuben admitted.

'Oh! it's not only that. But he's got an unusual brain and a wonderful memory. And it would be a thousand pities if he were to make nothing of them. You say he's useful, but — excuse me, Mr. Grieve — he seems to me to spend three parts of his time in loafing and desultory reading. He wants more teaching — he

[75]

wants steady training. Why don't you send him to Manchester,' said the minister boldly, 'and apprentice him? It costs money, no doubt.'

And he looked interrogatively at Reuben. Reuben, however, said nothing. They were toiling up the steep road from Clough End to the high farms under the Scout, a road which tried the minister's infirm limb severely; otherwise he would have taken more notice of his companion's awkward flush and evident discomposure.

'But it would pay you in the long run,' he said, when they stopped to take breath; 'it would be a capital investment if the boy lives, I promise you that, Mr. Grieve. And he could carry on his education there, too, a bit — what with evening classes and lectures, and the different libraries he could get the use of. It's wonderful how all the facilities for working-class education have grown in Manchester during the last few years.'

'Aye, sir — I spose they have — I spose they have,' said Reuben, uncomfortably, and then seemed incapable of carrying on the conversation any further. Mr. Ancrum talked, but nothing more was to be got out of the farmer. At last the minister turned back, saying, as he shook hands, 'Well, let me know if I can be of any use. I have a good many friends in Manchester. I tell you that's a boy to be proud of, Mr. Grieve, a boy of promise, if ever there was one. But he wants taking the right way. He's got plenty of mixed stuff

[76]

in him, bad and good. I should feel it anxious work, the next few years, if he were my boy.'

Now it was really this talk which was fermenting in Reuben, and which, together with the 'rumpus' between Hannah and Louie, had led to his singularly disturbed state of conscience this Sunday morning. As he stood, miserably pulling at his

pipe, the whole prospect of sloping field, and steep distant moor, gradually vanished from his eyes, and, instead, he saw the same London room which David's memory held so tenaciously — he saw Sandy raising himself from his deathbed with that look of sudden distrust — 'Now, you'll deal honest wi 'em, Reuben?'

Reuben groaned in spirit. 'A boy to be proud of' indeed. It seemed to him, now that he was perforce made to think about it, that he had never been easy in his mind since Sandy's orphans came to the house. On the one hand, his wife had had her way — how was he to prevent it? On the other, his religious sense had kept pricking and tormenting — like the gadfly that it was.

Who, in the name of fortune, was to ask Hannah for money to send the boy to Manchester and apprentice him? And who was going to write to Mr. Gurney about it without her leave? Once upset the system of things on which those two half-yearly cheques depended, how many more of them would be forthcoming? And how was Hannah going to put up with the loss of them? It made Reuben shiver to think of it.

Shouts from the lane behind. Reuben suddenly

[77]

raised himself and made for the gate at the corner of the farmyard. He came out upon the children, who had been to Sunday school at Clough End since dinner, and were now in consequence in a state of restless animal spirits. Louie was swinging violently on the gate which barred the path on to the moor. David was shying stones at a rook's nest opposite, the clatter of the outraged colony to which it belonged sounding as music in his ears.

They stared when they saw Reuben cross the road, sit down on a stone beside David, and take out his pipe. David ceased throwing, and Louie, crossing her feet and steadying herself as she sat on the topmost bar of the gate by a grip on either side, leant hard on her hands and watched her uncle in silence. When caught unawares by their elders, these two had always something of the air of captives defending themselves in an alien country.

‘Wal, Davy, did tha have Mr. Ancrum in school?’ began Reuben, affecting a brisk manner, oddly unlike him.

‘Naw. It wor Brother Winterbotham from Halifax, or soom sich name.’

‘Wor he edifyin, Davy?’

‘He wor — he wor — a leather-yed,’ said David, with sudden energy, and, taking up a stone again, he flung it at a tree trunk opposite, with a certain vindictiveness as though Brother Winterbotham were sitting there.

‘Now, yo’re not speakin as yo owt, Davy,’ said

[78]

Reuben reprovingly, as he puffed away at his pipe and felt the pleasantness of the spring sunshine which streamed down into the lane through the still bare but budding branches of the sycamores.

‘He *wor* a leather-yed,’ David repeated with emphasis. ‘He said it wor Alexander fought t’ battle o’ Marathon.’

Reuben was silent for a while. When tests of this kind were going, he could but lie low. However, David’s answer, after a bit, suggested an opening to him.

‘Yo’ve a rare deal o’ book-larnin for a farmin lad, Davy. If yo wor at a trade now, or a mill-hand, or summat o’ that soart, yo’d ha noan so mich time for readin as yo ha now.’

The boy looked at him askance, with his keen black eyes. His uncle puzzled him.

‘Wal, I’m not a mill-hand, onyways,’ he said, shortly, ‘an I doan’t mean to be.’

‘Noa, yo’re too lazy,’ said Louie shrilly, from the top of the gate. ‘Theer’s heaps o’ boys no bigger nor yo, arns their ten shillins a week.’

‘They’re welcome,’ said David laconically, throwing another stone at the water to keep his hand in. For some years now the boy had cherished a hatred of the mill-life on which Clough End and the other small towns and villages in the

neighbourhood existed. The thought of the long monotonous hours at the mules or the looms was odious to the lad whose joys lay in free

[79]

moorland wanderings with the sheep, in endless reading, in talks with a 'Lias Dawson.

'Wal, now, I'm real glad to heer yo say sich things, Davy, lad,' said Reuben, with a curious flutter of manner. 'I'm real glad. So yo take to the farmin, Davy? Wal, it's nateral. All yor forbears — all on em leastways, nobbut yor feyther — got their livin off t' land. It cooms nateral to a Grieve.'

The boy made no answer — did not commit himself in any way. He went on absently throwing stones.

'Why doan't he larn a trade?' demanded Louie. 'Theer's Harry Wigson, he's gone to Manchester to be prenticed. He doan't goo loafin round aw day.'

Her sharp wits disconcerted Reuben. He looked anxiously at David. The boy coloured furiously, and cast an angry glance at his sister.

'Theer's money wanted for prenticin,' he said shortly.

Reuben felt a stab. Neither of the children knew that they possessed a penny. A blunt word of Hannah's first of all, about 'not gien 'em ony high noshuns o' theirsels,' aided on Reuben's side by the natural secretiveness of the peasant in money affairs, had effectually concealed all knowledge of their own share in the family finances from the orphans.

He reached out a soil-stained hand, shaking already with incipient age, and laid it on David's sleeve.

'Art tha hankerin after a trade, lad?' he said hastily, nay, harshly.

[80]

David looked at his uncle astonished. A hundred thoughts flew through the boy's mind. Then he raised his head and caught sight of the great peak of Kinder Low

in the distance, beyond the green swells of meadowland, — the heathery slopes running up into its rocky breast, — the black patch on the brown, to the left, which marked the site of the Smithy.

‘No,’ he said decidedly. ‘No; I can’t say as I am. I like t’ farm in well enough.’

And then, boy-like, hating to be talked to about himself, he shook himself free of his uncle and walked away. Reuben fell to his pipe again with a beaming countenance.

‘Louie, my gell,’ he said.

‘Yes,’ said the child, not moving.

‘Coom yo heer, Louie.’

She unwillingly got down and came up to him.

Reuben put down his pipe, and fumbled in his waistcoat pocket. Out of it, with difficulty, he produced a sixpence.

‘Art tha partial to goodies, Louie?’ he said, dropping his voice almost to a whisper, and holding up the coin before her.

Louie nodded, her eyes glistening at the magnitude of the coin. Uncle Reuben might be counted on for a certain number of pennies during the year, but silver was unheard of.

‘Tak it then, child, an welcome. If yo have a sweet tooth — an it’s t’ way wi moast gells — I conno

[81]

see as it can be onythin else but Providence as gave it yo. So get yorsel soom bull’s-eyes, Louie, an — an’ — he looked a little conscious as he slipped the coin into her eager hand — ‘doan’t let on ti your aunt! She’d think mebbe I wor spoilin your teeth, or summat, — an, Louie’ —

Was Uncle Reuben gone mad? For the first time in her life, as it seemed to Louie, he was looking at what she had on, nay, was even taking up her dress between his finger and thumb.

‘Is thissen your Sunday frock, chilt?’

‘Yes,’ said the girl, flushing scarlet, ‘bean’t it a dishclout?’

And she stood looking down at it with passionate scorn. It was a worn and patched garment of brown alpaca, made out of an ancient gown of Hannah’s.

‘Wal, I’m naw judge i’ these matters,’ said Reuben, dubiously, drawing out his spectacles. ‘It’s got naw holes ’at I can see, but it’s not varra smart, perhaps. Satan’s varra active wi gells on this pint o’ dress — yo mun tak noatice o’ that, Louie — but — listen heer’ —

And he drew her nearer to him by her skirt, looking cautiously up and down the lane and across to the farm.

‘If I get a good price for t’ wool this year — an theer’s a new merchant coomin round, yan moor o’ t’ buyin soart nor owd Croker, soa they say, I’st save yo five shillin for a frock, chilt. Yo can goo an buy it, an I’st mak it straight wi yor aunt. But I mun get

[82]

a good price, yo know, or your aunt nil be fearfu’ bad to manage.’

And lie gazed up at her as though appealing to her common sense in the matter, and to her understanding of both his and her situation. Louie’s cheeks were red, her eyes did not meet his. They looked away, down towards Clough End.

‘Theer’s a blue cotton at Hinton’s,’ she said, hurriedly — ‘a light-blue cotton. They want sixpence farthin, — but Annie Wigson says yo could bate ’em a bit. But what’s t’ use?’ she added, with a sudden savage darkening of her bright look — ‘she’d tak it away.’

The tone gave Reuben a shock. But he did not rebuke it. For the first time he and Louie were conspirators in the same plot.

‘No, no, I’d see to ’at. But how ud yo get it made? ‘He was beginning to feel a childish interest in his scheme.

‘Me an Annie Wigson ud mak it oop fast enough. Theer are things I can do for her; she’d not want no payin, an she’s fearfu’ good at dressmakin. She wor prenticed two years afore she took ill.’

‘Gie me a kiss then, my gell; doan’t yo gie naw trooble, an we’st see. But I mun get a good price, yo know.’

And rising, Reuben bent towards his niece. She rose on tiptoe, and just touched his rough cheek. There was no natural childish effusiveness in the action.

[83]

For the seven years since she left her father, Louie had quite unlearnt kissing.

Reuben proceeded up the lane to the gate leading to the moor. He was in the highest spirits. What a mercy he had not bothered Hannah with Mr. Ancrum’s remarks! Why, the boy wouldn’t go to a trade, not if he were sent!

At the gate he ran against David, who came hastily out of the farmyard to intercept him.

‘Uncle Reuben, what do they coe that bit watter up theer?’ and he pointed up the lane towards the main ridge of the Peak. ‘Yo know — that bit pool on t’ way to th’ Downfall?’

The farmer stopped bewildered.

‘That bit watter? What they coe that bit watter? Why, they coe it t’ Witch’s Pool, or used to i’ my yoong days. An for varra good reason too. They drowned an owd witch theer i’ my grandfeyther’s time — I’ve heerd my grandmither tell th’ tale on’t scores o’ times. An theer’s aw mak o’ tales about it, or used to be. I hannot yeerd mony words about it o’ late years. Who’s been talkin to yo, Davy?’

Louie came running up and listened.

‘I doan’t know,’ said the boy, — what soart o’ tales?’

‘Why, they’d use to say th’ witch walked, on soom neets i’ th’ year — Easter Eve, most pertickerlerly — an foak wor feeart to goo onywhere near it on those neets.

But doan't yo goo listenin to tales, Davy,' said Reuben, with a paternal effusion most rare with him,

[84]

and born of his recent proceedings; 'yo'll only freeten yorsel o' neets for nothin.'

'What are witches?' demanded Louie, scornfully.

'I doan't bleeve in 'em.'

Reuben frowned a little.

'Theer wor witches yance, my gell, becos it's in th' Bible, an whatever's in th' Bible's *true* and the farmer brought his hand down on the top bar of the gate. 'I'm no gien ony judgment about 'em nowadays. Theer wor aw mak o' queer things said about Jenny Crum an Needham Farm i' th' owd days. I've heerd my grandmither say it worn't worth a Christian man's while to live in Needham Farm when Jenny Crum wor about. She meddled wi everythin — wi his lambs, an his coos, an his childer. I niver seed nothin mysel, so I doan't say nowt — not o' mi awn knowledge. But I doan't soomhow bleeve as it's th' Awmighty's will to freeten a Christian coountry wi witches, i' th' *present* dispensation. An murderin's a graat sin, wheder it's witches or oother foak.'

'In t' books they doan't coe it t' Witch's Pool at aw,' said Louie, obstinately.

'They coe it t' *Mermaid's* Pool.'

'An anoother book coes it a "Hammer-dry-ad," 'said David, mockingly, 'soa theer yo are.'

'Aye, soom faddlin kind of a name they gie it — I know — those Manchester chaps, as cooms trespassin ower t' Scout wheer they aren't wanted. To hear ony yan o' *them* talk, yo'd think theer wor only three

[85]

fellows like 'Im cam ower i' three ships, an two were drowned. T'aint ov ony account what they an their books coe it.'

And Reuben, as he leant against the gate, blew his smoke contemptuously in the air. It was not often that Reuben Grieve allowed himself, or was allowed by his world, to use airs of superiority towards any other human being whatever. But in the case of the Manchester clerks and warehousemen, who came tramping over the grouse moors which Reuben rented for his sheep, and were always being turned back by keepers or himself — and in their case only — did he exercise, once in a while, the commonest privilege of humanity.

‘Did yo iver know onybody ’at went up on Easter Eve?’ asked David.

Both children hung on the answer.

Reuben scratched his head. The tales of Jenny Crum, once well known to him, had sunk deep into the weaves of memory of late years, and his slow mind had some difficulty in recovering them. But at last he said with the sudden brightening of recollection:

‘Aye — of *coorse*! — I knew theer wor soom one. Yo know ’im, Davy, owd ’Lias o’ Frimley Moor? He wor allus a foo’hardy sort o’ creetur. But if he wor short o’ wits when he gan up, he wor mich shorter when he cam down. That wor a rum skit! — now I think on ’t. Sich a seet he wor! He came by here six o’clock i’ th’ mornin. I found him hangin ower t’ yard gate theer,

[86]

as white an slap as a puddin cloth oop on eend; an I browt him in, an was for gien him soom tay. An yor aunt, she gien him a warld o’ good advice about his gooins on. But bless yo, he didn’t tak in a word o’ ’t. An for th’ tay, he’d naw sooner swallowed it than he runs out, as quick as leetnin, an browt it aw up. He wor fairly clemmed wi’ t’ cold, — ‘at he wor. I put in th’ horse, an I took him down to t’ Frimley carrier, an we packed him i’ soom rugs an straw, an soa he got home. But they put him out o’ t’ school, an he wor months in his bed. An they do tell me, as nobory can mak owt o’ ’Lias Dawson these mony years, i’ th’ matter o’ brains. Eh, but yo shudno meddle wi Satan.’

‘What d’yo think he saw?’ asked David, eagerly, his black eyes all aglow.

‘He saw t’ woman wi’ t’ fish’s tail — ’at’s what he saw,’ said Louie, shrilly.

Reuben took no notice. He was sunk in silent reverie poking at his pipe. In spite of his confidence in the Almighty’s increased goodwill towards the present dispensation, he was not prepared to say for certain what ‘Lias Dawson did or didn’t see.

‘Nobory should goo an meddle wi Satan,’ he repeated slowly after an interval; and then opening the yard gate he went off on his usual Sunday walk over the moors to have a look at his more distant sheep.

Davy stood intently looking after him; so did

[87]

Louie. She had clasped her hands behind her head, her eyes were wide, her look and attitude all eagerness. She was putting two and two together — her uncle’s promise and the mermaid story as the Manchester man had delivered it. You had but to see her and wish, and, according to the Manchester man and his book, you got your wish. The child’s hatred of sermons and ministers had not touched her capacity for belief of this sort in the least. She believed feverishly, and was enraged with David for setting up a rival creed, and with her uncle for endorsing it.

David turned and walked towards the farmyard. Louie followed him, and tapped him peremptorily on the arm. ‘I’m gooin up theer Easter Eve — Saturday week’ — and she pointed over her shoulder to the Scout.

‘Gells conno be out neets,’ said David firmly; ‘if I goo I can tell yo.’

‘Yo’ll not goo without me — I’d tell Aunt Hannah!’

‘Yo’ve naw moor sense nor rotten sticks!’ said David, angrily. ‘Yo’ll get your death, an Aunt Hannah ‘ll be stick stock mad wi boath on us. If I goo she’ll niver find out.’

Louie hesitated a moment. To provoke Aunt Hannah too much might, indeed, endanger the blue frock. But daring and curiosity triumphed.

‘I doan’t care!’ she said, tossing her head; ‘I’m gooin.’

David slammed the yard gate, and, hiding himself

[88]

in a corner of the cowhouse, fell into moody meditations. It took all the tragic and mysterious edge off an adventure he had set his heart on that Louie should insist on going too. But there was no help for it. Next day they planned it together.

[89]

## CHAPTER V

‘REUBEN, ha yo seen t’ childer?’ inquired Aunt Hannah, poking her head round the door, so as to be heard by her husband, who was sitting outside cobbling at a bit of broken harness.

‘Noa; niver seed un since dinner.’

‘They went down to Clough End, two o’clock about, for t’ bread, an I’ve yerd nothin ov em since. Coom in to your tay, Reuben! I’ll keep nothin waitin for them! They may goo empty if they conno keep time!’

Reuben went in. An hour later the husband and wife came out together, and stood looking down the steep road leading to the town.

‘Just cast your eye on aw them stockins waitin to be mended,’ said Hannah, angrily, turning back to the kitchen, and pointing to a chair piled with various garments. ‘That’s why she doon it, I spose. I’ll be even wi her! It’s a poor soart of a supper she’ll get this neet, or he noather. An her stomach aw she cares for!’

Reuben wandered down into the road, strolled up and down for nearly an hour, while the sun set and the

[90]

light waned, went as far as the corner by Wigson’s farm, asked a passer-by, saw and heard nothing, and came back, shaking his head in answer to his wife’s shrill interrogations.

‘Wal, if I doan’t gie Louie a good smackin,’ ejaculated Hannah, exasperated; and she was just going back into the house when an exclamation from Reuben stopped her; instead, she ran out to him, holding on her cap against the east wind.

‘Look theer,’ he said, pointing; ‘what iver is them two up to?’

For suddenly he had noticed outside the gate leading into the field a basket lying on the ground against the wall. The two peered at it with amazement, for it was their own basket, and in it reposed the loaves David had been told to bring back from Clough End, while on the top lay a couple of cotton reels and a card of mending which Louie had been instructed to buy for her aunt.

After a moment Reuben looked up, his face working.

‘I’m thinkin, Hannah, they’n roon away!’

It seemed to him as he spoke that such a possibility had been always in his mind. And during the past week there had been much bad blood between aunt and niece. Twice had the child gone to bed supperless, and yesterday, for some impertinence, Hannah had given her a blow, the marks of which on her cheek Reuben had watched guiltily all day. At night he had

[91]

dreamed of Sandy. Since Mr. Ancrum had set him thinking, and so stirred his conscience in various indirect and unforeseen ways, Sandy had been a terror to him; the dead man had gained a mysterious hold on the living.

‘Roon away!’ repeated Hannah scornfully; ‘whar ud they roon to? They’re just at soom o’ their divilmets, ’at’s what they are. An if yo doan’t tak a stick to boath on them when they coom back, I *will* soa theer, Reuben Grieve. Yo niver had no sperrit wi ’em — niver — and that’s yan reason why they’ve grown up soa ramjam full o’ wickedness.’

It relieved her to abuse her husband. Reuben said nothing, but hung over the wall, straining his eyes into the gathering darkness. The wooded sides of the great moor which enclosed the valley to the north were fading into dimness, and to the east, above

the ridge of Kinder Low, a young moon was rising. The black steep wall of the Scout was swiftly taking to itself that majesty which all mountains win from the approach of night. Involuntarily, Reuben held his breath, listening, hungering for the sound of children's voices on the still air. Nothing — but a few intermittent bird notes and the eternal hurry of water from the moorland to the plain.

There was a step on the road, and a man passed whistling.

'Jim Wigson!' shouted Hannah, 'is that yo, Jim?'

[92]

The man opened the yard gate, and came through to them. Jim was the eldest son of the neighbouring farmer, whose girls were Louie's only companions. He was a full-blooded swaggering youth, with whom David was generally on bad terms. David despised him for an oaf who could neither read nor write, and hated him for a bully.

He grinned when Hannah asked him questions about the truants.

'Why, they're gone to Edale, th' yoong rascots, I'll uphowd yo! There's a parcel o' gipsies there tellin fortunes, an' lots o' foak ha gone ower there to-day. You may mak your mind up they've gone to Edale. That Louie's a limb, she is. She's got spunk enough to waak to Lunnon if she'd a mind. Oh, they'll be back here soon enough, trust 'em.'

'I shut *my* door at nine o'clock,' said Hannah, grimly. 'Them as cooms after that, may sleep as they can.'

'Well, that'll be sharp wark for th' eyes if they're gone to Edale,' said Jim, with a laugh. 'It's a good step fro here to Edale.'

'Aye, an soom o' 't bad ground,' said Reuben uneasily — 'varra bad ground.'

'Aye, it's not good walkin, neets. If they conno see their way when they get top o' t' Downfall, they'll stay theer till it gets mornin, if they've ony sort o' gumption. But, bless yo, it bean't gooin to be a dark neet,' — and he pointed to the moon. 'They'll be here afore

[93]

yo goo to bed. An if yo want onybody to help yo gie Davy a bastin, just coe me, Mr. Grieve. Good neet to yo.'

Reuben fidgeted restlessly all the evening. Towards nine he went out on the pretext of seeing to a cow that had lately calved and was in a weakly state. He gave the animal her food and clean litter, doing everything more clumsily than usual. Then he went into the stable and groped about for a lantern that stood in the corner.

He found it, slipped through the farmyard into the lane, and then lit it out of sight of the house.

'It's bad ground top o' t' Downfall,' he said to himself, apologetically, as he guiltily opened the gate on to the moor — 'varra bad ground.'

Hannah shut her door that night neither at nine nor at ten. For by the latter hour the master of the house was still absent, and nowhere to be found, in spite of repeated calls from the door and up the lane. Hannah guessed where he had gone without much difficulty; but her guess only raised her wrath to a white heat. Troublesome brats Sandy's children had always been — Louie more especially — but they had never perpetrated any such overt act of rebellion as this before, and the dour, tyrannical woman was filled with a kind of silent frenzy as she thought of her husband going out to welcome the wanderers.

'It's a quare kind o' fatted calf they'll get when *I* lay hands on 'em,' she thought to herself as she stood at the front door, in the cold darkness, listening.

[94]

Meanwhile David and Louie, high up on the side of Kinder Scout, were speculating with a fearful joy as to what might be happening at the farm. The manner of their escape had cost them much thought. Should they slip out of the front door instead of going to bed? But the woodwork of the farm was old and creaking, and the bolts and bars heavy. They were generally secured before supper by Hannah herself, and, though

they might be surreptitiously oiled, the children despaired — considering how close the kitchen was to the front door — of getting out without rousing Hannah's sharp ears. Other projects, in which windows and ropes played a part, were discussed. David held strongly that he alone could have managed any one of them, but he declined flatly to attempt them with a 'gell.' In the same way he alone could have made his way up the Scout and over the river in the dark. But who'd try it with a 'gell'?

The boy's natural conviction of the uselessness of 'gells' was never more disagreeably expressed than on this occasion. But he could not shake Louie off. She pinched him when he enraged her beyond bounds, but she never wavered in her determination to go too.

Finally they decided to brave Aunt Hannah and take the consequences. They meant to be out all night in hiding, and in the morning they would come back and take their beatings. David comfortably reflected that Uncle Reuben couldn't do him much

[95]

harm, and, though Louie could hardly flatter herself so far, her tone, also, in the matter was philosophical.

'Theer's soom bits o' owd books I' th' top-attic,' she said to David; 'I'll leave 'em in t' stable, an when we coom home, I'll tie 'em on my back — under mv dress — an she may leather away till Christmas.'

So on their return from C lough End with the bread — about five o'clock — they slipped into the field, crouching under the wall, so as to escape Hannah's observation, deposited their basket by the gate, took up a bundle and tin box which David had hidden that morning under the hedge, and, creeping back again into the road, passed noiselessly through the gate on to the moor, just as Aunt Hannah was lifting the kettle off the fire for tea.

Then came a wild and leaping flight over the hill, down to the main Kinder stream, across it, and up the face of the Scout — up, and up, with smothered laughter,

and tumbles and scratches at every step, and a glee of revolt and adventure swelling every vein.

It was then a somewhat stormy afternoon, with alternate gusts of wind and gleams of sun playing on the black boulders, the red-brown slopes of the mountain. The air was really cold and cutting, promising a frosty night. But the children took no notice of it. Up, and on, through the elastic carpet of heather and bilberry, and across bogs which showed like veins of vivid green on the dark surface of the moor; under circling peewits, who fled before them, crying with

[96]

plaintive shrillness to each, other, as though in protest; and past grouse-nests, whence the startled mothers soared precipitately with angry cluckings, each leaving behind her a loose gathering of eggs lying wide and open on the heather, those newly laid gleaming a brighter red beside their fellows. The tin box and its contents rattled under David's arm as he leapt and straddled across the bogs, choosing always the widest jump and the stiffest bit of climb, out of sheer wantonness of life and energy. Louie's thin figure, in its skimp cotton dress and red crossover, her long legs in their blue worsted stockings, seemed to fly over the moor, winged, as it were, by an ecstasy of freedom. If one could but be in two places at once — on the Scout — and peeping from some safe corner at Aunt Hannah's wrath!

Presently they came to the shoulder whereon — gleaming under the level light — lay the Mermaid's Pool. David had sufficiently verified the fact that the tarn did indeed bear this name in the modern guidebook parlance of the district. Young men and women, out on a holiday from the big towns near, and carrying little red or green 'guides,' spoke of the 'Mermaid's Pool' with the accent of romantic interest. But the boy had also discovered that no native-born farmer or shepherd about had ever heard of the name, or would have a word to say to it. And for the first time he had stumbled full into the deep deposit of witch-lore and belief still surviving in the Kinder Scout district,

[97]

as in all the remoter moorland of the North. Especially had he won the confidence of a certain ‘owd Matt,’ a shepherd from a farm high on Mardale Moor; and the tales ‘owd Matt’ had told him — of mysterious hares coursed at night by angry farmers enraged by the ‘bedivilment’ of their stock, shot at with silver slugs, and identified next morning with some dreaded hag or other lying groaning and wounded in her bed — of calves’ hearts burnt at midnight with awful ceremonies, while the baffled witch outside flung herself in rage and agony against the close-barred doors and windows — of spells and wise men — these things had sent chills of pleasing horror through the boy’s frame. They were altogether new to him, in this vivid personal guise at least, and mixed up with all the familiar names and places of the district; for his childish life had been singularly solitary, giving to books the part which half a century ago would have been taken by tradition; and, moreover, the witch-belief in general had now little foothold among the younger generation of the Scout, and was only spoken of with reserve and discretion among the older men.

But the stories once heard had struck deep into the lad’s quick and pondering mind. Jenny Crum seemed to have been the latest of all the great witches of Kinder Scout. The memory of her as a real and awful personage was still fresh in the mind of many a grey-haired farmer; the history of her death was well known; and most of the local inhabitants, even the boys and

[98]

girls, turned out, when you came to inquire, to be familiar with the later legends of the Pool, and, as David presently discovered, with one or more tales — for the stories were discrepant — of ‘Lias Dawson’s meeting with the witch, now fifteen years ago.

‘*What* had ‘Lias seen? What would they see? His flesh crept deliciously.

‘Wal, owd Mermaid!’ shouted Louie, defiantly, as soon as she had got her breath again. ‘Are yo coomin out to-night? Yo ‘ll ha coompany if yo do.’

David smiled contemptuously and did not condescend to argue.

‘Are yo coomin on?’ he said, shouldering his box and bundle again. ‘They’s’t be up after us if we doan’t look out.’

And on they went, climbing a steep boulder-strewn slope above the pool till they came to the ‘edge’ itself, a tossed and broken battlement of stone, running along the top of the Scout. Here the great black slabs of grit were lying fantastically piled upon each other at every angle and in every possible combination. The path which leads from the Hayfield side across the desolate tableland of the Scout to the Snake Inn on the eastern side of the ridge, ran among them, and many a wayfarer, benighted or mist-bound on the moor, had taken refuge before now in their caverns and recesses, waiting for the light, and dreading to find himself on the cliffs of the Downfall.

But David pushed on past many hiding-places well

[99]

known to him, till the two reached the point where the mountain face sweeps backward in the curve of which the Downfall makes the centre. At the outward edge of the curve a great buttress of ragged and jutting rocks descends perpendicularly towards the valley, like a ruined staircase with displaced and gigantic steps.

Down this David began to make his way, and Louie jumped, and slid, and swung after him, as lithe and sure-footed as a cat. Presently David stopped. ‘This ull do,’ he said, surveying the place with a critical eye.

They had just slid down a sloping chimney of rock, and were now standing on a flat block, over which hung another like a penthouse roof. On the side of the Downfall there was a projecting stone, on which David stepped out to look about him.

Holding on to a rock above for precaution’s sake, he reconnoitred their position. To his left was the black and semicircular cliff, down the centre of which the Downfall stream, now tamed and thinned by the dry spring winds, was trickling. The course of the stream was marked by a vivid orange colour, produced, apparently, in the grit by the action of water; and about halfway down the fall a mass of rock had recently

slipped, leaving a bright scar, through which one saw, as it were, the inner mass of the Peak, the rectangular blocks, now thick, now thin, as of some Cyclopean masonry, wherewith the earth-forces had built it up in days before a single alp had yet risen on the face of Europe. Below the boy's feet a precipice, which his

[100]

projecting stone overhung, fell to the bed of the stream. On this side at least they were abundantly protected.

On the moor side the steep broken ground of the hill came up to the rocky line they had been descending, and offered no difficulty to any s are-footed person. But no path ran anywhere near them, and from the path up above they were screened by the grit 'edge' already spoken of. Moreover, their penthouse, or half-gable, had towards the Downfall a tolerably wide opening; but towards the moor and the north there was but a narrow hole, which David soon saw could be stopped by a stone. When he crept back into their hiding-place, it pleased him extremely.

'They'll niver find us, if they look till next week!' he exclaimed exultantly, and, slipping off the heavy bundle strapped on his back, he undid its contents. Two old woollen rugs appeared — one a blanket, the other a horse-rug — and wrapped up in the middle of them a jagged piece of tarpaulin, a hammer, some wooden pegs, and two or three pieces of tallow dip. Louie, sitting cross-legged in the other corner, with her chin in her hands, looked on with her usual detached and critical air. David had not allowed her much of a voice in the preparations, and she felt an instinctive aversion towards other people's ingenuities. All she had contributed was something to while away the time, in the shape of a bag of bull's-eyes, bought with some of the sixpence Uncle Reuben had given her.

Having laid out his stores, David went to work.

[101]

Getting out on the projecting stone again, he laid the bit of tarpaulin along the sloping edge of the rock which roofed them, pegged it down into crevices at either end, and laid a stone to hold it in the middle. Then he slipped back again, and, behold, there was a curtain between them and the Downfall, which, as the dusk was fast advancing, made the little den inside almost completely dark.

‘What’s t’ good o’ that?’ inquired Louie, scornfully, more than half inclined to put out a mischievous hand and pull it down again.

‘Doan’t worrit, an yo’ll see,’ returned David, and Louie’s curiosity got the better of her malice.

Stooping down beside her, he looked through the hole which opened to the moor. His eye travelled down the hillside to the path far below, just visible in the twilight to a practised eye, to the river, to the pasture-fields on the hill beyond, and to the smoke, rising above the tops of some unseen trees, which marked the site of the farmhouse. No one in sight. The boy crawled out, and searched the moor till he found a large flattish stone, which he brought and placed against the opening, ready to be drawn quite across it from inside.

Then he slipped back again, and in the glimmer of light which remained groped for his tin box. Louie stooped over and eagerly watched him open it. Out came a bottle of milk, some large slices of bread, some oatcake, and some cheese. In the corner, recklessly near the cheese, lurked a grease-bespattered lantern

[102]

and a box of matches. David had borrowed the lantern that afternoon from a Clough End friend under the most solemn vows of secrecy and he drew it out now with a deliberate and special relish. When he had driven a peg into a cranny of the rock, trimmed half a dip carefully, lighted it, put it into the lantern, and hung the lantern on the peg, he fell back on his heels to study the effect, with a beaming countenance, filled all through with the essentially human joy of contrivance.

‘Now, then, d’yo see what that tarpaulin’s for?’ he inquired triumphantly of Louie.

But Louie’s mouth was conveniently occupied with a bull’s-eye, and she only sucked it the more vigorously in answer.

‘Why, yo little silly, if it worn’t for that we couldno ha no leet. They’d see us from t’ fields even, as soon as it ‘s real dark.’

‘Doan’t bleeve it,’ said Louie, laconically, in a voice much muffled by bull’s-eyes.

‘Wal, yo needn’t; I’m gooin to have my tea.’

And David, diving into the tin, brought out a hunch of bread and a knob of cheese. The voracity with which he fell on them, soon, with him also, stopped up the channels of speech. Louie, alarmed perhaps by the rapidity with which the mouthfuls disappeared, slid up on her heels and claimed her share. Never was there a more savoury meal than that! Their little den with its curtain felt warm for the moment after the

[103]

keen air of the moor; the lantern light seemed to shut them in from the world, gave them the sense of settlers carving a home out of the desert, and milk which had been filched from Aunt Hannah lay like nectar in the mouth.

After their meal both children crept out on to the moor to see what might be going on in the world outside. Darkness was fast advancing. A rising wind swept through the dead bracken, whirled round the great grit boulders, and sent a shiver through Louie’s thin body.

‘It’s cowl,’ she said pettishly; ‘I’m gooin back.’

‘Did yo spose it wor gooin to be warm, yo little silly? That’s why I browt t’ rugs, of course. Gells never think o’ nothin. It’s parishin cowl here, neets — fit to tie yo up in knots wi th’ rheumatics, like Jim Spedding, if yo doan’t mind yorsel. It wor only laying out a neet on Frimley Moor — poachin, I guess — ‘at twisted Jim that way.’

Louie's countenance fell. Jim Spedding was a little crooked greengrocer in Clough End, of whom she had a horror. The biting hostile wind, which obliged her to hold her hat on against it with both hands, the black moor at their feet, the grey sweep of sky, the pale cloudy moon, the darkness which was fast enveloping them — blotting out the distant waves of hill, and fusing the great blocks of grit above them into one threatening mass — all these became suddenly hateful to her. She went back into their den, wrapped

[104]

herself up in one of the tattered rugs, and crept sulkily into a corner. The lantern gleamed on the child's huddled form, the frowning brow, the great vixenish eyes. She had half a mind to run home, in spite of Aunt Hannah. Hours to wait! and she loathed waiting.

But gradually, as the rug warmed her, the passion for adventure and mystery — the vision of the mermaid — the hope of the blue cotton — reasserted themselves, and the little sharp face relaxed. She began to amuse herself with hunting the spiders and beetles which ran across the rocky roof above her head, or crept in and out of the crevices of stone, wondering, no doubt, at this unbidden and tormenting daylight. She caught one or two small blackbeetles in a dirty rag of a handkerchief — for she would not touch them if she could help it — and then it delighted her to push aside the curtain, stretch her hand out into the void darkness, and let them fall into the gulf below. Even if they could fly, she reflected, it must 'gie em a good start.'

Meanwhile, David had charged up the hill, filled with a sudden curiosity to see what the top of the Scout might look like by night. He made his way through the battlement of grit, found the little path behind, gleaming white in the moonlight, because of the quartz sheddings which wind and weather are for ever teasing out of the grit, and which drift into the open spaces; and at last, guided by the sound and the gleam of water, he made out the top of the Downfall,

[105]

climbed a high peat bank, and the illimitable plateau of the Scout lay wide and vast before him.

Here, on the mountain-top, there seemed to be more daylight left than on its rocky sides, and the moon among the parting clouds shone intermittently over the primeval waste. The top of the Peak is, so to speak, a vast black glacier, whereof the crevasses are great fissures, ebon-black in colour, sometimes ten feet deep, and with ten feet more of black water at the bottom. For miles on either side the ground is seamed and torn with these crevasses, now shallower, now deeper, succeeding each other at intervals of a yard or two, and it is they which make the crossing of the Peak in the dark or in mist a matter of danger sometimes even for the native. David, high on his bank, from which the black overhanging eaves curled inwards beneath his feet to a sullen depth of water, could see against the moonlit sky the posts which marked the track from the Downfall to the Snake Inn on the Glossop Road. Miss that track — a matter of some fifteen minutes' walk for the sturdy farmer who knows it well — and you find yourself lost in a region which has no features and no landmarks, where the earth lays snares for you and the mists betray you, and where even in bright sunshine there reigns an eternal and indescribable melancholy. The strangeness and wildness of the scene entered the boy's consciousness, and brought with them a kind of exaltation. He stood gazing; that inner life of his, of which Louie, his

[106]

constant companion, knew as good as nothing, asserting itself.

For the real companions of his heart were not Louie or the boys with whom he had joked and sparred at school; they were ideas, images, sounds, imaginations, caught from books or from the talk of old 'Lias and Mr. Ancrum. He had but to stand still a moment, as it were, to listen, and the voices and sights of another world came out before him like players on to a stage. Spaces of shining water, crossed by ships with decks

manned by heroes for whom the blue distance was for ever revealing new lands to conquer, new adventures to affront; the plumed Indian in his forest divining the track of his enemy from a displaced leaf or twig; the Zealots of Jehovah urging a last frenzied defence of Jehovah's Sanctuary against the Roman host; and now, last of all, the gloom and flames, the infernal palaces, the towering fiends, the grandiose and lumbering war of 'Paradise Lost': these things, together with the names and suggestions of 'Lias's talk — that whole crew of shining, fighting, haranguing men and women whom the old dreamer was for ever bringing into weird action on the moorside — lived in the boy's mind, and in any pause of silence, as we have said, emerged and took possession.

It was only that morning, in an old meal-chest which had belonged to his grandfather, James Grieve, he had discovered the old calf-bound copy of 'Paradise Lost,' which was now in one of his pockets, balanced by

[107]

'Anson's Voyages' in the other. All the morning he had been lying hidden in a corner of the sheepfold devouring it, the rolling verse imprinting itself on the boy's plastic memory by a sort of enchantment —

Yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,  
The seat of desolation, void of light,  
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames  
Casts pale and dreadful.

He chanted the words aloud, flinging them out in an ecstasy of pleasure. Before him, as it seemed, there stretched that very plain 'forlorn and wild,' with its black fissures and its impenetrable horizons; the fitful moonlight stood for the glimmering of the Tartarean flames; the remembered words and the actual sights played into and fused with each other, till in the cold and darkness the boy thrilled all through with that mingling of joy and terror which is only possible to the creature of fine gifts and high imagination.

Jenny Crum, too! A few more hours and he might see her face to face — as 'Lias had seen her. He quaked a little at the thought, but he would not have flinched for

the world. *He* was not going to lose his wits, as 'Lias did; and as for Louie, if she were frightened it would do her good to be afraid of something.

Hark! He turned, stooped, put his hand to his ear.

The sound he heard had startled him, turned him pale. But he soon recovered himself. It was the sound of heavy boots on stones, and it was brought to him by the wind, as it seemed, from far below. Some one was

[108]

coming after them — perhaps more than one. He thought he heard a voice.

He leapt fissure after fissure like a young roe, fled to the top of the Downfall and looked over. Did the light show through the tarpaulin? Alack! — there must be a rent somewhere — for he saw a dim glow-worm light beyond the cliff, on the dark rib of the mountain. It was invisible from below, but any roving eye from the top would be caught by it in an instant. In a second he had raced along the edge, dived in and out of the blocks, guiding his way by a sort of bat's instinct, till he reached the rocky stairway, which he descended at imminent risk of his neck.

'Put your hand ower t' leet, Louie, till I move t' stone!'

The light disappeared, David crept in, and the two children crouched together in a glow of excitement.

'Is 't Uncle Reuben?' whispered Louie, pressing her face against the side of the rocks, and trying to look through the chink between it and the covering stone.

'Aye — wi a lantern. But there's talkin — theer's someone else. Jim Wigson, mebbe.'

'If it's Jim Wigson,' said Louie, between her small, shut teeth, 'I'll bite him!'

'Cos yo're a gell! Gells and cats bite — they can't do nowt else!'

Whereupon Louie pinched him, and David, giving an involuntary kick as he felt the nip, went into first a

[109]

fit of smothered laughter, and then seized her arm in a tight grip.

‘Keep quiet, conno yo? Now they’re coomin, an I bleeve they’re coomin this way!’

But, after another minute’s waiting, he was quite unable to obey his own injunction, and he crept out on the stone overlooking the precipice to look.

‘Coom back! They’ll see yo!’ cried Louie, in a shrill whisper; and she caught him by the ankle.

David gave a kick. ‘Let goo; if yo do’ at I shall fall an be kilt!’

She held her breath. Presently, with an exclamation, he knelt down and looked over the edge of the great sloping block which served them for roof.

‘Wal, I niver! Theer’s nobory but Uncle Reuben, an he’s talkin to hissel. Wal, this is a rum skit!’

And he stayed outside watching, in spite of Louie’s angry commands to him to come back into the den. David had no fears of being discovered by Uncle Reuben. If it had been Jim Wigson it would have been different.

Presently, on the path some sixty feet above them, but hidden from them by the mass of tumbled rocks through which they had descended, they heard someone puffing and blowing, a stick striking and slipping on the stones, and weird rays of light stole down the mountain-side, and in and out of the vast blocks with which it was overstrewn.

‘He’s stopt up theer,’ said David, creeping in under

[110]

the gable, ‘an I mun hear what he’s sayin. I’m gooin up nearer. If yo coom we’ll be caught.’

‘Yo stoopid!’ cried Louie. But he had crawled up the narrow chimney they had come down by in a moment, and she was left alone. Her spirit failed her a little. She daren’t climb after him in the dark.

David clambered in and out, the fierce wind that beat the side of the mountain masking whatever sounds he may have made, till he found himself directly under the place where Reuben Grieve sat, slowly recovering his breath.

‘O Lord! O Lord! They’re aw reet, Sandy — they’re aw reet!’

The boy crouched down sharply under an overhanging stone, arrested by the name — *Sandy* — his father’s name.

Once or twice since he came to Kinder he had heard it on Uncle Reuben’s lips, once or twice from neighbours who had known James Grieve’s sons in their youth. But Sandy had left the farm early and was little remembered, and the true story of Sandy’s life was unknown in the valley, though there were many rumours. What the close and timid Reuben heard from Mr. Gurney, the head of Sandy’s firm, after Sandy’s death, he told to no one but Hannah. The children knew generally, from what Hannah often let fall when she was in a temper, that their mother was a disgrace to them, but they knew no more, and, with the natural instinct of forlorn creatures on the defensive,

[111]

studiously avoided the subject within the walls of Needham Farm. They might question old ’Lias; they would suffer many things rather than question their uncle and aunt.

But David especially had had many secret thoughts he could not put away, of late, about his parents. And to hear his father’s name dropped like this into the night moved the lad strangely. He lay close, listening with all his ears, expecting passionately, he knew not what.

But nothing came — or the wind carried it away. When he was rested, Reuben got up and began to move about with the lantern, apparently throwing its light from side to side.

‘David! Louie!’

The hoarse, weak voice, strained to its utmost pitch, died away on the night wind, and a weird echo came back from the cliffs of the Downfall.

There was no menace in the cry — rather a piteous entreaty. The truant below had a strange momentary impulse to answer — to disclose himself. But it was soon past, and instead, he crept well out of reach of the rays which flashed over the precipitous ground about him. As he did so he noticed the Mermaid's Pool, gleaming in a pale ray of moonlight, some two hundred feet below. A sudden alarm seized him, lest Reuben should be caught by it, put two and two together and understand.

But Reuben was absorbed in a discomfort, half

[112]

moral, half superstitious, and nothing else reached the slow brain — which was besides preoccupied by Jim Wigson's suggestion. After a bit, he picked up his stick and went on again. David, eagerly watching, tracked him along the path which follows the ridge, and saw the light pause once more close to the Downfall.

So far as the boy could see, his uncle made a long stay at a point beyond the stream, the bed of which was just discernible, as a sort of paler streak on the darkness.

'Why, that's about whar th' Edale path cooms in,' thought David, wondering. 'What ud he think we'd be doin theer?'

Faint sounds came to him in a lull of the wind, as though Reuben were shouting again — shouting many times. Then the light went wavering on, defining in its course the curved ridge of the further moor, till at last it made a long circuit downwards, disappearing for a minute somewhere in the dark bosom of Kinder Low, about midway between earth and sky. David guessed that Uncle Reuben must be searching the Smithy. Then it descended rapidly, till finally it vanished behind the hill far below, which was just distinguishable in the cloudy moonshine. Uncle Reuben had gone home.

David drew a long breath. But that patient quest in the dark — the tone of the farmer's call — that mysterious word *Sandy*, had touched the boy, made him restless. His mood grew a little flat, even a little

[113]

remorseful. The joy of their great adventure ebbed a little.

However, he climbed down again to Louie, and found a dark elfish figure standing outside their den, and dancing with excitement.

‘Wouldn’t yo like to ketch us — wouldn’t yo? — wouldn’t yo?’ screeched the child, beside herself. She too had been watching, had seen the light vanish.

‘Yo’ll have t’ parish up after yo if yo doan’t howd your tongue,’ said David roughly.

And creeping into their den he relit the lantern. Then he pulled out a watch, borrowed from the same friend who had provided the lantern. Past nine. Two hours and more before they need think of starting downwards for the Pool.

Louie condescended to come in again, and the stone was drawn close. But how fierce the wind had grown, and how nipping was the air! David shivered, and looked about for the rugs. He wrapt Louie in the horse-rug, which was heaviest, and tucked the blanket round himself.

‘Howd that tight round yo,’ he commanded, struck with an uneasy sense of responsibility, as he happened to notice how starved she looked, ‘an goo to sleep if yo want to. I’ll wake yo — I’m gooin to read.’

Louie rolled the rug round her chrysalis-like, and then, disdaining the rest of David’s advice, sat bolt upright against the rock, her wide-open eyes staring defiantly at all within their ken.

[114]

The minutes went by. David sat close up against the lantern, bitterly cold, but reading voraciously. At last, however, a sharper gust than usual made him look up and turn restive. Louie still sat in the opposite corner as stiffly as before, but over the great staring eyes the lids had just fallen, sorely against their owner’s will; the head was dropping against the rock; the child was fast asleep. It occurred to David she looked odd; the face seemed so grey and white. He instinctively took his own blanket and put it

over her. The silence and helplessness of her sleep seemed to appeal to him, to change his mood towards her, for the action was brotherly and tender. Then he pushed the stone aside and crept out on to the moor.

There he stood for a while, with his hands in his pockets, marking time to warm himself. How the wind bit to be sure! — and it would be colder still by dawn.

The pool showed dimly beneath him, and the gruesome hour was stealing on them fast. His heart beat quick. The weirdness and loneliness of the night came home to him more than they had done yet. The old woman dragged to her death, the hooting crowd, the inexorable parson, the struggle in the water, the last gurgling cry — the vision rose before him on the dark with an ever ghastlier plainness than a while ago on the mountain-top. *How* had 'Lias seen her that the sight had changed him so? Did she come to him with her drowned face and floating grey hair —

[115]

grip him with her cold hands? David, beginning to thrill in good earnest, obstinately filled in the picture with all the horrible detail he could think of, so as to harden himself. Only now he wished with all his heart that Louie were safe at home.

An idea occurred to him. He smiled at it, turned it over, gradually resolved upon it. She would lead him a life afterward, but what matter? — let her!

From the far depths of the unseen valley a sound struck upwards, piercing through the noises of river and wind. It was the clock of Clough End church, tolling eleven.

Well, one could not stand perishing there another hour. He stooped down and crawled in beside Louie. She was sleeping heavily, the added warmth of David's blanket conducing thereto. He hung over her, watching her breathing with a merry look, which gradually became a broad grin. It was a real shame — she would be just mad when she woke up. But mermaids were all stuff, and Jenny Crum would 'skeer' her to death. Just in proportion as the adventure became more awesome and more real did the

boy's better self awake. He grew soft for his sister, while, as he proudly imagined, iron for himself.

He crept in under the blanket carefully so as not to disturb her. He was too tired and excited to read. He would think the hour out. So he lay staring at the opposite wall of rock, at its crevices, and creeping ants, at the odd lights and shadows thrown by the lantern,

[116]

straining his eyes every now and then, that he might be the more sure how wide awake they were.

Louie stretched herself. What was the matter? Where was she? What was that smell? She leant forward on her elbow. The lantern was just going out, and smelt intolerably. A cold grey light was in the little den. What? Where?

A loud wail broke the morning silence, and David sleeping profoundly, his open mouth just showing above the horse-rug, was roused by a shower of blows from Louie's fists. He stirred uneasily, tried to escape them by plunging deeper into the folds, but they pursued him vindictively.

'Give ower!' he said at last, striking back at random, and then sitting up he rubbed his eyes. There was Louie sitting opposite to him, crying great tears of rage and pain, now rocking her ankle as if it hurt her, and now dealing cuffs at him.

He hastily pulled out his watch. Half-past four o'clock!

'Yo great gonner, yo!' sobbed Louie, her eyes blazing at him through her tears. 'Yo good-for-nowt, yo muffin-yed, yo donkey!' And so on through all the words of reviling known to the Derbyshire child. David looked extremely sheepish under them.

Then suddenly he put his head down on his knees and shook with laughter. The absurdity of it all — of their preparations, of his own terrors, of the disturbance they

[117]

had made, all to end in this flat and futile over-sleeping, seized upon him so that he could not control himself. He laughed till he cried, while Louie hit and abused him and cried too. But her crying had a different note, and at last he looked up at her, sobered.

‘Howd your tongue! — an doan’t keep bully-raggin like ’at! What’s t’ matter wi’ yo?’

For answer, she rolled over on the rock and lay on her face, howling with pain. David sprang up and bent over her.

‘What *iver*’s t’ matter wi’ yo, Louie?’

But she kept him off like a wild cat, and he could make nothing of her till her passion had spent itself and she was quiet again, from sheer exhaustion.

Then David, who had been standing near, shivering, with his hands in his pockets, tried again.

‘Now, Louie, do coom home,’ he said appealingly. ‘I can find yo a place in t’ stable ull be warmer nor this. You be parished if yo stay here.’ For, ignorant as he was, her looks began to frighten him.

Louie would have liked never to speak to him again. The thought of the blue cotton and of her own lost chance seemed to be burning a hole in her. But the stress of his miserable look drew her eyes open whether she would or no, and when she saw him her self-pity overcame her.

‘I conno walk,’ she said, with a sudden loud sob. ‘It’s my leg.’

‘What’s wrong wi’t?’ said David, inspecting it

[118]

anxiously. ‘It’s got th’ cowl in ’t, that’s what it is; it’s th’ rheumatics, I speck. Tak howd on me, I’ll help yo down.’

And with much coaxing on his part and many cries and outbursts on hers he got her up at last, and out of the den. He had tied his tin box across his back, and Louie,

with the rugs wrapped about her, clung, limping, and with teeth chattering, on to his arm. The child was in the first throes of a sharp attack of rheumatism, and half her joints were painful.

That was a humiliating descent! A cold grey morning was breaking over the moor; the chimneys of the distant cotton-towns rose out of mists, under a sky streaked with windy cloud. The Mermaid's Pool, as they passed it, looked chill and mocking; and the world altogether felt so raw and lonely that David welcomed the first sheep they came across with a leap of the heart, and positively hungered for a first sight of the farm. How he got Louie — in whose cheeks the fever-spots were rising — over the river he never quite remembered. But at last he had dragged her up the hill, through the fields close to the house, where the lambs were huddling in the nipping dawn beside their mothers, and into the farmyard.

The house rose before them grey and frowning. The lower windows were shuttered; in the upper ones the blinds were pulled closely down; not a sign of life anywhere. Yes; the dogs had heard them! Such a barking as began! Jock, in his kennel by the front

[119]

door, nearly burst his chain in his joyful efforts to get at them; while Tib, jumping the half-door of the out- house in the back yard, where he had been curled up in a heap of bracken, leapt about them and barked like mad.

Louie sank down crying and deathly pale on a stone by the stable door.

‘They’ll hear that fast enoof,’ said David, looking anxiously up at the shut windows.

But the dogs went on barking, and nothing happened. Ten minutes of chilly waiting passed away.

‘Tak him away, *do!*’ she cried, as Tib jumped up at her. ‘No, I woan’t! — I woan’t!’

The last words rose to a shriek, as David tried to persuade her to go into the stable, and let him make her a bed in the straw. He stood looking at her in despair. They had always supposed they would be locked out; but surely the sleepers inside must hear the dogs. He turned and stared at the house, hungering for some sign of life in it. Uncle Reuben would hear them — Uncle Reuben would let them in!

But the blinds of the top room never budged. Louie, with her head against the stable-door, and her eyes shut, went on convulsively sobbing, while Tibby sniffed about her for sympathy. And the bitter wind coming from the Scout whistled through the yard and seemed to cut the shivering child like a knife.

‘I’ll mak a clunter agen th’ window wi some gravel,’ said David at last, in desperation. And he

[120]

picked up a handful and threw it, first cautiously, then recklessly. Yes! — at last a hand moved the blind — a hand the children knew well, and a face appeared to one side of it. Hannah Grieve had never looked so forbidding as at that moment. The boy caught one glance of a countenance pale with wrath and sleeplessness; of eyes that seemed to blaze at them through the window; then the blind fell. He waited breathlessly for minute after minute. Not a sound.

Furiously he stooped for more gravel, and flung it again and again. For an age, as it seemed to him, no more notice was taken. At last, there was an agitation in the blind, as though more than one person was behind it. It was Hannah who lifted it again; but David thought he caught a motion of her arm as though she were holding some one else back. The lad pointed excitedly to Louie.

‘She’s took bad!’ he shouted. ‘Uncle Reuben! — Uncle Reuben! — coom down an see for yorsel. If yo let her in, yo can keep me out as long as yo like!’

Hannah looked at him, and at the figure huddled against the stable-door — looked deliberately, and then, as deliberately, pulled the blind down lower than before, and not a sign of Reuben anywhere.

A crimson flame sprang to David's cheek. He rushed at the door, and while with one hand he banged away at the old knocker, he thumped with the other, kicking lustily the while at the panels, till Louie, almost forgetting her pains in the fierce excitement of

[121]

the moment, thought he would kick them in. In the intervals of his blows, David could hear voices inside in angry debate.

'Uncle Reuben!' he shouted, stopping the noise for a moment, 'Uncle Reuben, Louie's turned sick! She's clemmed wi t' cold. If yo doan't open th' door, I'll go across to Wigson's, and tell 'em as Louie's parishin, an yo're bein th' death on her.'

The bolt shot back, and there stood Reuben, his red hair sticking up wildly from his head, his frame shaking with unusual excitement.

'What are yo makin that roompus for, Davy?' began Reuben, with would-be severity. 'Ha done wi yo, or I'll have to tak a stick to yo.'

But the boy stood akimbo on the steps, and the old farmer shrank before him, as David's black eye travelled past him to a gaunt figure on the stairs.

'Yo'll tak noa stick to me. Uncle Reuben. I'll not put up wi it, an yo know it. I'm goin to bring Louie in. We've bin on t' moor by t' Pool lookin for th' owd witch, an we both on us fell asleep, an Louie's took the rheumatics. — Soa theer. — Stan out o' t' way.'

And running back to Louie, who cried out as he lifted her up, he half carried, half dragged her in.

'Why, she's like death,' cried Reuben. 'Hannah! summat hot — at woonst.'

But Hannah did not move. She stood at the foot of the stairs, barring the way, the chill morning light

[122]

falling on her threatening attitude, her grey dishevelled hair and all the squalid disarray of her dress.

‘Them as doos like beggar’s brats,’ she said grimly, ‘may fare like ’em. *I’ll* do nowt for ’em.’

The lad came up to her, his look all daring and resolution — his sister on his arm. But as he met the woman’s expression, his lips trembled, he suddenly broke down.

‘Now, look here,’ he cried, with a sob in his throat.

‘I know we’re beggar’s brats. I know yo hate th’ seet on us. But I wor t’ worst. I’m t’ biggest. Tak Louie in, and bully-rag me as mich as yo like. Louie — *Louie!*’ and he hung over her in a frenzy, ‘wake up, Louie!’

But the child was insensible. Fatigue, the excitement of the struggle, the anguish of movement had done their work — she lay like a log upon his arm.

‘She’s fainted,’ said Hannah, recognising the fact with a sort of fierce reluctance. ‘Tak her up, an doan’t Stan blatherin theer.’

And she moved out of the way.

The boy gathered up the thin figure, and, stumbling over the tattered rugs, carried her up by a superhuman effort.

Reuben leant against the passage wall, staring at his wife.

‘Yo’re a hard woman, Hannah — a hard woman,’ he said to her under his breath, in a low, shaken voice.

‘An yo coed em beggar’s brats — oh Lord — Lord!’

[123]

‘Howd your tongue, an blow up t’ fire,’ was all the reply she vouchsafed him, and Reuben obeyed.

Meanwhile upstairs Louie had been laid on her bed. Consciousness had come back, and she was moaning.

David stood beside her in utter despair. He thought she was going to die, and he had done it. At last he sank down beside her, and flinging an arm round her, he laid his hot cheek to her icy one.

‘Louie, doan’t — doan’t — I’ll tak yo away from here, Louie, when I can. I’ll tak care on yo, Louie. Doan’t, Louie, — doan’t!’

His whole being seemed rent asunder by sympathy and remorse. Uncle Reuben, coming up with some hot gruel, found him sitting on the bed beside his sister, on whom he had heaped all the clothing he could find, the tears running down his cheeks.

[124]

#### CHAPTER VI

FROM that night forward, David looked upon the farm and all his life there with other eyes.

Up till now in spite of the perennial pressure of Hannah’s tyrannies, which, however, weighed much less upon him than upon Louie, he had been — as he had let Reuben see — happy enough. The open-air life, the animals, his books, out of all of them he managed to extract a very fair daily sum of enjoyment. And he had been content enough with his daily tasks — herding the sheep, doing the rough work of the stable and cow-house, running Aunt Hannah’s errands with the donkey cart to Clough End, helping in the haymaking and the sheep-shearing, or the driving of stock to and from the various markets Reuben frequented. All these things he had done with a curious placidity, a detachment and yet readiness of mind, as one who lends himself, without reluctance, to a life not his own. It was this temper mainly, helped, no doubt, by his unusual tastes and his share of foreign blood and looks, which had set him apart from the other lads of his own class in the neighbourhood. He had few friends of his own

[125]

age, yet he was not unpopular, except, perhaps, with an overbearing animal like Jim Wigson, who instinctively looked upon other people's brains as an offence to his own muscular pretensions.

But his Easter Eve struggle with Hannah closed, as it were, a childhood, which, though hard and loveless, had been full of compensations and ignorant of its own worst wants. It woke in him the bitterness of the orphan dependant, who feels himself a burden and loathes his dependence. That utter lack of the commonest natural affection, in which he and Louie had been brought up — for Reuben's timorous advances had done but little to redress the balance — had not troubled him much, till suddenly it was writ so monstrous large in Hannah's refusal to take pity on the fainting and agonised Louie. Thenceforward every morsel of food he took at her hands seemed to go against him. They were paupers, and Aunt Hannah hated them. The fact had been always there, but it had never meant anything substantial to him till now. Now, at last, that complete dearth of love, in which he had lived since his father died, began to react in revolt and discontent.

The crisis may have been long preparing, those words of his uncle as to his future, as well as the incident of their locking out, may have had something to say to it. Anyway, a new reflective temper set in. The young immature creature became self-conscious, began to feel the ferments of growth. The ambition

[126]

and the restlessness his father had foreseen, with dying eyes, began to stir.

Reuben's qualms returned upon him. On the 15th of May, he and David went to Woodhead, some sixteen or seventeen miles off, to receive the young stock from the Yorkshire breeders, which were to be grazed on the farm during the summer. In general, David had taken the liveliest interest in the animals, in the number and quality of them, in the tariff to be paid for them, and the long road there and back had been cheered for

the farmer by the lad's chatter, and by the athletic antics he was always playing with any handy gate or tree which crossed their path.

'Them heifers ull want a deal o' grass puttin into 'em afoor they'll be wuth onybody's buyin, Davy,' said Reuben, inspecting his mixed herd with a critical eye from a roadside bank, as they climbed the first hill on their return journey.

'Aye, they're a poor lot,' returned David, shortly, and walked on as far in front of his uncle as might be, with his head in the air and his moody look fixed on the distance.

'T' Wigsons ull be late gettin whoam,' began Reuben again, with an uneasy look at the boy. 'Owd Wigson wor that full up wi yell when I last seed him they'll ha a job to get him started straight this neet.'

To this remark David had nothing at all to say, though in general he had a keen neighbourly relish for the misdeeds of the Wigsons. Reuben did not know

[127]

what to make of him. However, a mile further on he made another attempt:

'Lord, how those Yorkshire breeders did talk! Yo'd ha thowt they'd throw their jaws off the hinges. An a lot o' gimcrack notions as iver wor — wi their new foods, an their pills an strengthening mixtures — messin wi cows as though they wor humans. Why conno they leave God Awmighty alone? He can bring a calvin cow through beawt ony o' their meddlin, I'll uphowd yo!'

But still not a word from the lad in front. Reuben might as well have talked to the wall beside him. He had grown used to the boy's companionship, and the obstinate silence which David still preserved from hour to hour as they drove their stock homewards made a sensible impression on him.

Inside the house there was a constant, though in general a silent, struggle going on between the boy and Hannah on the subject of Louie. Louie, after the escapade of Easter Eve, was visited with a sharp attack of inflammatory rheumatism, only just stopping short of rheumatic fever. Hannah got a doctor, and tended her sufficiently

while the worst lasted, partly because she was, after all, no monster, but only a commonly sordid and hard-natured woman, and partly because for a day or two Louie's state set her pondering, perforce, what might be the effect on Mr. Gurney's remittances if the child incontinently died. This thought undoubtedly quickened whatever natural instincts might be left in

[128]

Hannah Grieve: and the child had her doctor, and the doctor's orders were more or less followed.

But when she came downstairs again — a lanky, ghostly creature, much grown, her fierce, black eyes more noticeable than ever in her pinched face — Hannah's appetite for 'snipin' — to use the expressive Derbyshire word — returned upon her. The child was almost bullied into her bed again — or would have been if David had not found ways of preventing it. He realised for the first time that, as the young and active male of the household, he was extremely necessary to Hannah's convenience, and now whenever Hannah ill-treated Louie her convenience suffered. David disappeared. Her errands were undone, the wood uncut, and coals and water had to be carried as they best could. As to reprisals, with a strong boy of fourteen, grown very nearly to a man's height, Hannah found herself a good deal at a loss. 'Bully-raggin' he took no more account of than of a shower of rain; blows she instinctively felt it would have been dangerous to attempt; and as to deprivation of food, the lad seemed to thrive on hunger, and never whistled so loudly as when, according to Hannah's calculations, he must have been as 'keen-bitten as a hawk.' For the first time in her life Hannah was to some extent tamed. When there was business about she generally felt it expedient to let Louie alone.

But this sturdy protection was more really a matter of roused pride and irritation on David's part than of brotherly love. It was the tragedy of Louie Grieve's

[129]

fate — whether as child or woman — that she was not made to be loved. Whether *she* could love, her story will show; but to love her when you were close to her was always hard. How different the days would have been for the moody lad, who had at last learnt to champion her, if their common isolation and dependence had but brought out in her towards him anything clinging — anything confidential, any true spirit of comradeship! On the contrary, while she was still ill in bed, and almost absolutely dependent on what he might choose to do for her, she gibed and flouted him past bearing, mainly, no doubt, for the sake of breaking the tedium of her confinement a little. And when she was about again, and he was defending her weakness from Aunt Hannah, it seemed to him that she viewed his proceedings rather with a malicious than a grateful eye. It amused and excited her to see him stand up to Hannah, but he got little reward from her for his pains.

She was, as it were, always watching him with a sort of secret discontent. He did not suit her — was not congenial to her. Especially was she exasperated now more than ever by his bookish tastes. Possibly she was doubly jealous of his books; at any rate, unless he had been constantly on his guard, she would have hidden them, or done them a mischief whenever she could, in her teasing, magpie way.

One morning, in the grey summer dawn, Louie had just wakened, and was staring sleepily at the door,

[130]

when, all on a sudden, it opened — very quietly, as though pushed by some one anxious not to make a noise — and Reuben's head looked round it. Louie, amazed, woke up in earnest, and Reuben came stealthily in. He had his hat and stick under his arm, and one hand held his boots, while he stepped noiselessly in his stocking feet across the room to where Louie lay — 'Louie, are yo awake?'

The child stared up at him, seeing mostly his stubble of red hair, which came like a grotesque halo between her and the wall. Then she nodded.

‘Doan’t let yor aunt hear nothin, Louie. She thinks I’m gone out to th’ calves. But, Louie, that merchant I towed yo on came yesterday, an he wor a hard un, he wor — as tough as nails, a sight worse nor owd Croker to deal wi, ony day in th’ week. I could mak nowt on him — an he gan me sich a poor price, I darn’t tak a penny on ’t from your aunt — noa, I darn’t, Louie, — not if it wor iver so. She’ll be reet down mad when she knaws — an I’m real sorry about that bit dress o’ yourn, Louie.’

He stood looking down at her, his spectacles falling forward on his nose, the corners of his mouth drooping — a big ungainly culprit.

For a second or two the child was quite still, nothing but the black eyes and tossed masses of hair showing above the sheet. Then the eyes blinked suddenly, and flinging out her hand at him with a passionate gesture, as though to push him away, she

[131]

turned on her face and drew the bedclothes over her head.

‘Louie!’ he said — ‘Louie!’

But she made no sign, and, at last, with a grotesquely concerned face, he went out of the room and downstairs, hanging his head.

Out of doors, he found David already at work in the cowhouse, but as surly and uncommunicative as before when he was spoken to. That the lad had turned ‘agen his wark,’ and was on his way to hate the farm and all it contained, was plain even to Reuben. Why was he so glum and silent — why didn’t he speak up? Perhaps he would, Reuben’s conscience replied, if it were conveyed to him that he possessed a substantial portion of six hundred pounds!

The boy knew that his uncle watched him — anxiously, as one watches something explosive and incalculable — and felt a sort of contempt for himself that nothing practical came of his own revolt and discontent. But he was torn with indecision. How to leave Louie — what to do with himself without a farthing in the world — whom to go to for advice? He thought often of Mr. Ancrum, but a fierce distaste for chapels and ministers had been growing on him, and he had gradually seen

less and less of the man who had been the kind comrade and teacher of his early childhood. His only real companions during this year of moody adolescence were his books. From the forgotten

[132]

deposit in the old meal-ark upstairs, which had yielded 'Paradise Lost,' he drew other treasures by degrees. He found there, in all, some tattered leaves — three or four books altogether — of Pope's 'Iliad,' about half of Foxe's 'Martyrs' — the rest having been used apparently by the casual nurses, who came to tend Reuben's poor mother in her last days, to light the fire — a complete copy of Locke 'On the Human Understanding,' and various volumes of old Calvinist sermons, which he read, partly because his reading appetite was insatiable, partly from a half-contemptuous desire to find out what it might be that Uncle Reuben was always troubling his head about.

As to 'Lias Dawson, David saw nothing of him for many long weeks after the scene which had led to the adventure of the pool. He heard only that 'Lias was 'bad,' and mostly in his bed, and feeling a little guilty, he hardly knew why, the lad kept away from his old friend.

Summer and the early autumn passed away. October brought a spell of wintry weather; and one day, as he was bringing the sheep home, he met old Margaret, 'Lias's wife. She stopped and accosted him.

'Why doant yo coom and see 'Lias sometimes, Davy, my lad? Yo might leeten him up a bit, an' he wants it, t' Lord knows. He's been fearfu' bad in his sperrits this summer.'

The lad stammered out some sheepish excuses, and soon made his way over to Frimley Moor. But the

[133]

visits were not so much pleasure as usual. 'Lias was very feeble, and David had a constant temptation to struggle with. He understood that to excite 'Lias, to throw him again into the frenzy which had begotten the vision of the pool, would be a cruel act. But all the same he found it more and more difficult to restrain himself, to keep back the questions which burnt on his tongue.

As for 'Lias, his half-shut eye would brighten whenever David showed himself at the door, and he would point to a wooden stool on the other side of the fire.

'Sit tha down, lad. Margret, gie him soom tay,' or 'Margret, yo'll just find him a bit oatcake.'

And then the two would fall upon their books together, and the conversation would glide imperceptibly into one of those scenes of half-dramatic impersonation, for which David's relish was still unimpaired.

But the old man was growing much weaker; his inventions had less felicity, less range than of old; and the watchful Margaret, at her loom in the corner, kept an eye on any signs of an undue excitement, and turned out David or any other visitor, neck and crop, without scruple, as soon as it seemed to her that her crippled seer was doing himself a mischief. Poor soul! she had lived in this tumult of 'Lias's fancies year after year, till the solid world often turned about her. And she, all the while, so simple, so sane — the ordinary good woman, with the ordinary woman's hunger for

[134]

the common blessings of life — a little love, a little chat, a little prosaic well-being! She had had two sons — they were gone. She had been the proud wife 'o' t' cliverest mon atwixt Sheffield an Manchester,' as Frimley and the adjacent villages had once expressed it, when every mother that respected herself sent her children to 'Lias Dawson's school. And the mysterious chances of a summer night had sent home upon her hands a poor incapable, ruined in mind and body, who was to live henceforward upon her charity, wandering amid the chaotic wreck and debris of his former self.

Well, she took up her burden!

The straggling village on Frimley Moor was mainly inhabited by a colony of silk hand-loom weavers — the descendants of French prisoners in the great war, and employed for the most part by a firm at Leek. Very dainty work was done at Frimley, and very beautiful stuffs made. The craft went from father to son. All Margaret's belongings had been weavers; but 'Lias, in the pride of his schoolmaster's position, would never allow his wife to use the trade of her youth. When he became dependent on her, Margaret bought a disused loom from a cousin, had it mended and repaired, and set to work. Her fingers had not forgotten their old cunning; and when she was paid for her first 'cut,' she hurried home to 'Lias with a reviving joy in her crushed heart. Thenceforward, she lived at her loom; she became a skilled and favoured

[135]

worker, and the work grew dear to her — first, because 'Lias lived on it, and, next, because the bright roses and ribbon-patterns she wove into her costly stuffs were a perpetual cheer to her. The moors might frown outside, the snow might drift against the cottage walls: Margaret had always something gay under her fingers, and threw her shuttle with the more zest the darker and colder grew the Derbyshire world without.

Naturally the result of this long concentration of effort had been to make the poor soul, for whom each day was lived and fought, the apple of Margaret's eye. So long as that bent, white form sat beside her fire, Margaret was happy. Her heart sank with every fresh sign of age and weakness, revived with every brighter hour. He still lorded it over her often, as he had done in the days of their prosperity, and whenever this old mood came back upon him, Margaret could have cried for pleasure.

The natural correlative of such devotion was a drying up of interest in all the world beside. Margaret had the selfishness of the angelic woman — everything was judged as it affected her idol. So at first she took no individual interest in David — he cheered up 'Lias — she had no other thought about him.

On a certain November day David was sitting opposite to 'Lias. The fire burnt between them, and on the fire was a griddle, whereon Margaret had just deposited some oatcakes for tea. The old man was

[136]

sitting drooped in his chair, his chin on his breast, his black eyes staring beyond David at the wall. David was seized with curiosity — what was he thinking about? — what did he see? There was a mystery, a weirdness about the figure, about that hungry gaze, which tormented him. His temptation returned upon him irresistibly.

' 'Lias,' he said, bending forward, his dark cheek flushing with excitement, 'Louie and I went up, Easter Eve, to t' Pool, but we went to sleep an saw nowt. What was't yo saw, 'Lias? Did yo see her for sure?'

The old man raised his head frowning, and looked at the boy. But the frown was merely nervous, he had heard nothing. On the other hand, Margaret, whom David had supposed to be in the back kitchen, but who was in reality a few steps behind him, mending something which had gone wrong in her loom, ran forward suddenly to the fire, and bending over her griddle somehow promptly threw down the tongs, making a clatter and commotion, in the midst of which the cakes caught, and old 'Lias moved from the fender, saying fretfully,

'Yo're that orkard wi things, Margret, yo're like a dog dancin.'

But in the bustle Margaret had managed to say to David, 'Howd your tongue, noddle-yed, will yo?'

And so unexpected was the lightning from her usually mild blue eyes that David sat dumbfounded,

[137]

and presently sulkily got up to go. Margaret followed him out and down the bit of garden.

And at the gate, when they were well out of hearing of 'Lias, she fell on the boy with a torrent of words, gripping him the while with her long thin hand, so that only violence could have released him. Her eyes flamed at him under the brown woollen shawl she wore pinned under her chin; the little emaciated creature became a fury. What did he come there for, 'moiderin 'Lias wi his divilmments? 'If he ever said a word of such things again, she'd lock the door on him, and he might go to Jenny Crum for his tea. Not a bite or a sup should he ever have in her house again.

'I meant no harm,' said the boy doggedly. 'It wor he tow'd me about t' witch it — wor he as put it into our yeds — Louie an me.'

Margaret exclaimed. So it was he that got 'Lias talking about the Pool in the spring! Some one had been 'cankin wi him about things they didn't owt' — that she knew — 'and she might ha thowt it wor 'Davy. For that one day's 'worritin ov him' she had had him on her hands for weeks — off his sleep, and off his feed, and like a blighted thing. 'Aye it 's aw play to yo,' she said, trembling all through in her passion, as she held the boy — 'it 's aw play to yo and your minx of a sister. An if it means deein to the old man hissel, yo don't care! "Margaret," says the doctor to me last week, "if you can keep his mind quiet he may hang on a bit. But you munna let him excite hissel about owt

[138]

— he mun tak things varra easy. He's like a wilted leaf — nobbut t' least thing will bring it down. He's worn varra thin like, heart an lungs, and aw t' rest of him." An d' yo think I'st sit still an see yo *murder* him — the poor lamb — afore my eyes — me as ha got nowt else but him i' t' wide warld? No — yo yoong varlet — goo an ast soom one else about Jenny Crum if yo 're just set on meddlin wi divil's wark — but yo '11 no trouble my 'Lias.'

She took her hands off him, and the boy was going away in a half-sullen silence, when she caught him again.

'Who tow'd yo about 'Lias an t' Pool, nobbut 'Lias hissel?'

‘Uncle Reuben towld me summat.’

‘Aye Reuben Grieve — he put him in t’ carrier’s cart, an behaved moor like a Christian nor his wife — I allus mind that o’ Reuben Grieve, when foak coe him a foo. Wal, I’st tell yo, Davy, an if iver yo want to say a word about Jenny Crum in our house afterwards, yo mun ha a gritstone whar your heart owt to be — that’s aw.’

And she leant over the wall of the little garden, twisting her apron in her old, tremulous hands, and choking down the tears which had begun to rise. Then, looking straight before her, and in a low, plaintive voice, which seemed to float on hidden depths of grief, she told her story.

It appeared that ’Lias had been ‘queer’ a good while before the adventure of the Pool. But, according

[139]

to his wife, ‘he wor that cliver on his good days, foak could mak shift wi him on his bad days;’ the school still prospered, and money was still plentiful. Then, all of a sudden, the moorland villages round were overtaken by an epidemic of spirit-rapping and table-turning. ‘It wor sperrits here, sperrits there, sperrits everywhere — t’ world wor gradely swarmin wi em,’ said Margaret bitterly. It was all started, apparently, by a worthless ‘felly’ from Castleton, who had a great reputation as a medium, and would come over on summer evenings to conduct seances at Frimley and the places near. ‘Lias, already in an excitable, overworked state, was bitten by the new mania, and could think of nothing else.

One night he and the Castleton medium fell talking about Jenny Crum, the witch of Kinder Scout, and her Easter Eve performances. The medium bet ’Lias a handsome sum that he would not dare face her. ’Lias, piqued and wrathful, and ‘wi moor yell on board nor he could reetly stan,’ took the bet. Margaret heard nothing of it. He announced on Easter Eve that he was going to a brother in Edale for the Sunday, and gave her the slip. She saw no more of him till the carrier brought home to her, on the Sunday morning, a starved and pallid object — ‘gone clean silly, an hatched thegither

like an owd man o' seventy — he bein fifty-six by his reet years.' With woe and terror she helped him to his bed, and in that bed he stayed for more than a year, while everything went

[140]

from them — school and savings, and all the joys of life.

'An yo'll be wantin to know, like t' rest o' 'em, what he saw! 'cried Margaret angrily, facing round upon the boy, whose face was, indeed, one question. "Margaret, did he tell tha what t' witch said to un?" — every blatherin idiot i' th' parish asked me that, wi his mouth open, till I cud ha stopped my ears an run whenever I seed a livin creetur. What do I keer? — what does it matter to me what he saw? I doan't bleeve he saw owt, if yo ast *me*. He wor skeert wi his own thinkins, an th' cowl gripped him i' th' in'ards, an twisted him as yo may twist a withe of hay — Aye! it wor a *cruel* neet. When I opened t' door i' t' early mornin, t' garden wor aw black — th' ice on t' reservoir wor inches thick. Mony a year afterwards t' foak round here ud talk o' that for an April frost. An my poor 'Lias — lost on that fearfu Scout — sleepin out wi'out a rag to cover him, an skeert soomhow — t' Lord or t' Devil knows how! And then foak ud have me mak a good tale out o' it — soomthin to gie 'em a ticklin down their back-bane — soomthin to pass an evenin — *Lord!*'

The wife's voice paused abruptly on this word of imprecation, or appeal, as though her own passion choked her. David stood beside her awkwardly, his eyes fixed on the gravel, wherewith one foot was playing. There was no more sullenness in his expression.

Margaret's hand still played restlessly with the

[141]

handkerchief. Her eyes were far away, her mind absorbed by the story of her own fate. Round the moorside, on which the cottage was built, there bent a circling edge of wood,

now aflame with all the colour of late autumn. Against its deep reds and browns, Margaret's small profile was thrown out — the profile already of the old woman, with the meeting nose and chin, the hollow cheek, the maze of wrinkles round the eyes. Into that face, worn by the labour and the grief of the poor — into that bending figure, with the peasant shawl folded round the head and shoulders — there had passed all the tragic dignity which belongs to the simple and heartfelt things of human life, to the pain of helpless affection, to the yearning of irremediable loss.

The boy beside her was too young to feel this. But he felt more, perhaps, than any other lad of the moorside could have felt. There was, at all times, a natural responsiveness in him of a strange kind, vibrating rather to pain than joy. He stood by her, embarrassed, yet drawn to her — waiting, too, as it seemed to him, for something more that must be coming.

'An then,' said Margaret at last, turning to him, and speaking more quietly, but still in a kind of tense way, 'then, when 'Lias wor took bad, yo know, Davy, I had my boys. Did yo ever hear tell o' what came to 'em, Davy?'

The boy shook his head.

'Ah! 'she said, catching her breath painfully, ' they're moast forgotten, is my boys. 'Lias had been

[142]

seven weeks i' his bed, an I wor noan so mich cast down — i' those days I had a sperrit more 'n most. I thowt th' boys ud keer for us — we'd gien em a good bringin up, an they wor boath on 'em larnin trades i' Manchester. Yan evenin — it wor that hot we had aw t' doors an windows open — theer came a man runnin up fro t' railway. An my boys were kilt, Davy — boath on 'em — i' Duley Moor Tunnel. They wor coomin to spend Sunday wi us, an it wor an excursion train — I niver knew t' reets on 't!'

She paused and gently wiped away her tears. Her passion had all ebbed.

'An I thowt if I cud ha got 'em home an buried 'em, Davy, I could ha borne it better. But they wor aw crushed, an cut about, an riddlet to bits — they wudna let me ha

em. And so we kep it fro 'Lias. Soomtimes I think he knows t' boys are dead — an then soomtimes he frets 'at they doan't coom an see him. Fourteen year ago! An I goo on tellin him they'll coom soon. An last week, when I tow'd him it, I thow't to mysel it wor just th' naked truth!'

David leant over the gate, pulling at some withered hollyhocks beside. But when, after a minute of choking silence, Margaret caught his look, she saw, though he tried to hide it, that his black eyes were swimming. Her full heart melted altogether.

'Oh, Davy, I meant naw offence!' she said, catching him by the arm again. 'Yo're a good lad, an yo're allus a welcome seet to that poor creetur. But yo'll

[143]

not say owt to trouble him again, laddie — will yo? If he'd yeerd yo just now — but, by t' Lord's blessin, he did na — he'd ha worked himsel up fearfu'! I'd ha had naw sleep wi him for neets — like it wor i' th' spring. Yo munna — yo munna! He's all I ha — his livin 's my livin, Davy — an when he's took away — why, I'll mak shift soomhow to dee too!'

She let him go, and, with a long sigh, she lifted her trembling hands to her head, put her frilled cap straight and her shawl. She was just moving away, when something of a different sort struck her sensitive soul, and she turned again. She lived for 'Lias, but she lived for her religion too, and it seemed to her she had been sinning in her piteous talk.

'Dinna think, Davy,' she said hurriedly, 'as I'm complainin o' th' Lord's judgments. They're aw mercies, if we did but know. An He tempers th' wind — He sends us help when we're droppin for sorrow. It worn't for nothin He made us all o' a piece. Theer's good foak i' th' warld — aye, theer is! An what's moor, theer's soom o' th' best mak o' foak gooin about dressed i' th' worst mak o' clothes. Yo'll find it out when yo want 'em.'

And with a clearing face, as of one who takes up a burden again and adjusts it anew more easily, she walked back to the house.

David went down the lane homewards, whistling hard. But once, as he climbed a stile and sat dangling his legs a moment on the top, he felt his eyes wet

[144]

again. He dashed his hand impatiently across them. At this stage of youth he was constantly falling out with and resenting his own faculty of pity, of emotion. The attitude of mind had in it a sort of secret half-conscious terror of what feeling might do with him did he but give it head. He did not want to feel — feeling only hurt and stabbed — he wanted to enjoy, to take in, to discover — to fling the wild energies of mind and body into some action worthy of them. And because he had no knowledge to show him how, and a wavering will, he suffered and deteriorated.

The Dawsons, indeed, became his close friends. In Margaret there had sprung up a motherly affection for the handsome lonely lad; and he was grateful. He took her ‘cuts’ down to the Clough End office for her; when the snow was deep on the Scout, and Reuben and David and the dogs were out after their sheep night and day, the boy still found time to shovel the snow from Margaret’s roof and cut a passage for her to the road. The hours he spent this winter by her kitchen fire, chatting with ‘Lias, or eating havercakes, or helping Margaret with some household work, supplied him for the first time with something of what his youth was, in truth, thirsting for — the common kindness of natural affection.

But certainly, to most observers, he seemed to deteriorate. Mr. Ancrum could make nothing of him. David held the minister at arm’s-length, and meanwhile rumours reached him that ‘Reuben Grieve’s

[145]

nevv’y’ was beginning to be much seen in the public-houses; he had ceased entirely to go to chapel or Sunday school; and the local gossips, starting perhaps from a natural

prejudice against the sons of unknown and probably disreputable mothers, prophesied freely that the tall, queer-looking lad would go to the bad.

All this troubled Mr. Ancrum sincerely. Even in the midst of some rising troubles of his own he found the energy to buttonhole Reuben again, and torment him afresh on the subject of a trade for the lad.

Reuben, flushed and tremulous, went straight from the minister to his wife — with the impetus of Mr. Ancrum's shove, as it were, fresh upon him. Sitting opposite to her in the back kitchen, while she peeled her potatoes with a fierce competence and energy which made his heart sick within him, Reuben told her, with incoherent repetitions of every phrase, that in his opinion the time had come when Mr. Gurney should be written to, and some of Sandy's savings applied to the starting of Sandy's son in the world.

There was an ominous silence. Hannah's knife flashed, and the potato-peelings fell with a rapidity which fairly paralysed Reuben. In his nervousness, he let fall the name of Mr. Ancrum. Then Hannah broke out. '*Some foo*,' she knew, had been meddling, and she might have guessed that fool was Mr. Ancrum. Instead of defending her own position, she fell upon Reuben and his supporter with a rhetoric whereof the moral flavour was positively astounding. Standing

[146]

with the potato-bowl on one hip, and a hand holding the knife on the other, she delivered her views as to David's laziness, temper, and general good-fornothingness. If Reuben chose to incur the risks of throwing such a young lout into town-wickedness, with no one to look after him, let him; she'd be glad enough to be shut on him. But, as to writing to Mr. Gurney and that sort of talk, she wasn't going to bandy words — not she; but nobody had ever meddled with Hannah Grieve's affairs yet and found they had done well for themselves.

'An I wouldna advise yo, Reuben Grieve, to begin now — no, I wouldna. I gie yo fair noatice. Soa theer's not enough for t' lad to do, Mr. Ancrum, he thinks? Perhaps

he'll tak th' place an try? I'd not gie him as mich wage as ud fill his stomach i' th" week — noa, I'd not, not if yo wor to ask *me* — a bletherin windy chap as iver I saw. I'd as soon hear a bird-clapper preach as him — theer'd be more sense an less noise! An they're findin it out down theer — we'st see th' back on him soon.'

And to Reuben, looking across the little scullery at his wife, at the harsh face shaken with the rage which these new and intolerable attempts of her husband to dislodge the yoke of years excited in her, it was as though like Christian and Hopeful he were trying to get back into the Way, and found that the floods had risen over it.

When he was out of her sight, he fell into a boundless

[147]

perplexity. Perhaps she was right, after all. Mr. Ancrum was a meddler and he an ass. When next he saw David, he spoke to the boy harshly, and demanded to know where he went loafing every afternoon. Then, as the days went on, he discovered that Hannah meant to visit his insubordination upon him in various unpleasant ways. There were certain little creature comforts, making but small show on the surface of a life of general abstinence and frugality, but which, in the course of years, had grown very important to Reuben, and which Hannah had never denied him. They were now withdrawn. In her present state of temper with her better half, Hannah could not be 'fashed' with providing them. And no one could force her to brew him his toddy at night, or put his slippers to warm, or keep his meals hot and tasty for him, if some emergency among the animals made him late for his usual hours — certainly not the weak and stammering Reuben. He was at her mercy, and he chafed indescribably under her unaccustomed neglect.

As for Mr. Ancrum, his own affairs, poor soul, soon became so absorbing that he had no thoughts left for David. There were dissensions growing between him and the 'Christian Brethren.' He spoke often at the Sunday meetings — too often, by a great deal, for the other shining lights of the congregation. But his much speaking seemed to

come rather of restlessness than of a full ‘experience,’ so torn, subtle, and difficult were the things he said. Grave doubts of his doctrine

[148]

were rising among some of the ‘Brethren;’ a mean intrigue against him was just starting among others, and he himself was tempest-tossed, not knowing from week to week whether to go or stay.

Meanwhile, as the winter went on, he soon perceived that Reuben Grieve’s formidable wife was added to the ranks of his enemies. She came to chapel, because for a Christian Brother or Sister to go anywhere else would have been a confession of weakness in the face of other critical and observant communities — such, for instance, as the Calvinistic Methodists, or the Particular Baptists — not to be thought of for a moment. But when he passed her, he got no greeting from her; she drew her skirts aside, and her stony eye looked beyond him, as though there were nothing on the road. And the sharp-tongued things she said of him came round to him one by one. Reuben, too, avoided the minister, who, a year or two before, had brought fountains of refreshing to his soul, and in the business of the chapel, of which he was still an elder, showed himself more inarticulate and confused than ever. While David, who had won a corner in Mr. Ancrum’s heart since the days of their first acquaintance at Sunday-school — David fled him altogether, and would have none of his counsel or his friendship. The alienation of the Grieves made another and a bitter drop in the minister’s rising cup of failure.

So the little web of motives and cross-motives, for

[149]

the most part of the commonest earthiest hue, yet shot every here and there by a thread or two of heavenlier stuff, went spinning itself the winter through round the unknowing children. The reports which had reached Mr. Ancrum were true enough. David was, in

his measure, endeavouring to 'see life.' On a good many winter evenings the lad, now nearly fifteen, and shooting up fast to man's stature, might have been seen among the toppers at the 'Crooked Cow,' nay, even lending an excited ear to the Secularist speakers, who did their best to keep things lively at a certain low public kept by one Jerry Timmins, a Radical wag, who had often measured himself both in the meeting-houses and in the streets against the local preachers, and, according to his own following, with no small success. There was a covered skittle-ground attached to this house in which, to the horrid scandal of church and chapel, Sunday dances were sometimes held. A certain fastidious pride, and no doubt a certain conscience towards Reuben, kept David from experimenting in these performances, which were made as demonstratively offensive to the pious as they well could be without attracting the attentions of the police.

But at the disputations between Timmins and a succession of religious enthusiasts, ministers and others, which took place on the same spot during the winter and spring, David was frequently present.

Neither here, however, nor at the 'Crooked Cow' did the company feel the moody growing youth to be

[150]

one of themselves. He would sit with his pint before him, silent, his great black eyes roving round the persons present. His tongue was sharp on occasion, and his fists ready, so that after various attempts to make a butt of him he was generally let alone. He got what he wanted — he learnt to know what smoking and drinking might be like, and the jokes of the taproom. And all by the help of a few shillings dealt out to him this winter for the first time by Reuben, who gave them to him with a queer deprecating look and an injunction to keep the matter secret from Hannah. As to the use the lad made of them, Reuben was as ignorant as he was of all other practical affairs outside his own few acres.

[151]

## CHAPTER VII

SPRING came round again and the warm days of June. At Easter time David had made no further attempts to meet with Jenny Crum on her midnight wanderings. The whole tendency of his winter's mental growth, as well perhaps of the matters brutally raised and crudely sifted in Jerry Timmins's parlour, had been towards a harder and more sceptical habit of mind. For the moment the supernatural had no thrill in it for an intelligence full of contradictions. So the poor witch, if indeed she 'walked,' revisited her place of pain unobserved of mortal eye.

About the middle of June David and his uncle went, as usual, to Kettlewell and Masholme, in Yorkshire, for the purpose of bringing home from thence some of that hardier breed of sheep which was required for the moorland, a Scotch breed brought down yearly to the Yorkshire markets by the Lowland farmers beyond the border. This expedition was an annual matter, and most of the farmers in the Kinder Valley and thereabouts joined in it. They went together by train to Masholme, made their purchases, and then drove their sheep over the

[152]

moors home, filling the wide ferny stretches and the rough upland road with a patriarchal wealth of flocks, and putting up at night at the village inns, while their charges strayed at will over the hills. These yearly journeys had always been in former years a joy to David. The wild freedom of the walk, the change of scene which every mile and every village brought with it, the resistance of the moorland wind, the spring of the moorland turf, every little incident of the road, whether of hardship or of rough excess, added fuel to the flame of youth, and went to build up the growing creature.

This year, however, that troubling of the waters which was going on in the boy was especially active during the Masholme expedition. He kept to himself and his animals, and showed such a gruff unneighbourly aspect to the rest of the world that the

other drivers first teased and then persecuted him. He fought one or two pitched battles on the way home, showed himself a more respectable antagonist, on the whole, than his assailants had bargained for, and was thenceforward contemptuously sent to Coventry. ‘Yoong man,’ said an old farmer to him once reprovngly, after one of these ‘rumpuses,’ ‘yor temper woan’t mouldy wi’ keepin.’ Reuben coming by at the moment threw an unhappy glance at the lad, whose bruised face and torn clothes showed he had been fighting. To the uncle’s mind there was a wanton, nay, a ruffianly look about him, which was wholly new. Instead of rebuking the

[153]

culprit, Reuben slouched away and put as much road as possible between himself and Davy.

One evening, after a long day on the moors, the party came, late in the afternoon, to the Yorkshire village of Haworth. To David it was a village like any other. He was already mortally tired of the whole business — of the endless hills, the company, the bleak grey weather. While the rest of the party were mopping brows and draining ale-pots in the farmers’ public, he was employing himself in aimlessly kicking a stone about one of the streets, when he was accosted by a woman of the shopkeeping class, a decent elderly woman, who had come out for a mouthful of air, with a child dragging after her.

‘Yoong mester, yo’ve coom fro a distance, hannot yo?’

The woman’s tone struck the boy pleasantly as though it had been a phrase of cheerful music. There was a motherliness in it — a something, for which, perhaps all unknown to himself, his secret heart was thirsting.

‘Fro’ Masholme,’ he said, looking at her full, so that she could see all the dark, richly coloured face she had had a curiosity to see; then he added abruptly, ‘We’re bound Kinder way wi t’ sheep — reet t’other side o’ t’ Scout.’

The woman nodded. ‘Aye, I know a good mony o’ your Kinder foak. They’ve coom by here a mony year passt. But I doan’t know as I’ve seen yo afoor. Yo’re

[154]

nobbut a young 'un. Eh, but we get sich a sight of strangers here now, the yan fairly drives the tother out of a body's mind.'

'Doos foak coom for t' summer?' asked David, lifting his eyebrows a little, and looking round on the bleak and straggling village.

'Noa, they coom to see the church. Lor' bless ye!' said the good woman, following his eyes towards the edifice and breaking into a laugh, ' 'taint becos the church is onything much to look at. 'Taint nowt out o' t' common that I knows on. Noa — but they coom along o' t' monument, an' Miss Brontë — Mrs. Nicholls, as should be, poor thing — rayder.'

There was no light of understanding in David's face, but his penetrating eyes, the size and beauty of which she could not help observing, seemed to invite her to go on.

'You niver heerd on our Miss Brontë?' said the woman, mildly. 'Well, I spose not. She was just a bit quiet body. Nobboddy hereabouts saw mich in her. But she wrote bukes — tales, yo know — tales about t' foak roun here; an they do say, them as has read 'em, 'at they're terr'ble good. Mr. Watson, at t' Post Office, he's read 'em, and he's allus promised to lend 'em me. But soomhow I doan't get th' time. An in ginerall I've naw moor use for a book nor a coo has for clogs. But she's terr'ble famous, is Miss Brontë, now — an her sisters too, pore young women. Yo should see t' visitors' book in th' church. Aw t' grand foak as iver

[155]

wor. They cooms fro Lunnon a purpose, soom on 'em, an they just takes a look roun t' place, an writes their names, an goos away. Would yo like to see th' church?' said the good-natured creature — looking at the tall lad beside her with an admiring scrutiny

such as every woman knows she may apply to any male. ‘I’m goin that way, an it’s my brother ‘at has th’ keys.’

David accompanied her with an alacrity which would have astonished his usual travelling companions, and they mounted the straggling village street together towards the church. As they neared it the woman stopped and, shading her eyes against the sunlight, pointed up to it and the parsonage.

‘Noa, it’s not a beauty, isn’t our church. They do say our parson ud like to have it pulled clean down an a new one built. Onyways, they’re goin to clear th’ Brontës’ pew away, an sich a rumpus as soom o’ t’ Bradford papers have bin makin, and a gradely few o’ t’ people here too! I doan’t know t’ reets on ’t missel, but I’st be sorry when yo conno see ony moor where Miss Charlotte an Miss Emily used to sit o’ Sundays — An theer’s th’ owd house. Yo used to be ’lowed to see Miss Charlotte’s room, where she did her writin, but they tell me yo can’t be let in now. Seems strange, doan’t it, ‘at onybody should be real fond o’ that place? When yo go by it i’ winter, soomtimes, it lukes that lonesome, with t’ churchyard coomin up close roun it, it’s enoof to gie a body th’

[156]

shivers. But I do bleeve, Miss Charlotte she could ha kissed ivery stone in ’t; an they do say, when she came back fro furrin parts, she ’d sit an cry for joy, she wor that partial to Haworth. It’s a place yo do get to favour soomhow,’ said the good woman, apologetically, as though feeling that no stranger could justly be expected to sympathise with the excesses of local patriotism.

‘Did th’ oother sisters write books?’ demanded David, his eyes wandering over the bare stone house towards which the passionate heart of Charlotte Brontë had yearned so often from the land of exile.

‘Bless yo, yes. An theer’s mony foak ’at think Miss Emily wor a deol cliverer even nor Miss Charlotte. Not but what yo get a bad noshun o’ Yorkshire folk fro Miss Emily’s bukes — soa I’m towld. Bit there’s rough doins on t’ moors soom times, I’ll

uphowd yo! An Miss Emily had eyes like gimlets — they seed reet through a body. Deary me,’ she cried, the fountain of gossip opening more and more, ‘to think I should ha known ’em in pinafores, Mr. Patrick an aw!’

And under the stress of what was really a wonder at the small beginnings of fame — a wonder which much repetition of her story had only developed in her — she poured out upon her companion the history of the Brontës; of that awful winter in which three of that weird band — Emily, Patrick, Anne — fell away from Charlotte’s side, met the death which belonged to each, and left Charlotte alone to reap the harvest of their

[157]

common life through a few burning years; of the publication of the books; how the men of the Mechanics’ Institute (the roof of which she pointed out to him) went crazy over ‘Shirley;’ how everybody about ‘thowt Miss Brontë had bin puttin ov ‘em into prent,’ and didn’t know whether to be pleased or piqued; how, as the noise made by ‘Jane Eyre’ and ‘Shirley’ grew, a wave of excitement passed through the whole countryside, and people came from Halifax, and Bradford, and Huddersfield — ‘aye, an Lunnon soomtoimes’ — to Haworth church on a Sunday, to see the quiet body at her prayers who had made all the stir; how Mr. Nicholls, the curate, bided his time and pressed his wooing; how he won her as Rachel was won; and how love did but open the gate of death, and the fiery little creature — exhausted by such an energy of living as had possessed her from her cradle — sank and died on the threshold of her new life. All this Charlotte Brontë’s townswoman told simply and garrulously, but she told it well because she had felt and seen.

‘She wor so sma’ and nesh; nowt but a midge. Theer was no lasst in her. Aye, when I heerd the bell tolling for Miss Charlotte that Saturday mornin,’ said the speaker, shaking her head as she moved away towards the church, ‘I cud ha sat down and cried my eyes out. But if she’d ha seen me she’d ha nobbut said, “Martha, get your house

straight, an doan't fret for me!" She had sich a sperrit, had Miss Charlotte. Well, now, after aw, I needn't go for t' keys, for th'

[158]

church door's open. It's Bradford early closin day, yo see, an I dessay soom Bradford foak's goin over.'

So she marched him in, and there indeed was a crowd in the little ugly church, congregated especially at the east end, where the Brontës' pew still stood awaiting demolition at the hands of a reforming vicar. As David and his guide came up they found a young weaver in a black coat, with a sallow oblong face, black hair, high collars, and a general look of Lord Byron, haranguing those about him on the iniquity of removing the pews, in a passionate undertone, which occasionally rose high above the key prescribed by decorum. It was a half-baked eloquence, sadly liable to bathos, divided, indeed, between sentences ringing with the great words 'genius' and 'fame,' and others devoted to an indignant contemplation of the hassocks in the old pews, 'the touching and well-worn implements of prayer,' to quote his handsome description of them, which a meddlesome parson was about to 'hurl away,' out of mere hatred for intellect and contempt of the popular voice.

But, half-baked or no, David rose to it greedily. After a few moments' listening, he pressed up closer to the speaker, his broad shoulders already making themselves felt in a crowd, his eyes beginning to glow with the dissenter's hatred of parsons. In the full tide of discourse, however, the orator was arrested by an indignant sexton, who, coming quickly up the church, laid hold upon him.

[159]

'No speechmakin in the church, if you *please*, sir. Move on if yo're goin to th' vestry, sir, for I'll have to shut up directly.'

The young man stared haughtily at his assailant, and the men and boys near closed up, expecting a row. But the voice of authority within its own gates is strong, and the champion of outraged genius collapsed. The whole flock broke up and meekly followed the sexton, who strode on before them to the vestry.

‘William’s a rare way wi un,’ said his companion to David, following her brother’s triumph with looks of admiration. ‘I thowt that un wud ha bin harder to shift.’

David, however, turned upon her with a frown. ‘*Tis* a black shame,’ he said; ‘why conno they let t’ owd pew bide?’

‘Ah, weel,’ said the woman with a sigh, ‘as I said afore, I’st be reet sorry when Miss Charlotte’s seat’s gone. But yo conno ha brawlin i’ church. William’s reet enough there.’

And beginning to be alarmed lest she should be raising up fresh trouble for William in the person of this strange, foreign-looking lad, with his eyes like ‘live birds,’ she hurried him on to the vestry, where the visitors’ books were being displayed. Here the Byronic young man was attempting to pick a fresh quarrel with the sexton, by way of recovering himself with his party. But he took little by it; the sexton was a tough customer. When the local press was shaken in his face,

[160]

the vicar’s hireling, a canny, weather-beaten Yorkshireman, merely replied with a twist of the mouth,

‘Aye, aye, th’ newspapers talk — there’d be soom- body goin hoongry if they didn’t;’ or — ‘Them ‘at has to eat th’ egg knaws best whether it is addled or no — to my thinkin,’ and so on through a string of similar aphorisms which finally demolished his antagonist.

David meanwhile was burning to be in the fray. He thought of some fine Miltonic sayings to hurl at the sexton, but for the life of him he could not get them out. In the presence of that indifferent, sharp-faced crowd of townspeople his throat grew hot and dry whenever he thought of speaking.

While the Bradford party struggled out of the church, David, having somehow got parted from the woman who had brought him in, lingered behind, before that plain tablet on the wall, whereat the crowd which had just gone out had been worshipping.

Emily, aged 29.

Anne, aged 27.

Charlotte, in the 39th year of her age.

The church had grown suddenly quite still. The sexton was outside, engaged in turning back a group of Americans, on the plea that visiting hours were over for the day. Through the wide open door, the fading yellow light streamed in, and with it a cool wind which chased little eddies of dust about the pavement. In the dusk the three names — black on the white — stood out with

[161]

a stern and yet piteous distinctness. The boy stood there feeling the silence — the tomb near by — the wonder and pathos of fame, and all that thrill of undefined emotion to which youth yields itself so hungrily.

The sexton startled him by tapping him on the shoulder. ‘Time to go home, yoong man. My sister she told me to say good neet to yer, and she wishes yo good luck wi your journey. Where are yo puttin up?’

‘At the " Brown Bess," ’ murmured the boy ungraciously, and hurried out. But the good man, unconscious of repulse and kindly disposed towards his sister’s waif, stuck to him, and, as they walked down the churchyard together, the difference between the manners of official and those of private life proved to be so melting to the temper that even David’s began to yield. And a little incident of the walk mollified him completely. As they turned a comer they came upon a bit of waste land, and there in the centre of an admiring company was the sexton’s enemy, mounted on a bit of wall, and dealing out their deserts in fine style to those meddling parsons and their underlings who despised genius and took no heed of the relics of the mighty dead.

The sexton stopped to listen when they were nearly out of range, and was fairly carried away by the 'go' of the orator.

[162]

'Doan't he do it nateral! 'he said with enthusiasm to David, after a passage specially and unflatteringly devoted to himself. 'Lor' bless yo, it don't hurt me. But I do loike a bit o' good speakin, 'at I do. If fine worrds wor penny loaves, that yoong gen'leman ud get a livin aisy! An as for th' owd pew, I cud go skrikin about th' streets mysel, if it ud do a ha'porth o' good.'

David's brow cleared, and, by the time they had gone a hundred yards further, instead of fighting the good man, he asked a favour of him.

'D' yo think as theer's onybody in Haworth as would lend me a seet o' yan o' Miss Brontë's tales for an hour?' he said, reddening furiously, as they stopped at the sexton's gate.

'Why to be sure, mon,' said the sexton cheerily, pleased with the little opening for intelligent patronage. 'Coom your ways in, and we'll see if we can't oblige yo. I've got a tidy lot o' books in my parlour, an I can give yo "Shirley," I know.'

David went into the stone-built cottage with his guide, and was shown in the little musty front room a bookcase full of books which made his eyes gleam with desire. The half-curbed joy and eagerness he showed so touched the sexton that, after inquiring as to the lad's belongings, and remembering that in his time he had enjoyed many a pipe and 'glass o' yell' with 'owd Reuben Grieve' at the 'Brown Bess,' the worthy man actually lent him indefinitely three precious

[163]

Volumes — 'Shirley,' 'Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography,' and 'Nicholas Nickleby.'

David ran off hugging them, and thenceforward he bore patiently enough with the days of driving and tramping which remained, for the sake of the long evenings

when in some lonely corner of moor and wood he lay full length on the grass revelling in one or other of his new possessions. He had a voracious way of tearing out the heart of a book first of all, and then beginning it again with a different and a tamer curiosity, lingering, tasting, and digesting. By the time he and Reuben reached home he had rushed through all three books, and his mind was full of them.

‘Shirley’ and ‘Nicholas Nickleby’ were the first novels of modern life he had ever laid hands on, and before he had finished them he felt them in his veins like new wine. The real world had been to him for months something sickeningly narrow and empty, from which at times he had escaped with passion into a distant dream-life of poetry and history. Now the walls of this real world were suddenly pushed back as it were on all sides, and there was an inrush of crowd, excitement, and delight. Human beings like those he heard of or talked with every day — factory hands and mill-owners, parsons, squires, lads and lasses — the Yorkes, and Robert Moore, Squeers, Smike, Kate Nickleby and Newman Noggs, came by, looked him in the eyes, made him take sides, compare himself with them, join in their fights and hatreds, pity and exult

[164]

with them. Here was something more disturbing, personal, and stimulating, than that mere imaginative relief he had been getting out of ‘Paradise Lost,’ or the scenes of the ‘Jewish Wars’!

By a natural transition the mental tumult thus roused led to a more intense self-consciousness than any he had yet known. In measuring himself with the world of ‘Shirley’ or of Dickens, he began to realise the problem of his own life with a singular keenness and clearness. Then — last of all — the record of Franklin’s life, — of the steady rise of the ill-treated printer’s devil to knowledge and power — filled him with an urging and concentrating ambition, and set his thoughts, endowed with a new heat and nimbleness, to the practical unravelling of a practical case.

They reached home again early on a May day. As he and Reuben, driving their new sheep, mounted the last edge of the moor which separated them from home, the

Kinder Valley lay before them, sparkling in a double radiance of morning and of spring. David lingered a minute or two behind his uncle. What a glory of light and freshness in the air — what soaring larks — what dipping swallows! And the scents from the dew-steeped heather — and the murmur of the blue and glancing stream!

The boy's heart went out to the valley — and in the same instant he put it from him. An indescribable energy and exultation took possession of him. The

[165]

tide of will for which he had been waiting all these months had risen; and for the first time he felt swelling within him the power to break with habit, to cut his way.

But what first step to take? Whom to consult? Suddenly he remembered Mr. Ancrum, first with shame, then with hope. Had he thrown away his friend? Rumour said that things were getting worse and worse at chapel, and that Mr. Ancrum was going to Manchester at once.

He ran down the slopes of heather towards home as though he would catch and question Mr. Ancrum there and then. And Louie? Patience! He would settle everything. Meanwhile, he was regretfully persuaded that if you had asked Miss Brontë what could be done with a creature like Louie she would have had a notion or two.

[166]

## CHAPTER VIII

'Reach me that book, Louie,' said David peremptorily; 'it ull be worse for yo if yo don't.'

The brother and sister were in the Smithy. Louie was squatting on the ground with her hands behind her, her lips sharply shut as though nothing should drag a word out of them, and her eyes blazing defiance at David, who had her by the shoulder, and looked to the full as fierce as she looked provoking.

‘Find it! ‘was all she said. He had been absent for a few minutes after a sheep that had got into difficulties in the Red Brook, and when he returned, his volume of Rollin’s ‘Ancient History’ — ‘Lias’s latest loan — which he had imprudently forgotten to take with him, had disappeared.

David gave her an angry shake, on which she toppled over among the fallen stones with an exasperating limpness, and lay there laughing.

‘Oh, very well,’ said David, suddenly recovering himself; ‘yo keep yor secret. I’st keep mine, that’s aw.’

[167]

Louie lay quiet a minute or two, laughing artificially at intervals, while David searched the comers of the Smithy, turning every now and then to give a stealthy look at his sister.

The bait took. Louie stopped laughing, sat up, put herself straight, and looked about her.

‘Yo’ hain’t got a secret,’ she said coolly; ‘I’m not to be took in wi snuff that way.’

‘Very well,’ said David indifferently, ‘then I haven’t.

And sitting down near the pan, he took out one of the little boats from the hole near, and began to trim its keel here and there with his knife. The occupation seemed to be absorbing.

Louie sat for a while, sucking at a lump of sugar she had swept that morning into the *omnium gatherum* of her pocket. At last she took up a little stone and threw it across at David.

‘What’s your silly old secret about then?’

‘Where’s my book, then?’ replied David, holding up the boat and looking with one eye shut along the keel.

‘Iv I gie it yer, an yor secret ain’t wo’th it, I’ll put soom o’ that watter down yor neckhole,’ said Louie, nodding towards the place.

‘If you don’t happen find yorsel in th’ pan fust,’ remarked David unmoved.

Louie sucked at her sugar a little longer, with her hands round her knees. She had thrown off her hat, and the May sun struck full on her hair, on the glossy

[168]

brilliance of it, and the natural curls round the temples which disguised a high and narrow brow. She no longer wore her hair loose. In passionate emulation of Annie Wigson, she had it plaited behind, and had begged an end of blue ribbon of Mrs. Wigson to tie it with, so that the beautiful arch of the head showed more plainly than before, while the black eyes and brows seemed to have gained in splendour and effectiveness, from their simpler and severer setting. One could see, too, the length of the small neck and of the thin falling shoulders. It was a face now which made many a stranger in the Clough End streets stop and look backward after meeting it. Not so much because of its beauty, for it was still too thin and starved-looking for beauty, as because of a singular daring and brilliance, a sense of wild and yet conscious power it left behind it. The child had grown a great piece in the last year, so that her knees were hardly decently covered by the last year’s cotton frock she wore, and her brown sticks of arms were far beyond her sleeves. David had looked at her once or twice lately with a new kind of scrutiny. He decided that she was a ‘rum-looking’ creature, not the least like anybody else’s sister, and on the whole his raw impression was that she was plain.

‘How’ll I know yo’ll not cheat?’ she said at last, getting up and surveying him with her arms akimbo.

‘Can’t tell, I’m sure,’ was all David vouchsafed. ‘Yo mun find out.’

Louie studied him threateningly.

[169]

‘Weel I’d be even wi yo soomhow,’ was her final conclusion; and disappearing through the ruined doorway, she ran down the slope to where one of the

great mill-stones lay hidden in the heather, and diving into its central hole, produced the book, keenly watched the while by David, who took mental note of the hiding-place.

‘Naw then,’ she said, walking up to him with her hands behind her and the book in them, ‘tell me your secret.’

David first forcibly abstracted the book and made believe to box her ears, then went back to his seat and his boat.

‘Go on, can’t yo!’ exclaimed Louie, after a minute, stamping at him.

David laid down his boat deliberately.

‘Well, yo won’t like it,’ he said; ‘I know that. But — I’m off to Manchester, that’s aw — as soon as I can goo; as soon as iver I can hear of onything. An I’m gooin if I don’t hear of onything. I’m gooin onyways; I’m tired o’ this. So now yo know.’

Louie stared at him.

‘Yo ain’t!’ she said, passionately, as though she were choking.

David instinctively put up his hands to keep her off. He thought she would have fallen upon him there and then and beaten him for his ‘secret.’

But, instead, she flung away out of the Smithy, and David was left alone and in amazement. Then he got

[170]

up and went to look, stirred with the sudden fear that she might have run off to the farm with the news of what he had been saying, which would have precipitated matters unpleasantly.

No one was to be seen from outside, either on the moor path or in the fields beyond, and she could not possibly have got out of sight so soon. So he searched among the heather and the bilberry hummocks, till he caught sight of a bit of print cotton in a hollow just below the quaint stone shooting-hut, built some sixty years ago on the side of the Scout for the convenience of sportsmen. David stalked the cotton, and found her lying prone and with her hat, as usual, firmly held down over her ears. At sight of her

something told him very plainly he had been a brute to tell her his news so. There was a strong moral shock which for the moment transformed him.

He went and lifted her up in spite of her struggles. Her face was crimson with tears, but she hit out at him wildly to prevent his seeing them. ‘Now, Louie, look here,’ he said, holding her hands, ‘I didna mean to tell yo short and sharp like that, but yo do put a body’s back up so, there’s no bearin it. Don’t take on, Louie. I’ll coom back when I’ve found soomthin, an take you away, too, niver fear. Theer’s lots o’ things gells can do in Manchester — tailorin, or machinin, or dressmakin, or soomthin like that. But yo must get a bit older, an I must find a place for us to live in, so theer’s naw use fratchin, like a spiteful hen. Yo must bide

[171]

and I must bide. But I’ll coom back for yo, I swear I will, an we’ll get shut on Aunt Hannah, and live in a little place by ourselves, as merry as larks.’

He looked at her appealingly. Her head was turned sullenly away from him, her thin chest still heaved with sobs. But when he stopped speaking she jerked round upon him.

‘Leave me behint, an I’ll murder her!’

The child’s look was demoniacal. ‘No, yo won’t,’ said David, laughing. ‘I th’ fust place. Aunt Hannah could settle a midge like yo wi yan finger. I’ th’ second, hangin isn’t a coomfortable way o’ deein. Yo wait till I coom for yo, an when we’s t ha got reet away, an’ can just laugh in her face if she riles us, — *that* ’ll spite her mich moor nor murderin.’

The black eyes gleamed uncannily for a moment and the sobbing ceased. But the gleam passed away, and the child sat staring at the moorland distance, seeing nothing. There was such an unconscious animal pain in the attitude, the pain of the creature that feels itself alone and deserted, that David watched her in a puzzled silence. Louie was always mysterious, whether in her rages or her griefs, but he had never seen her sob quite like this before. He felt a sort of strangeness in her fixed gaze, and with a

certain timidity he put out his arm and laid it round her shoulder. Still she did not move. Then he slid up closer in the heather, and kissed her. His heart, which had seemed all frostbound for months, melted, and that hunger for

[172]

love — home-love, mother-love — which was, perhaps, at the very bottom of his moody complex youth, found a voice.

‘Louie, couldn’t yo be nice to me soomtimes — couldn’t yo just take an interest, like, yo know — as if yo cared a bit — couldn’t yo? Other gells do. I’m a brute to yo, I know, often, but yo keep aggin an teasin, an theer’s niver a bit o’ peace. Look here, Loo, yo give up, an I’st give up. Theer’s nobbut us two — nawbody else cares a ha’porth about the yan or the tother — coom along! yo give up, an I’st give up.’

He looked at her anxiously. There was a new manliness in his tone, answering to his growing manliness of stature. Two slow tears rolled down her cheeks, but she said nothing. She couldn’t for the life of her. She blinked, furiously fighting with her tears, and at last she put up an impatient hand which left a long brown streak across her miserable little face.

‘Yo havn’t got no trade,’ she said. ‘Yo’ll be clemmed.’

David withdrew his arm, and gulped down his rebuff. ‘No, I sha’n’t,’ he said. ‘Now you just listen here.’ And he described how, the day before, he had been to see Mr. Ancrum, to consult him about leaving Kinder, and what had come of it.

He had been just in time. Mr. Ancrum, worn, ill, and harassed to death, had been cheered a little during his last days at Clough End by the appearance of David,

[173]

very red and monosyllabic, on his doorstep. The lad’s return, as he soon perceived, was due simply to the stress of his own affairs, and not to any knowledge of or sympathy with the minister’s miseries. But, none the less, there was a certain balm in it for Mr.

Ancrum, and they had sat long discussing matters. Yes, the minister was going — would look out at Manchester for an opening for David, in the bookselling trade by preference, and would write at once. But Davy must not leave a quarrel behind him. He must, if possible, get his uncle's consent, which Mr. Ancrum thought would be given.

'I'm willing to lend you a hand, Davy,' he had said, 'for you're on the way to no trade but loafing as you are now; but square it with Grieve. You can, if you don't shirk the trouble of it.'

Whereupon Davy had made a wry face and said nothing. But to Louie he expressed himself plainly enough.

'I'll not say owt to oather on 'em,' he said, pointing to the chimneys of the farm, 'till the day I bid 'em good-bye. Uncle Reuben, mebbe, ud be for givin me somethin to start wi, an Aunt Hannah ud be for cloutin him over the head for thinkin of it. No, I'll not be beholden to yan o' them. I've got a shillin or two for my fare, and I'll keep mysel.'

'What wages ull yo get?' inquired Louie sharply.

'Nothin very fat, that's sure,' laughed David. 'If Mr. Ancrum can do as he says, an find me a place in

[174]

a book-shop, they'll, mebbe, gie me six shillin to begin wi.'

'An what ull yo do wi 'at?'

'Live on't,' replied David briefly.

'Yo conno, I tell yo! Yo'll ha food an firin, cloos, an lodgin to pay out o't. Yo conno do 't — soa theer.'

Louie looked him up and down defiantly. David was oddly struck with the practical knowledge her remark showed. How did such a wild imp know anything about the cost of lodging and firing?

'I tell yo I'll live on't,' he replied with energy; 'I'll get a room for 'half a crown — two shillin, p'r'aps — an I'll live on sixpence a day, see if I don't.'

‘See if yo do!’ retorted Louie, ‘clemm on it more like.’

‘That’s all yo know about it, miss,’ said David, in a tone, however, of high good humour; and, stretching one of his hands down a little further into his trousers pocket, he drew out a paper-covered book, so that just the top of it appeared. ‘Yo’re allus naggin about books. Well; I tell yo, I’ve got an idea out o’ thissen ull be worth shillins a week to me. It’s about Benjamin Franklin. Never yo mind who Benjamin Franklin wor; but he wor a varra cute soart of a felly; an when he wor yoong, an had nobbut a few shillins a week, he made shift to save soom o’ them shillins, becos he found he could do without eatin *flesh meat*, an that wi bread an meal an green stuff, a mon could

[175]

do very well, an save soom brass every week. When I go to Manchester,’ continued David emphatically, ‘I shall niver touch meat. I shall buy a bag o’ oatmeal like Grandfeyther Grieve lived on, boil it for mysel, wi a sup o’ milk, perhaps, an soom salt or treacle to gi it a taste. An I’ll buy apples an pears an oranges cheap soomwhere, an store ‘em. Yo mun ha a deal o’ fruit when yo doan’t ha meat. Fourpence!’ cried Davy, his enthusiasm rising, ‘I’ll live on *thruppence* a day, as sure as yo’re sittin theer ! Seven thruppences is one an nine; lodgin, two shillin — three an nine. Two an three left over, for cloos, firin, an pocket money. Why, I’ll be rich before yo can look roun! An then, o’ coorse, they’ll not keep me long on six shillins a week. In the book-trade I’ll soon be wuth ten, an moor!’

And, springing up, he began to dance a sort of cut and shuffle before her out of sheer spirits. Louie surveyed him with a flushed and sparkling face. The nimbleness of David’s wits had never come home to her till now.

‘What ull I earn when I coom?’ she demanded abruptly.

David stopped his cut and shuffle, and took critical stock of his sister for a moment.

‘Now, look here, Louie, yo’re goin to stop where yo are, a good bit yet,’ he replied decidedly. ‘Yo’ll have to wait two year or so — moor ‘n one, onyways,’ he went on hastily, warned by her start and fierce

[176]

expression. ‘Yo know, they can ha th’ law on yo,’ and he jerked his thumb over his shoulder towards the farm. ‘Boys is all reet, but gells can’t do nothink till they’re sixteen. They mun stay wi th’ foak as browt ‘em up, and if they run away afore their sixteenth birthday — they gets put in prison.’

David poured out his legal fictions hastily, three parts convinced of them at any rate, and watched eagerly for their effect on Louie.

She tossed her head scornfully. ‘Doan’t b’lieve it. Yo’re jest tellin lees to get shut o’ me. Nex summer ii yo doan’t send for me, I’ll run away, whatever yo may say. So yo know.’

‘You’re a tormentin thing!’ exclaimed David, exasperated, and began savagely to kick stones down the hill. Then, recovering himself, he came and sat down beside her again.

‘I doan’t want to get shut on yo, Louie. But yo won’t understand nothin.’

He stopped, and began to bite at a stalk of heather, by way of helping himself. His mind was full of vague and yet urgent thoughts as to what became of girls in large towns with no one to look after them, things he had heard said at the public-house, things he had read. He had never dreamt of leaving Louie to Aunt Hannah’s tender mercies. Of course he must take her away when he could. She was his charge, his belonging. But all the same she was a ‘limb’; in his opinion she always would be a ‘limb.’ How could he be sure of her. getting

[177]

work, and who on earth was to look after her when he was away?

Suddenly Louie broke in on his perplexities.

‘I’ll go tailorin,’ she cried triumphantly. ‘Now I know — it wor t’ Wigsons’ cousin Em’ly went to Manchester; an she earned nine shillin a week — nine shillin I tell yo, an found her own thread. Yo’ll be taken ten shillin, yo say, nex year? an I’ll be takin nine. That’s nineteen shillin fur th’ two on us. *Isn’t* it nineteen shillin?’ she said peremptorily, seizing his arm with her long fingers.

‘Well, I dessay it is,’ said David, reluctantly. ‘An precious tired yo’ll be o’ settin stitchin mornin, noon, an neet. Like to see yo do ’t.’

‘I’d do it fur nine shillin,’ she said doggedly, and sat looking straight before her, with wide glittering eyes. She understood from David’s talk that, what with meal, apples, and greenstuff, your ‘eatin’ need cost you nothing. There would be shillings and shillings to buy things with. The child who never had a copper but what Uncle Reuben gave her, who passed her whole existence in greedily coveting the unattainable and in chafing under the rule of an iron and miserly thrift, felt suddenly intoxicated by this golden prospect of illimitable ‘buying.’ And what could possibly prevent its coming true? Any fool — such as ‘Wigson’s Em’ly’ — could earn nine shillings a week at tailoring; and to make money at your stomach’s expense seemed suddenly to put you in possession of a

[178]

bank on which the largest drawings were possible. It all looked so ingenious, so feasible, so wholly within the grip of that indomitable will the child felt tense within her.

So the two sat gazing out over the moorland. It was the first summer day, fresh and timid yet, as though the world and the sun were still ill-acquainted. Down below, over the sparkling brook, an old thorn was quivering in the warm breeze, its bright thin green shining against the brown heather. The larches alone had as yet any richness of leaf, but the sycamore-buds glittered in the sun, and the hedges in the lower valley made wavy green lines delightful to the eye. A warm soft air laden with moist scents of earth

and plant bathed the whole mountain-side, and played with Louie's hair. Nature wooed them with her best, and neither had a thought or a look for her.

Suddenly Louie sprang up.

'Theer's Aunt Hannah shoutin. I mun goo an get t' coos.'

David ran down the hill with her.

'What'll yo do if I tell? 'she inquired maliciously at the bottom.

'If yo do I shall cut at yance, and yo'll ha all the longer time to be by yoursen.'

A darkness fell over the girl's hard shining gaze. She turned away abruptly, then, when she had gone a few steps, turned and came back to where David stood whistling and calling for the dogs. She caught him

[179]

suddenly from behind round the neck. Naturally he thought she was up to some mischief, and struggled away from her with an angry exclamation. But she held him tight and thrust something hard and sweet against his lips. Involuntarily his mouth opened and admitted an enticing cake of butter-scotch. She rammed it in with her wiry little hand so that he almost choked, and then with a shrill laugh she turned and fled, leaping down the heather between the boulders, across the brook, over the wall, and out of sight.

David was left behind, sucking. The sweetness he was conscious of was not all in the mouth. Never that he could remember had Louie shown him any such mark of favour.

Next day David was sent down with the donkey-cart to Clough End to bring up some weekly stores for the family, Hannah specially charging him to call at the post-office and inquire for letters. He started about nine o'clock, and the twelve o'clock dinner passed by without his reappearance.

When she had finished her supply of meat and suet-pudding, after a meal during which no one of the three persons at table had uttered a word, Louie abruptly pushed her plate back again towards Hannah.

‘David!’ was all she said.

‘Mind your manners, miss,’ said Hannah, angrily. ‘Them as cooms late gets nowt.’ And, getting up, she cleared the table and put the food away with even

[180]

greater rapidity than usual. The kitchen was no sooner quite clear than the donkey-cart was heard outside, and David appeared, crimsoned with heat, and panting from the long tug uphill, through which he had just dragged the donkey.

He carried a letter, which he put down on the table. Then he looked round the kitchen.

‘Aunt’s put t’ dinner away,’ said Louie, shortly, ‘ ’cos yo came late.’

David’s expression changed. ‘Then nex time she wants owt, she can fetch it fro Clough End hersel,’ he said violently, and went out.

Hannah came forward and laid eager hands on the letter, which was from London, addressed in a clerk’s hand.

‘Louie!’ she called imperatively, ‘tak un out soom bread-an-drippin.’

Louie put some on a plate, and went out with it to the cowhouse, where David sat on a stool, occupying himself in cutting the pages of a number of the *Vegetarian News*, lent him in Clough End, with trembling hands, while a fierce red spot burnt in either cheek.

‘Tak it away!’ he said, almost knocking the plate out of Louie’s hands; ‘it chokes me to eat a crumb o’ hers.’

As Louie was bearing the plate back through the yard, Uncle Reuben came by. ‘What’s — what’s ’at?’ he said, peering shortsightedly at what she held. Every month of late Reuben’s back had seemed to grow

[181]

rounder, his sight less, and his wits of less practical use.

‘Summat for David,’ said Louie, shortly, ‘ ’cos Aunt Hannah woan’t gie him no dinner. But he woan’t ha it.’

Reuben’s sudden look of trouble was unmistakable. ‘Whar is he?’

‘I’ th’ coo-house.’

Reuben went his way, and found the dinnerless boy deep, or apparently deep, in recipes for vegetable soups.

‘What made yo late, Davy?’ he asked him, as he stood over him.

David had more than half a mind not to answer, but at last he jerked out fiercely, ‘Waitin for th’ second post, fust; then t’ donkey fell down half a mile out o’ t’ town, an th’ things were spilt. There was nobody about, an’ I had a job to get ’un up at a’.’

Reuben nervously thrust his hands far into his coat-pockets.

‘Coom wi me, Davy, an I’st mak yur aunt gie yer yur dinner.’

‘I wouldn’t eat a morsel if she went down on her bended knees to me,’ the lad broke out, and, springing up, he strode sombrely through the yard and into the fields.

Reuben went slowly back into the house. Hannah was in the parlour — so he saw through the half-opened door. He went into the room, which smelt musty and

[182]

close from disuse. Hannah was standing over the open drawer of an old-fashioned corner cupboard, carefully scanning a letter and enclosure before she locked them up.

‘Is ‘t Mr. Gurney’s money?’ Reuben said to her, in a queer voice.

She was startled, not having heard him come in, but she put what she held into the drawer all the more deliberately, and turned the key.

‘Ay, ’t is.’

Reuben sat himself down on one of the hard chairs beside the table in the middle of the room. The light streaming through the shutters Hannah had just opened streamed in on his grizzling head and face working with emotion.

‘It’s stolen money,’ he said hoarsely. ‘Yo’re stealin it fro Davy.’

Hannah smiled grimly, and withdrew the key.

‘I’m paying missel an yo, Reuben Grieve, for t’ keep o’ two wuthless brats as cost moor nor they pays,’ she said, with an accent which somehow sent a shiver through Reuben. ‘I don’t keep udder foaks’ childer fur nothin.’

‘Yo’ve had moor nor they cost for seven year,’ said Reuben, with the same thick tense utterance. ‘Yo should let Davy ha it, an gie him a trade.’

Hannah walked up to the door and shut it.

‘I should, should I? An who’ll pay for Louie — for your luvly limb of a niece? It ‘ud tak about that,’

[183]

and she pointed grimly to the drawer, ‘to coover what she wastes an spiles i’ t’ yeer.’

‘Yo get her work, Hannah. Her bit an sup cost yo most nothin. I cud wark a bit moor — soa cud yo. Yo’re hurtin me i’ mi conscience, Hannah — yo’re coomin atwixt me an th’ Lord!’

He brought a shaking hand down on the damask table-cloth among the wool mats and the chapel hymnbooks which adorned it. His long, loose frame had drawn itself up with a certain dignity.

‘Ha done wi your cantin!’ said Hannah under her breath, laying her two hands on the table, and stooping down so as to face him with more effect. The phrase startled Reuben with a kind of horror. Whatever words might have passed between them, never yet that he could remember had his wife allowed herself a sneer at his religion. It seemed to him suddenly as though he and she were going fast downhill — slipping to perdition, because of Sandy’s six hundred pounds.

But she cowed him — she always did. She stayed a moment in the same bent and threatening position, coercing him with angry eyes. Then she straightened herself, and moved away.

‘Let t’ lad tak hisself off if he wants to,’ she said, an iron resolution in her voice. ‘I told yo so afore — I woan’t cry for ’im. But as long as Louie’s here, an I ha to keep her, I’ll want that money, an every penny on’t. If it bean’t paid, she may go too!’

‘Yo’d not turn her out, Hannah?’ cried Reuben,

[184]

instinctively putting out an arm to feel that the door was closed.

‘*She*’d not want for a livin,’ replied Hannah, with a bitter sneer; ‘she’s her mither’s child.’

Reuben rose slowly, shaking all over. He opened the door with difficulty, groped his way out of the front passage, then went heavily through the yard and into the fields. There he wandered by himself for a couple of hours, altogether forgetting some newly dropped lambs to which he had been anxiously attending. For months past, ever since his conscience had been roused on the subject of his brother’s children, the dull, incapable man had been slowly reconceiving the woman with whom he had lived some five-and-twenty years, and of late the process had been attended with a kind of agony. The Hannah Martin he had married had been a hard body indeed, but respectable, upright, with the same moral instincts as himself. She had kept the farm together — he knew that; he could not have lived without her, and in all practical respects she had been a good and industrious wife. He had coveted her industry and her strong will; and, having got the use of them, he had learnt to put up with her contempt for him, and to fit his softer nature to hers. Yet it seemed to him that there had always been certain conditions implied in this subjection of his, and that she was breaking them. He could not have been fetching and carrying all these years for a woman who could go on wilfully appropriating money that

[185]

did not belong to her, — who could even speak with callous indifference of the prospect of turning out her niece to a life of sin.

He thought of Sandy's money with loathing. It was like the cursed stuff that Achan had brought into the camp — an evil leaven fermenting in their common life, and raising monstrous growths.

Reuben Grieve did not demand much of himself; a richer and more spiritual nature would have thought his ideals lamentably poor. But, such as they were, the past year had proved that he could not fall below them without a dumb anguish, without a sense of shutting himself out from grace. He felt himself — by his fear of his wife — made a partner in Hannah's covetousness, in Hannah's cruelty towards Sandy's children. Already, it seemed to him, the face of Christ was darkened, the fountain of grace dried up. All those appalling texts of judgment and reprobation he had listened to so often in chapel, protected against them by that warm inward certainty of 'election,' seemed to be now pressing against a bared and jeopardised soul.

But if he wrote to Mr. Gurney, Hannah would never forgive him till her dying day; and the thought of making her his enemy for good put him in a cold sweat.

After much pacing of the upper meadows he came heavily down at last to see to his lambs. Davy was just jumping the wall on to his uncle's land, having apparently come down the Frimley path. When he

[186]

saw his uncle he thrust his hands into his pockets, began to whistle, and came on with a devil-may-care swing of the figure. They met in a gateway between two fields.

'Whar yo been, Davy?' asked Reuben, looking at him askance, and holding the gate so as to keep him.

'To Dawson's,' said the boy, sharply.

Reuben's face brightened. Then the lad's empty stomach must have been filled; for he knew that 'Dawsons' were kind to him. He ventured to look at him more directly, and, as he did so, something in the attitude of the proud handsome stripling

reminded him of Sandy — Sandy, in the days of his youth, coming down to show his prosperous self at the farm. He put his large soil-stained hand on David's shoulder.

‘Goo your ways in, Davy. I'll see yo ha your reets.’

David opened his eyes at him, astounded. There is nothing more startling in human relations than the strong emotion of weak people.

Reuben would have liked to say something else, but his lips opened and shut in vain. The boy, too, was hopelessly embarrassed. At last, Reuben let the gate fall and walked off, with downcast head, to where, in the sheep-pen, he had a few hours before bound an orphan lamb to a refractory foster-mother. The foster-mother's resistance had broken down, she was lying patiently and gently while the thin long-legged creature

[187]

sucked; when it was frightened away by Reuben's approach she trotted bleating after it. In his disturbed state of feeling the parallel, or rather the contrast, between the dumb animal and the woman struck home.

[188]

## CHAPTER IX

BUT the crisis which had looked so near delayed!

Poor Reuben! The morning after his sudden show of spirit to David he felt himself, to his own miserable surprise, no more courageous than he had been before it. Yet the impression made had gone too deep to end in nothingness. He contracted a habit of getting by himself in the fields and puzzling his brain with figures — an occupation so unfamiliar and exhausting that it wore him a good deal; and Hannah, when he came in at night, would wonder, with a start, whether he were beginning ‘to break up.’ But it possessed him more and more. Hannah would not give up the money, but David must have his rights. How could it be done? For the first time Reuben fell to calculation over his money matters, which he did not ask Hannah to revise. But meanwhile he lived in a

state of perpetual inward excitement which did not escape his wife. She could get no clue to it, however, and became all the more forbidding in the household the more she was invaded by this wholly novel sense of difficulty in managing her husband.

Yet she was not without a sense that if she could

[189]

but contrive to alter her ways with the children it would be well for her. Mr. Gurney's cheque was safely put away in the Clough End bank, and clearly her best policy would have been to make things tolerable for the two persons on whose proceedings — if they did but know it! — the arrival of future cheques in some measure depended. But Hannah had not the cleverness which makes the successful hypocrite. And for some time past there had been a strange unmanageable change in her feelings towards Sandy's orphans. Since Reuben had made her conscious that she was robbing them, she had gone nearer to an active hatred than ever before. And, indeed, hatred in such a case is the most natural outcome; for it is little else than the soul's perverse attempt to justify to itself its own evil desire.

David, however, when once his rage over Hannah's latest offence had cooled, behaved to his aunt much as he had done before it. He was made placable by his secret hopes, and touched by Reuben's advances — though of these last he took no practical account whatever; and he must wait for his letter. So he went back ungraciously to his daily tasks. Meanwhile he and Louie, on the strength of the great *coup* in prospect, were better friends than they had ever been, and his consideration for her went up as he noticed that, when she pleased, the reckless creature could keep a secret 'as close as wax.'

The weeks, however, passed away, and still no letter came for David. The shepherds' meetings — first at

[190]

Clough End for the Cheshire side of the Scout, and then at the 'Snake Inn' for the Sheffield side — when the strayed sheep of the year were restored to their owners, came and went in due course; sheep-washing and sheep-shearing were over; the summer was halfway through; and still no word from Mr. Ancrum.

David, full of annoyance and disappointment, was seething with fresh plans he — and Louie spent hours discussing them at the Smithy — when suddenly an experience overtook him, which for the moment effaced all his nascent ambitions, and entirely did away with Louie's new respect for him.

It was on this wise.

Mr. Ancrum had left Clough End towards the end of June. The congregation to which he ministered, and to which Reuben Grieve belonged, represented one of those curious and independent developments of the religious spirit which are to be found scattered through the teeming towns and districts of northern England. They had no connection with any recognised religious community, but the members of it had belonged to many — to the Church, the Baptists, the Independents, the Methodists. They were mostly mill-hands or small tradesmen, penetrated on the one side with the fervour, the yearnings, the strong formless poetry of English evangelical faith, and repelled on the other by various features in the different sects from which they came — by the hierarchical strictness of the Wesleyan organisation, or the looseness of the Congregationalists, or the

[191]

coldness of the Church. They had come together to seek the Lord in some way more intimate, more moving, more effectual than any they had yet found; and in this pathetic search for the 'rainbow gold' of faith they were perpetually brought up against the old stumbling-blocks of the unregenerate man, — the smallest egotisms, and the meanest vanities. Mr. Ancrum, for instance, had come to the Clough End 'Brethren' full of an indescribable missionary zeal. He had laboured for them night and day, taxing his sickly

frame far beyond its powers. But the most sordid conspiracy imaginable, led by two or three of the prominent members who thought he did not allow them enough share in the evening meetings, had finally overthrown him, and he had gone back to Manchester a bitterer and a sadder man.

After he left there was an interregnum, during which one or two of the elder 'Brethren' taught Sunday school and led the Sunday services. But at last, in August, it became known in Clough End that a new minister for the 'Christian Brethren' had come down, and public curiosity in the Dissenting circles was keen about him. After a few weeks there began to be a buzz in the little town on the subject of Mr. Dyson. The 'Christian Brethren' meeting-room, a long low upper chamber formerly occupied by half a dozen hand-loom, was crowded on Sundays, morning and evening, not only by the Brethren, but by migrants from other denominations, and the Sunday school, which was held

[192]

in a little rickety garret off the main room, also received a large increase of members. It was rumoured that Mr. Dyson was specially successful with boys, and that there was an 'awakening' among some of the lowest and roughest of the Clough End lads.

'He ha sich a way wi un,' said a much-stirred mother to Reuben Grieve, meeting him one day in the street, 'he do seem to melt your varra marrow.'

Reuben went to hear the new man, was much moved, and came home talking about him with a stammering unction, and many furtive looks at David. He had tried to remonstrate several times on the lad's desertion of chapel and Sunday school, but to no purpose. There was something in David's half contemptuous, halt obstinate silence on these occasions which for a man like Reuben made argument impossible. To his morbid inner sense the boy seemed to have entered irrecoverably on the broad path which leadeth to destruction. Perhaps in another year he would be drinking and thieving. With a curious fatalism Reuben felt that for the present, and till he had made some tangible amends to Sandy and the Unseen Powers for Hannah's sin, he himself could do nothing.

His hands were unclean. But some tremulous passing hopes he allowed himself to build on this new prophet.

Meanwhile, David heard the town-talk, and took small account of it. He supposed he should see the new comer at Jerry's in time. Then if folk spoke true there would be a shindy worth joining in. Meanwhile,

[193]

the pressure of his own affairs made the excitement of the neighbourhood seem to him one more of those storms in the Dissenting tea-cup, of which, boy as he was, he had known a good many already.

One September evening he was walking down to Clough End, bound to the reading-room. He had quite ceased to attend the 'Crooked Cow,' His pennies were precious to him now, and he saved them jealously, wondering scornfully sometimes how he could ever have demeaned himself so far as to find excitement in the liquor or the company of the 'Cow.' Halfway down to the town, as he was passing the foundry, whence he had drawn the pan which had for so long made the Smithy enchanted ground to him, the big slouching apprentice who had been his quondam friend and ally there, came out of the foundry yard just in front of him. David quickened up a little.

'Tom, whar are yo goin?'

The other looked round at him uneasily.

'Niver yo mind.'

The youth's uncouth clothes were carefully brushed, and his fat face, which wore an incongruous expression of anxiety and dejection, shone with washing. David studied him a moment in silence, then he said abruptly —

'Yo're goin prayer-meetin, that's what yo are,'

'An if I am, it's noa consarn o' yourn. Yo're yan o' th' unregenerate; an I'll ask yo, Davy, if happen yo're goin town way, not to talk ony o' your

[194]

carnal talk to me. I'se got hindrances enough, t' Lord knows.'

And the lad went his way, morosely hanging his head, and stepping more rapidly as though to get rid of his companion.

'Well, I niver!' exclaimed David, in his astonishment. 'What's wrong wi yo, Tom? Yo've got no more spunk nor a moultin hen. What's gotten hold o' yo?'

Tom hesitated a moment. '*Th Lord!* 'he burst out at last, looking at Davy with that sudden unconscious dignity which strong feeling can bestow for the moment on the meanest of mortals. 'He's a harryin' me! I havn't slep this three neets for shoutin an cryin! It's th' conviction o' *sin*, Davy. Th' devil seems a howdin me, an I conno pull away, not whativer. T' new minister says, "Dunnot yo pull. Let Jesus do 't all. He's strang, He is. Yo're nobbut a worm." But I've naw *assurance*, Davy, theer's whar it is — I've naw assurance! 'he repeated, forgetting in his pain the unregenerate mind of his companion.

David walked on beside him wondering. When he had last seen Tom he was lounging in a half-drunken condition outside the door of the 'Crooked Cow,' cracking tipsy jokes with the passers-by.

'Where is the prayer-meetin?' he inquired presently.

'In owd Simes's shed — an it's late too — I mun hurry.'

[195]

'Why, theer'll be plenty o' room in old Simes's shed. It's a fearfu big place.'

'An lasst time theer was na stannin ground for a corn-boggart; an I wudna miss ony o' Mr. Dyson's prayin, not for nothin. Good neet to yo, Davy.'

And Tom broke into a run; David, however, kept up with him.

'P'raps I'll coom too,' he said, with a kind of bravado, when they had passed the bridge and the Kinder printing works, and Clough End was in sight.

Tom said nothing till they had breasted a hill, at the top of which he paused panting, and confronted David.

‘Noo yo’ll not mak a rumpus, Davy,’ he said mistrustfully.

‘An if I do, can’t a hunderd or two o’ yo kick me out?’ asked David, mockingly. ‘I’ll mak no rumpus. P’raps your Mr. Dyson ’ll convert me.’

And he walked on laughing.

Tom looked darkly at him; then, as he recovered his wind, his countenance suddenly cleared. Satan laid a new snare for him — poor Tom! — and into his tortured heart there fell a poisonous drop of spiritual pride. Public reprobation applied to a certain order of offences makes a very marketable kind of fame, as the author of *Manfred* knew very well. David in his small obscure way was supplying another illustration of the principle. For the past year he had been something of a personage in Clough End — having always his wits, his

[196]

book-learning, his looks, and his singular parentage to start from. Tom — the shambling butt of his comrades — began to like the notion of going into prayer-meeting with David Grieve in tow; and even that bitter and very real cloud of spiritual misery lifted a little.

So they marched in together, Tom in front, with his head much higher than before; and till the minister began there were many curious glances thrown at David. It was a prayer-meeting for boys only, and the place was crammed with them, of all ages up to eighteen.

It was a carpenter’s workshop. Tools and timber had been as far as possible pushed to the side, and at the end a rough platform of loose planks had been laid across some logs so as to raise the preacher a little?

Soon there was a stir, and Mr. Dyson appeared. He was tall and loosely built, with the stoop from the neck and the sallow skin which the position of the cotton-spinner at work and the close fluffy atmosphere in which he lives tend to develop. Up to six months ago, he had been a mill-hand and a Wesleyan class-leader. Now, in consequence partly of some inward crisis, partly of revolt against an ‘unspiritual’

superintendent, he had thrown up mill and Methodism together, and come to live on the doles of the Christian Brethren at Clough End. He had been preaching on the moors already during the day, and was tired out; but the pallor of the harsh face only made the bright, commanding

[197]

eye more noticeable. It ran over the room, took note first of the numbers, then of individuals, marked who had been there before, who was a new-comer. The audience fell into order and quiet before it as though a general had taken command.

He put his hands on his hips and began to speak without any preface, somewhat to the boys' surprise, who had expected a prayer. The voice, as generally happens with a successful revivalist preacher, was of fine quality, and rich in good South Lancashire intonations, and his manner was simplicity itself.

'Suppose we put off our prayer a little bit,' he said, in a colloquial tone, his fixed look studying the crowded benches all the while. 'Perhaps we'll have more to pray about by-and-by. . . . Well, now, I haven't been long in Clough End, to be sure, but I think I've been long enough to get some notion of how you boys here live — whether you work on the land, or whether you work in the mills or in shops — I've been watching you a bit, perhaps you didn't think it; and what I'm going to do to-night is to take your lives to piece— take them to pieces, an look close into them, as you've seen them do at the mill, perhaps, with a machine that wants cleaning. I want to find out what's wrong wi them, what they're good for, whose work they do — *God's or the devil's*. . . . First let me take the mill-hands. Perhaps I know most about their life, for I went to work in a cotton-mill when I was eight years old, and I only left it six months ago. I have seen men and

[198]

women saved in that mill, so that their whole life afterwards was a kind of ecstasy: I have seen others lost there, so that they became true children of the devil, and made those about them as vile and wretched as themselves. I have seen men grow rich there, and I have seen men die there; so if there is anything I know in this world it is how factory workers spend their time — at least, I think I know. But judge for yourselves — shout to me if I'm wrong. Isn't it somehow like this?'

And he fell into a description of the mill-hand's working day. It was done with knowledge, sometimes with humour, and through it all ran a curious undercurrent of half-ironical passion. The audience enjoyed it, took the points, broke in now and then with comments as the speaker touched on such burning matters as the tyranny of overlookers, the temper of masters, the rubs between the different classes of 'hands,' the behaviour of 'minders' to the 'piecers' employed by them, and so on. The sermon at one time was more like a dialogue between preacher and congregation. David found himself joining in it involuntarily once or twice, so stimulating was the whole atmosphere, and Mr. Dyson's eye was caught perforce by the tall dark fellow with the defiant carriage of the head who sat next to Tom Mullins, and whom he did not remember to have seen before.

But suddenly the preacher stopped, and the room fell dead silent, startled by the darkening of his look.

[199]

'Ay,' he said, with stern sharpness. 'Ay, that's how you live — them's the things you spend your time and your minds on. You laugh, and I laugh — not a bad sort of life, you think — a good deal of pleasure, after all, to be got out of it. If a man must work he might do worse. *O you poor souls!*'

The speaker stopped, as though mastering himself. His face worked with emotion; his last words had been almost a cry of pain. After the easy give and take of the opening, this change was electrical. David felt his hand tremble on his knee.

‘Answer me this!’ cried the preacher, his nervous cotton-spinner’s hand outstretched. ‘Is there any soul here among you factory lads who, when he wakes in the morning, *ever thinks of saying a prayer?* Not one of you, I’ll be bound! What with shovelling on one’s clothes, and gulping down one’s breakfast, and walking half a mile to the mill, who’s got time to think about prayers? God must wait. He’s always there above, you think, sitting in glory. He can listen any time. Well, as you stand at your work — all those hours! — is there ever a moment then for putting up a word in Jesus’ ear — Jesus, Who died for sinners? Why, no, how should there be indeed? If you don’t keep a sharp eye on your work the overlooker ‘ull know the reason why in double-quick time! . . . But there comes a break, perhaps, for one reason or another. Does the Lord get it? What a thing to ask, to be sure! Why, there are other spinners close by, waiting for rovings,

[200]

or leaving off for “baggin,” and a bit of talk and a bad word or two are a deal more fun, and come easier than praying. Half-past five o’clock at last — knocking-off time. Then you begin to think of amusing yourselves. There’s loafing about the streets, which never comes amiss, and there’s smoking and the public for you bigger ones, and there’s betting on Manchester races, and there’s a bout of swearing every now and then to keep up your spirits, and there are other thoughts, and perhaps actions, for some of you, of which the less said in any decent Christian gathering the better! And so bedtime comes round again; still not a moment to think of God in — of the Judgment which has come a day closer — of your sins which have grown a day heavier — of your soul which has sunk a day further from heaven, a day nearer to hell? Not one. You are dead tired, and mill-work begins so early. Tumble in — God can wait. He has waited fourteen, or eighteen, or twenty years already!

‘But you’re not all factory hands here. I see a good many lads I know come from the country — from the farms up Kinder or Edale way. Well, I don’t know so much about your ways as I do about mills; but I know some, and I can guess some. *You*

are not shut up all day with the roar of the machines in your ears, and the cotton-fluff choking your lungs. You have to live harder, perhaps. You've less chances of getting on in the world; but I declare to you, if you're bad and godless — as some of you are — I think there's

[201]

a precious sight less excuse for you than there is for the mill-hands!'

And with a startling vehemence, greater by far than he had shown in the case of the mill-workers, he threw himself on the vices and the callousness of the field-labourers. For were they not, day by day, and hour by hour, face to face with the Almighty in His marvellous world — with the rising of His sun, with the flash of His lightning, with His clouds which dropped fatness, and with the heavens which declare His glory? Nothing between them and the Most High, if they would open their dull eyes and see! And more than that, Not a bit of their life, but had been dear to the Lord Jesus — but He had spoken of it, taught from it, made it sacred. The shepherd herding the sheep — how could he, of all men, forget and blaspheme the Good Shepherd? The sower scattering the seed — how could he, of all men, forget and blaspheme the Heavenly Sower? Oh, the crookedness of sin! Oh, the hardness of men's hearts!

The secret of the denunciations which followed lay hidden deep in the speaker's personal history. They were the utterances of a man who had stood for years at the 'mules,' catching, when he could, through the coarse panes of factory glass, the dim blue outlines of distant moors. Here were noise, crowd, coarse jesting, mean tyrannies, uncongenial company — everything which a nervous, excitable nature, tuned to poetry in the English way through religion, most loathed; *there* was beauty,

[202]

peace, leisure for thought, for holiness, for emotion.

Meanwhile the mind of David Grieve rose once or twice in angry protest. It was not fair — it was unjust — and why did Mr. Dyson always seem to be looking at him? — flinging at him all these scathing words about farming people's sins and follies? He was shaken and excited. Oratory, of any sort, never failed to stir him extraordinarily. Once even he would have jumped up to speak, but Tom Mullins's watchful hand closed on his arm. Davy shook it off angrily, but was perforce reminded of his promise. And Mr. Dyson was swift in all things. The pitiless sentences dropped; the speaker, exhausted, wiped his brow and pondered a moment; and the lads from the farms about, most of whom David knew by sight, were left staring at the floor, some inclined to laugh by reaction, others crimson and miserable.

Well; so God was everywhere forgotten — in the fields and in the mill. The greedy, vicious hours went by, and God still waited — waited. Would He wait for ever?

‘Nay!’

The intense, low-spoken word sent a shiver through the room. The revivalist passion had been mounting rapidly amongst the listeners, and the revivalist sense divined what was coming. To his dying day David, at least, never forgot the picture of a sinner's death agony, a sinner's doom, which followed. As to the first, it was

[203]

very quiet and colloquial. The preacher dwelt on the tortured body, the choking breath, the failing sight, the talk of relations and friends round the bed.

‘“Ay, poor fellow, he'll not lasst mich longer; t' doctor's gien him up — and a good thing too, for his sufferins are terr'ble to see.”

‘And your poor dying ears will catch what they say. Then will your fear come upon you as a storm, and your calamity as a whirlwind. Such a fear!

‘Once, my lads — long ago — I saw a poor girl caught by her hair in one of the roving machines in the mill I used to work at. Three minutes afterwards they tore away her body from the iron teeth which had destroyed her. But I, a lad of twelve, had

seen her face just as the thing caught her, and if I live to be a hundred I shall never forget that face — that horrible, horrible fear convulsing it.

‘But that fear, my boys, was as nothing to the sinner’s fear at death! Only a few more hours — a few more minutes, perhaps — and then *judgment!* All the pleasant loafing and lounging, all the eating and drinking, the betting and swearing, the warm sun, the kind light, the indulgent parents and friends left behind; nothing for ever and ever but the torments which belong to sin, and which even the living God can no more spare you and me if we die in sin than the mill-engine, once set going, can spare the poor creature that meddles with it.

‘Well; but perhaps in that awful last hour you try

[204]

to pray — to call on the Saviour. But, alas! alas! prayer and faith have to be learnt, like cotton-spinning. Let no man count on learning that lesson for the asking. While your body has been enjoying itself in sin, your soul has been dying — dying; and when at the last you bid it rise and go to the Father, you will find it just as helpless as your poor paralysed limbs. It cannot rise, it has no strength; it cannot go, for it knows not the way. No hope; no hope. Down it sinks, and the black waters of hell close upon it for ever!’

Then followed a sort of vision of the lost — delivered in short abrupt sentences — the form of the speaker drawn rigidly up meanwhile to its full height, the long arm outstretched. The utterance had very little of the lurid materialism, the grotesque horror of the ordinary ranter’s hell. But it stole upon the imagination little by little, and possessed it at last with an all-pervading terror. Into it, to begin with, had gone the whole life-blood and passion of an agonised soul. The man speaking had himself graven the terrors of it on his inmost nature through many a week of demoniacal possession. But since that original experience of fire which gave it birth, there had come to its elaboration a strange artistic instinct. Day after day the preacher had repeated it to hushed congregations, and with every repetition, almost, there had come a greater

sharpening of the light and shade, a keener sense of what would tell and move. He had given it on the moors that

[205]

afternoon, but he gave it better to-night, for on the wild walk across the plateau of the Peak some fresh illustrations, drawn from its black and fissured solitude, had suggested themselves, and he worked them out as he went, with a kind of joy, watching their effect. Yet the man was, in his way, a saint, and altogether sincere — so subtle a thing is the life of the spirit.

In the middle, Tom Mullins, David's apprentice-friend, suddenly broke out into loud groans, rocking himself to and fro on the form. A little later, a small fair-haired boy of twelve sprang up from the form where he had been sitting trembling, and rushed into the space between the benches and the preacher, quite unconscious of what he was doing.

'Sir!' he said; 'oh, sir! — please — I didn't want to say them bad words this mornin; I didn't, sir ; it wer t' big uns made me; they said they'd duck me — an it do hurt that bad. Oh, sir, please!'

And the little fellow stood wringing his hands, the tears coursing down his cheeks.

The minister stopped, frowning, and looked at him. Then a smile broke on the set face, he stepped up to the lad, threw his arm round him, and drew him up to his side fronting the room.

'My boy,' he said, looking down at him tenderly, 'you and I, thank God, are still in the land of the *living*; there is still time to-night — this very minute — to be saved! Ay, saved, for ever and ever, by the blood of the Lamb. Look away from yourselves — away from sin

[206]

— away from hell — to the blessed Lord, that suffered and died and rose again; just for what? For this only — that He might, with His own pierced hands, draw every soul here to-night, and every soul in the wide world that will but hear His voice, out of the clutches of the devil, and out of the pains of hell, and gather it close and safe into His everlasting arms!’

There was a great sob from the whole room. Rough lads from the upland farms, shop-boys, mill-hands, strained forward, listening, thirsting, responding to every word.

*Redemption — Salvation* — the deliverance of the soul from itself — thither all religion comes at last, whether for the ranter or the philosopher. To the enriching of that conception, to the gradual hewing it out in historical shape, have gone the noblest poetry, the purest passion, the intensest spiritual vision of the highest races, since the human mind began to work. And the historical shape may crumble; but the need will last and the travail will go on; for man’s quest of redemption is but the eternal yielding of the clay in the hands of the potter, the eternal answer of the creature to the urging indwelling Creator.

[207]

## CHAPTER X

HALF an hour later, after the stormy praying and singing which had succeeded Mr. Dyson’s address, David found himself tramping up the rough and lonely road leading to the high Kinder valley. The lights of Clough End had disappeared; against the night sky the dark woody side of Mardale Moor was still visible; beneath it sang the river; a few stars were to be seen; and every now and then the windows of a farm shone out to guide the wayfarer. But David stumbled on, noticing nothing. At the foot of the steep hill leading to the farm he stopped a moment, and leant over the gate. The little lad’s cry was in his ears.

Presently he leapt the gate impatiently, and ran up whistling. Supper was over, but Hannah ungraciously brought him out some cold bacon and bread. Louie hung about him while he ate, studying him with quick furtive eyes.

‘Whar yo bin?’ she said abruptly, when Hannah had gone to the back kitchen for a moment. Reuben was dozing by the fire over the local paper.

‘Nowhere as concerns you,’ said David, shortly. He

[208]

finished his supper and went and sat on the steps. The dogs came and put their noses on his knees. He pulled absently at their coats, looking straight before him at the dark point of Kinder Low.

‘Whar yo bin?’ said Louie’s voice again in his ear. She had squatted down on the step behind him.

‘Be off wi yer,’ said David, angrily, getting up in order to escape her.

But she pursued him across the farmyard.

‘Have yo got a letter?’

‘No, I havn’t.’

‘Did yo ask at t’ post-office?’

‘No, I didn’t.’

‘An why didn’t yo?’

‘Because I didn’t want — soa there — get away.’ And he stalked off. Louie, left behind, chewed the cud of reflection in the darkness.

Presently, to his great disgust, as he was sitting under a wall of one of the pasture-fields, hidden, as he conceived, from all the world by the night, he heard the rustle of a dress, the click of a stone, and there was Louie dangling her legs above him, having attacked him in the rear.

‘Uncle Reuben’s talkin ’is stuff about Mr. Dyson. I seed ‘im gooin passt Wigsons’ this afternoon. He’s nowt — he’s common, he is.’

The thin scornful voice out of the dark grated on him intolerably. He bent forward and shut his ears tight with both his hands. To judge from the muffled

[209]

sounds he heard, Louie went on talking for a while; but at last there had been silence for so long, that he took his hands away, thinking she must have gone.

‘Yo’ve been at t’ prayer-meetin, I tell yo, an yo’re a great stupid muffin-yed, soa theer.’

And a peremptory little kick on his shoulder from a substantial shoe gave the words point.

He sprang up in a rage, ran down the hill, jumped over a wall or two, and got rid of her. But he seemed to hear her elfish laugh for some time after. As for himself, he could not analyse what had come over him. But not even the attraction of an unopened parcel of books he had carried home that afternoon from Clough End — a loan from a young stationer he had lately made acquaintance with — could draw him back to the farm. He sat on and on in the dark. And when at last, roused by the distant sounds of shutting up the house, he slunk in and up to bed, he tossed about for a long time, and woke up often in the night. The tyrannous power of another man’s faith was upon him. He could not get Mr. Dyson out of his head. How on earth could anybody be so *certain*? It was monstrous that any one should be. It was canting stuff.

Still, next day, hearing by chance that the new comer was going to preach at a hamlet the other side of Clough End, he went, found a large mixed meeting mostly of mill-hands, and the tide of Revivalism rolling high. This time Mr. Dyson picked him out at once — the

[210]

face and head indeed were easily remembered. After the sermon, when the congregation were filing out, leaving behind those more particularly distressed in mind to be dealt

with more intimately in a small prayer-meeting by Mr. Dyson and a prayer-leader, the minister suddenly stepped aside from a group of people he was talking with, and touched David on the arm as he was making for the door.

‘Won’t you stay?’ he said peremptorily. ‘Don’t trifle with the Lord.’

And his feverish divining eyes seemed to look the boy through and through. David flushed, and pushed past him with some inarticulate answer. When he found himself in the open air he was half angry, half shaken with emotion. And afterwards a curious instinct, the sullen instinct of the wild creature shrinking from a possible captor, made him keep himself as much as possible out of Mr. Dyson’s way. At the prayer-meetings and addresses, which followed each other during the next fortnight in quick succession, David was almost always present; but he stood at the back, and as soon as the general function was over he fled. The preacher’s strong will was piqued. He began to covet the boy’s submission disproportionately, and laid schemes for meeting with him. But David evaded them all.

Other persons, however, succeeded better. Whenever the revivalist fever attacks a community, it excites in a certain number of individuals, especially women.

[211]

an indescribable zeal for proselytising. The signs of ‘conviction’ in any hitherto unregenerate soul are marked at once, and the ‘saved’ make a prey of it, showing a marvellous cunning and persistence in its pursuit.

One day a woman, the wife of a Clough End shoemaker, slightly known to David, met him on the moors.

‘Will yo coom to-night?’ she said, nodding to him. ‘Theer’ll be prayin’ at our house — about half a dozen.’

Then, as the boy stopped, amazed and hesitating, she fixed him with her shining ecstatic eyes.

‘Awake, thou that sleepest,’ she said under her breath, ‘and Christ shall give thee light.’

She had been carrying a bundle to a distant farm. A child was in her arms, and she looked dragged and worn. But all the way down the moor as she came towards him David had heard her singing hymns.

He hung his head and passed on. But in the evening he went, found three or four other boys his own age or older, the woman, and her husband. The woman sang some of the most passionate Methodist hymns; the husband, a young shoemaker, already half dead of asthma and bronchitis, told his 'experiences' in a voice broken by incessant coughing; one of the boys, a rough specimen, known to David as a van-boy from some calico-printing works in the neighbourhood, prayed aloud, breaking down into sobs in the middle; and David, at first obstinately silent, found himself

[212]

joining before the end in the groans and 'Amen,' by force of a contagious excitement he half despised but could not withstand.

The little prayer-meeting, however, broke up somewhat in confusion. There was not much real difference of opinion at this time in Clough End, which was, on the whole, a strongly religious town. Even the Churchmanship of it was decidedly evangelical, ready at any moment to make common cause with Dissent against Ritualism, if such a calamity should ever threaten the little community, and very ready to join, more or less furtively, in the excitements of Dissenting revivals. Jerry Timmins and his set represented the only serious blot on what the pious Clough Endian might reasonably regard as a fair picture. But this set contained some sharp fellows — provided outlet for a considerable amount of energy of a raw and roving sort, and, no doubt, did more to maintain the mental equilibrium of the small factory-town than any enthusiast on the other side would for a moment have allowed. The excitement which followed in the train of a man like Mr. Dyson roused, of course, an answering hubbub among the Timminsites. The whole of Jerry's circle was stirred up, in fact, like a hive of wasps; their ribaldry grew with what it fed on; and every day some new and exquisite method of harrying the devout occurred to the more ingenious among them.

David had hitherto escaped notice. But on this evening, while he and his half-dozen companions were still

[213]

on their knees, they were first disturbed by loud drummings on the shoemaker's door, which opened directly into the little room where they were congregated; and then, when they emerged into the street, they found a mock prayer-meeting going on outside, with all the usual 'manifestations' of revivalist fervour — sighs, groans, shouts, and the rest of it — in full flow. At the sight of David Grieve there were first stares and then shrieks of laughter.

'I say, Davy,' cried a drunken young weaver, sidling up to him on his knees and embracing him from behind, 'my heart's real touched. Gie me your coat, Davy; it's better nor mine, Davy; and I'm your Christian brother, Davy.'

The emotion of this appeal drew uproarious merriment from the knot of Secularists. David, in a frenzy, kicked out, so that his assailant dropped him with a howl. The weaver's friends closed upon the 'Ranters,' who had to fight their way through. It was not till they had gained the outskirts of the town that the shower of stones ceased, and that they could pause to take stock of their losses. Then it appeared that, though all were bruised, torn, and furious, some were inclined to take a mystical joy in persecution, and to find compensation in certain plain and definite predictions as to the eternal fate in store for 'Jerry Timmins's divils.' David, on the other hand, was much more inclined to vent his wrath on his own side than on the Timminsites.

[214]

'Why can't yo keep what yo're doin to yoursels? 'he called out fiercely to the knot of panting boys, as he faced round upon them at the gate leading to the Kinder road. 'Yo're a parcel o' fools — always chatterin an clatterin.'

The others defended themselves warmly. ‘Them Timmins lot’ were always spying about. They daren’t attack the large meetings, but they had a diabolical way of scenting out the small ones. The meetings at the shoemaker’s had been undisturbed for some few nights, then a Timminsite passing by had heard hymns, probably listened at the keyhole, and of course informed the main body of the enemy.

‘They’re like them nasty earwigs,’ said one boy in disgust, ‘they’ll wriggle in onywheres.’

‘Howd yor noise!’ said David, peremptorily. ‘If yo wanted to keep, out o’ their way, yo could do ’t fasst enough.’

‘How?’ they inquired, with equal curtness.

‘Yo needn’t meet in th’ town at aw. Theer’s plenty o’ places up on t’ moor,’ and he waved his hand towards the hills behind him, lying clear in the autumn moonlight. ‘Theer’s th’ owd Smithy — who’d find yo there?’

The mention of the Smithy was received as an inspiration. There is a great deal of pure romantic temper roused by these revivalist outbreaks in provincial England. The idea of the moors and the old rain as setting for a secret prayer-meeting struck

[215]

the group of excited lads as singularly attractive. They parted cheerfully upon it, in spite of their bruises.

David, however, walked home fuming. The self-abandonment of the revival had been all along well-nigh intolerable to him — and now, that he should have allowed the Timminsites to know anything about his prayers! He very nearly broke off from it altogether in his proud disgust.

However he did ultimately nothing of the sort. As soon as he grew cool again, he was as much tormented as before by what was at bottom more an intellectual curiosity than a moral anguish. There was some moral awakening in it; he had some real qualms about sin, some real aspirations after holiness, and, so far, the self-consciousness which had first stirred at Haworth was deepened and fertilised. But the

thirst for emotion and sensation was the main force at work. He could not make out what these religious people meant by their ‘experiences,’ and for the first time he wanted to make out. So when it was proposed to him to meet at the Smithy on a certain Saturday evening, he agreed.

Meanwhile, Louie was sitting up in bed every night, with her hands round her sharp knees, and her black brows knit over David’s follies. It seemed to her he no longer cared ‘a haporth’ about getting a letter from Mr. Ancrum, about going to Manchester, about all those entrancing anti-meat schemes which were to lead so easily to a paradise of free ‘buying’ for both of

[216]

them. Whenever she tried to call him back to these things he shook her off impatiently, and their newborn congeniality to each other had been all swamped in this craze for ‘shoutin hollerin’ people she despised with all her heart. When she flew out at him, he just avoided her. Indeed, he avoided her now at all times, whether she flew out or not. There was an invincible heathenism about Louie, which made her the natural enemy of any ‘awakened’ person.

The relation of the elders in the farm to the new development in David was a curious one. Hannah viewed it with a secret satisfaction. Christians have less time than other people — such, at least, had been her experience with Reuben — to spend in thirsting for the goods of this world. The more David went to prayer-meetings, the less likely was he to make inadmissible demands on what belonged to him. As for poor Reuben, he seemed to have got his wish; while he and Hannah had been doing their best to drive Sandy’s son to perdition through a downward course of ‘loafing,’ God had sent Mr. Dyson to put Davy back on the right road. But he was ill at ease; he watched the excitement, which all the lad’s prickly reticence could not hide from those about him, with strange and variable feelings. As a Christian, he should have rejoiced; instead, the uncle and nephew shunned each other more than ever, and shunned especially all talk of

the revival. Perhaps the whole situation — the influence of the new man, of the local talk, of the

[217]

quicken<sup>d</sup> spiritual life around him, did but aggravate the inner strain in Reuben. Perhaps his wife's satisfaction, which his sharpened conscience perceived and understood, troubled him intolerably. At any rate, his silence and disquiet grew, and his only pleasure lay, more than ever, in those solitary cogitations we have already spoken of.

The 15th of October approached — as it happened, the Friday before the Smithy prayer-meeting. On that day of the year, according to ancient and invariable custom, the Yorkshire stock — steers, heifers, young horses — which are transferred to the Derbyshire farms on the 15th of May, are driven back to their Yorkshire owners, with all the fatness of Derbyshire pastures showing on their sleek sides. Breeders and farmers meet again at Woodhead, just within the Yorkshire border. The animals are handed over to their owners, paid for at so much a head, and any preventive damage or loss occurring among them is reckoned against the farmer returning them, according to certain local rules.

As the middle of the month came nearer, Reuben began to talk despondently to Hannah of his probable gains from his Yorkshire 'boarders.' It had been a cold wet summer; he was 'feart' the owners would think he might have taken more care of some of the animals, especially of the young horses, and he mentioned certain ailments springing from damp and exposure for which he might be held responsible.

[218]

Hannah grew irritated and anxious. The receipts from this source were the largest they could reckon upon in the year. But the fields on which the Yorkshire animals pastured were at some distance from the house; this department of the farm business was always

left wholly to Reuben; and, with much grumbling and scolding, she took his word for it as to the probable lowness of the sum he should bring back.

David, meanwhile, was sometimes a good deal puzzled by Reuben's behaviour. It seemed to him that his uncle told some queer tales at home about their summer stock. And when Reuben announced his intention of going by himself to Woodhead, and leaving David at home, the boy was still more astonished.

However, he was glad enough to be spared the tramp with a set of people whose ways and talk were more and more uncongenial to him; and after his uncle's departure he lay for hours hidden from Louie among the heather, sometimes arguing out imaginary arguments with Mr. Dyson, sometimes going through passing thrills of emotion and fear. What was meant, he wanted to know, by '*the sense of pardon*'? Person after person at the prayer-meetings he had been frequenting had spoken of attaining it with ecstasy, or of being still shut out from it with anguish. But how, after all, did it differ from pardoning yourself? You had only, it seemed to him, to think very hard that you were pardoned, and the feeling came. How could anybody

[219]

tell it was more than that? David racked his brain endlessly over the same subject. Who could be sure that 'experience' was not all moonshine? But he was as yet much too touched and shaken by what he had been going through to draw any trenchant conclusions. He asked the question, however, and therein lay the great difference between him and the true stuff of Methodism.

Meanwhile, in his excitement, he, for the first time, ceased to go to the Dawsons' as usual. To begin with, they dropped out of a mind which was preoccupied with one of the first strong emotions of adolescence. Then, some one told him casually that 'Lias was more ailing than usual, and that Margaret was in much trouble. He was pricked with remorse, but just because Margaret would be sure to question him, a raw shyness came in and held him back from the effort of going.

On the Saturday evening David, having ingeniously given Louie the slip, sped across the fields to the Smithy. It was past five o'clock, and the light was fading. But the waning gold of the sunset as he jumped the wall on to the moor made the whole autumnal earth about him, and the whole side of the Scout, one splendour. Such browns and pinks among the withering ling; such gleaming greens among the bilberry leaf; such reds among the turning ferns; such fiery touches on the mountain ashes overhanging the Red Brook! The

[220]

western light struck in great shafts into the bosom of the Scout; and over its grand encompassing mass hung some hovering clouds just kindling into rosy flame. As the boy walked along he saw and thrilled to the beauty which lay spread about him. His mood was simple, and sweeter than usual. He felt a passionate need of expression, of emotion. There was a true disquiet, a genuine disgust with self at the bottom of him, and God seemed more than imaginatively near. Perhaps, on this day of his youth, of all days, he was closest to the Kingdom of Heaven.

At the Smithy he found about a dozen persons, mostly youths, just come out from the two or three mills which give employment to Clough End, and one rather older than the rest, a favourite prayer-leader in Sunday meetings. At first, everything felt strange; the boys eyed one another; even David as he stepped in among them had a momentary reaction, and was more conscious of the presence of a red-haired fellow there with whom he had fought a mighty fight on the Huddersfield expedition, than of any spiritual needs.

However, the prayer-leader knew his work. He was slow and pompous; his tone with the Almighty might easily have roused a hostile sense of humour; but Dissent in its active and emotional forms kills the sense of humour; and, besides, there was a real, ungainly power in the man. Every phrase of his opening prayer was hackneyed; every gesture uncouth. But his heart was in it, and religious conviction is the most infectious

[221]

thing in the world. He warmed, and his congregation warmed with him. The wild scene, too, did its part — the world of darkening moors spread out before them; the mountain wall behind them; the October wind sighing round the ruined walls; the lonely unaccustomed sounds of birds and water. When he ceased, boy after boy broke out into more or less incoherent praying. Soon in the dusk they could no longer see each other's faces; and then it was still easier to break through reserve.

At last David found himself speaking. What he said was at first almost inaudible, for he was kneeling between the wall and the pan which had been his childish joy, with his face and arms crushed against the stones. But when he began the boys about pricked up their ears, and David was conscious suddenly of a deepened silence. There were warm tears on his hidden cheeks; but it pleased him keenly they should listen so, and he prayed more audibly and freely. Then, when his voice dropped at last, the prayer-leader gave out the familiar hymn, 'Come, thou Traveller unknown:' —

Come, thou Traveller unknown,  
Whom still I hold, but cannot see!  
My company before is gone.  
And I am left alone with Thee;  
With Thee all night I mean to stay,  
And wrestle till the break of day.

[222]

Wilt thou not yet to me reveal  
Thy new unutterable name?  
Tell me, I still beseech thee, tell —  
To know it now resolved I am.  
Wrestling, I will not let thee go,  
Till I thy name, thy nature know.

\* \* \* \*

Tis Love! 'tis Love — thou lovest me!

I hear thy whisper in my heart;

The morning breaks, the shadows flee.

Pure universal Love thou art;

To me, to all, thy mercies move.

Thy nature and thy name is Love.

Again and again the lines rose on the autumn air; each time the hymn came to an end it was started afresh, the sound of it spreading far and wide into the purple breast of Kinder Scout. At last the painful sobbing of poor Tom Mullins almost drowned the singing. The prayer-leader, himself much moved, bent over and seized him by the arm.

'Look to Jesus, Tom. Lay hold on the Saviour. Don't think of your sins; they're done away i' th' blood o' the Lamb. Howd Him fast. Say, "I believe," and the Lord nil deliver yo.'

With a cry, the great hulking lad sprang to his feet, and clasped his arms above his head —

'I do believe — I will believe. Help me. Lord Jesus. Oh, I'm saved! I'm saved!' And he remained standing in an ecstasy, looking to the sky above the Scout, where the red sunset glow still lingered.

'Hallelujah! hallelujah! Thanks be to God!' cried the prayer-leader, and the Smithy resounded in the

[223]

growing darkness with similar shouts. David was almost choking with excitement. He would have given worlds to spring to Tom Mullins's side and proclaim the same faith. But the inmost heart of him, his real self, seemed to him at this testing moment something dead and cold. No heavenly voice spoke to *him* David Grieve. A genuine pang of religious despair seized him. He looked out over the moor through a gap in the stones. There was a dim path below; the fancy struck him that Christ, the 'Traveller

unknown,' was passing along it. He had already stretched out His hand of blessing to Tom Mullins.

'To me! to me, too!' David cried under his breath, carried away by the haunting imagination, and straining his eyes into the dusk. Had the night opened to his sight there and then in a vision of glory, he would have been no whit surprised.

Hark! — what was that sound?

A weird scream rose on the wind. The startled congregation in the Smithy scrambled to their feet. Another scream, nearer apparently than the first, and then a loud wailing, broken every few seconds by a strange slight laugh, of which the distance seemed quite indefinite. Was it close by, or beyond the Red Brook?

The prayer-leader turned white, the boys stood huddled round him in every attitude of terror. Again the scream, and the little ghostly laugh! Looking at

[224]

each other wildly, the whole congregation broke from the Smithy down the hill. But the leader stopped himself.

'It's mebbe soom one in trouble,' he said manfully, every limb trembling. 'We mun go and see, my lads.' And he rushed off in the direction whence the first sound had seemed to come — towards the Red Brook — half a dozen of the bolder spirits following. The rest stood cowering on the slope under the Smithy. David meanwhile had climbed the ruined wall, and stood with head strained forward, his eyes sweeping the moor. But every outline was sinking fast into the gulf of the night; only a few indistinct masses — a cluster of gorse-bushes, a clump of mountain ash — still showed here and there.

The leader made for one of these darker patches on the mountain-side, led on always by the recurrent screams. He reached it; it was a patch of juniper overhanging the Red Brook — when suddenly from behind it there shot up a white thing, taller than the tallest man, with nodding head and outspread arms, and such laughter — so faint, so shrill, so evil, breaking midway into a hoarse angry yell.

‘*Jenny Crum! Jenny Crum!*’ cried the whole band with one voice, and, wheeling round, they ran down the Scout, joined by the contingent from the Smithy, some of them falling headlong among the heather in their agony of flight, others ruthlessly knocking over those

[225]

in front of them who seemed to be in their way. In a few seconds, as it seemed, the whole Scout was left to itself and the night. Footsteps, voices, all were gone — save for one long peal of most human, but still elfish, mirth, which came from the Red Brook.

[226]

## CHAPTER XI

A DARK figure sprang down from the wall of the Smithy, leapt along the heather, and plunged into the bushes along the brook. A cry in another key was heard.

David emerged, dragging something behind him.

‘Yo limb, yo! How dare yo, yo little beast? Yo impident little toad!’ And in a perfect frenzy of rage he shook what he held. But Louie — for naturally it was Louie — wrenched herself away, and stood confronting him, panting, but exultant.

‘I fretened ’em! just didn’t I? Cantin humbugs! “*Jenny Crum! Jenny Crum!*”’ And, mimicking the voice of the leader, she broke again into an hysterical shout of laughter.

David, beside himself, hit out and struck her. It was a heavy blow which knocked her down, and for a moment seemed to stun her. Then she recovered her senses, and flew at him in a mad passion, weeping wildly with the smart and excitement.

He held her off, ashamed of himself, till she flung away, shrieking out —

‘Go and say its prayers, do — good little boy — poor

[227]

little babby. Ugh, yo coward! hittin gells, that's all yo're good for.'

And she ran off so fast that all sight of her was lost in a few seconds. Only two or three loud sobs seemed to come back from the dark hollow below. As for the boy he stopped a second to disentangle his feet from the mop and the tattered sheet wherewith Louie had worked her transformation scene. Then he dashed up the hill again, past the Smithy, and into a track leading out on to the high road between Castleton and Clough End. He did not care where he went. Five minutes ago he had been almost in heaven; now he was in hell. He hated Louie, he hated the boys who had cut and run, he loathed himself. No! — religion was not for such as he. No more canting — no more praying — away with it! He seemed to shake all the emotion of the last few weeks from him with scorn and haste, as he ran on, his strong young limbs battling with the wind.

Presently he emerged on the high road. To the left, a hundred yards away, were the lights of a wayside inn; a farm waggon and a pair of horses standing with drooped and patient heads were drawn up on the cobbles in front of it. David felt in his pockets. There was eighteenpence in them, the remains of half-a-crown a strange gentleman had given him in Clough End the week before for stopping a runaway horse. In he stalked.

'Two penn'orth of gin — hot!' he commanded.

[228]

The girl serving the bar brought it and stared at him curiously. The glaring paraffin lamp above his head threw the frowning brows and wild eyes, the crimson cheeks, heaving chest, and tumbled hair, into strong light and shade. 'That's a quare un!' she thought, but she found him handsome all the same, and, retreating behind the beer-taps, she eyed him surreptitiously. She was a raw country lass, not yet stript of all her natural shyness, or she would have begun to 'chaff' him.

‘Another!’ said David, pushing forward his glass. This time he looked at her. His reckless gaze travelled over her coarse and comely face, her full figure, her bare arms. He drank the glass she gave him, and yet another. She began to feel half afraid of him, and moved away. The hot stimulant ran through his veins. Suddenly he felt his head whirling from the effects of it, but that horrible clutch of despair was no longer on him. He raised himself defiantly and turned to go, staggering along the floor. He was near the entrance when an inner door opened, and the carter, who had been gossiping in a room behind with the landlord, emerged. He started with astonishment when he saw David.

‘Hullo, Davy, what are yo after?’

David turned, nearly losing his balance as he did so, and clutching at the bar for support. He found himself confronted with Jim Wigson — his old enemy — who had been to Castleton with a load of hay and some

[229]

calves, and was on his way back to Kinder again. When he saw who it was clinging to the bar counter, Jim first stared and then burst into a hoarse roar of laughter.

‘Coom here! coom here!’ he shouted to the party in the back parlour. ‘Here’s a rum start! I do declare this beats cock-fighting! — this do. Damn my eyes iv it doosn’t! Look at that yoong limb. Why they towd me down at Clough End this mornin he’d been took “serious” — took wi a prayin turn — they did. Look at un! It ull tak ’im till tomorrow mornin to know his yed from his heels. He! he! he! Yo’re a deep un, Davy — yo are. But yo’ll get a bastin when Hannah sees you — prayin or no prayin.’

And Jim went off into another guffaw, pointing his whip the while at Davy. Some persons from the parlour crowded in, enjoying the fun. David did not see them. He reached out his hand for the glass he had just emptied, and steadying himself by a mighty effort, flung it swift and straight in Jim Wigson’s face. There was a crash of fragments, a line of blood appeared on the young carter’s chin, and a chorus of wrath

and alarm rose from the group behind him. With a furious oath Jim placed a hand on the bar, vaulted it, and fell upon the lad. David defended himself blindly, but he was dazed with drink, and his blows and kicks rained aimlessly on Wigson's iron frame. In a second or two Jim had tripped him up,

[230]

and stood over him, his face ablaze with vengeance and conquest.

'Yo yoong varmint — yo cantin yoong hypocrite! I'll teach yo to show imperence to your betters. Yo bin allus badly i' want o' soombody to tak yo down a peg or two. Now I'll show yo. I'll not fight yo, but I'll flog yo — *flog yo* — d' yo hear?'

And raising his carter's whip he brought it down on the boy's back and legs. David tried desperately to rise — in vain — Jim had him by the collar; and four or five times more the heavy whip came down, avenging with each lash many a slumbering grudge in the victor's soul.

Then Jim felt his arm firmly caught. 'Now, Mister Wigson,' cried the landlord — a little man, but a wiry — 'yo'll not get me into trooble. Let th' yoong ripstitch go. Yo've gien him a taste he'll not forget in a week o' Sundays. Let him go.'

Jim, with more oaths, struggled to get free, but the landlord had quelled many rows in his time, and his wrists were worthy of his calling. Meanwhile his wife helped up the boy. David was no sooner on his feet than he made another mad rush for Wigson, and it needed the combined efforts of landlord, landlady, and servant-girl to part the two again. Then the landlord, seizing David from behind by 'the scuft of the neck,' ran him out to the door in a twinkling.

'Go 'long wi yo! An if yo coom raisin th' divil here again, see iv I don't gie yo a souse on th' yed

[231]

mysel.' And he shoved his charge out adroitly and locked the door.

David staggered across the road as though still under the impetus given by the landlord's shove.

The servant-girl took advantage of the loud crossfire of talk which immediately rose at the bar round Jim Wigson to run to a corner window and lift the blind. The boy was sitting on a heap of stones for mending the road, looking at the inn. Other passersby had come in, attracted by the row, and the girl slipped out unperceived, opened the side door, and ran across the road. It had begun to rain, and the drops splashed in her face.

David was sitting leaning forward, his eyes fixed on the lighted windows of the house opposite. The rays which came from them showed her that his nose and forehead were bleeding, and that the blood was dripping unheeded on the boy's clothes. He was utterly powerless, and trembling all over, but his look 'gave her a turn.'

'Now, luke here,' she said, bending down to him. 'Yo jes go whoam. Wigson, he'll be out direckly, an he'll do yo a hurt iv he finds yo. Coom, I'll put yo i' the way for Kinder.'

And before he could gather his will to resist, she had dragged him up with her strong countrywoman's arms and was leading him along the road to the entrance of the lane he had come by.

'Lor, yo *are* bleedin,' she said compassionately;

[232]

'he shud ha thowt as how yo wor nobbut a lad — an it wor he begun aggin fust. He's a big bully is Wigson.' And impulsively raising her apron she applied it to the blood, David quite passive all the while. The great clumsy lass nearly kissed him for pity.

'Now then,' she said at last, turning him into the lane, 'yo know your way, an I mun goo, or they'll be raisin the parish arter me. Gude neet to yo, an keep out o' Wigson's seet. Rest yursel a bit theer — agen th' wall.'

And leaving him leaning against the wall, she reluctantly departed, stopping to look back at him two or three times in spite of the rain, till the angle of the wall hid him from view.

The rain poured down and the wind whistled through the rough lane. David presently slipped down upon a rock jutting from the wall, and a fevered, intermittent sleep seized him — the result of the spirits he had been drinking. His will could oppose no resistance; he slept on hour after hour, sheltered a little by an angle of the wall, but still soaked by rain and buffeted by the wind.

When he awoke he staggered suddenly to his feet. The smart of his back and legs recalled him, after a few moments of bewilderment, to a mental torture he had scarcely yet had time to feel. He — David Grieve — had been beaten — thrashed like a dog — by Jim Wigson! The remembered fact brought with it a degradation of mind and body — a complete unstringing

[233]

of the moral fibres, which made even revenge seem an impossible output of energy. A nature of this sort, with such capacities and ambitions, carries about with it a sense of supremacy, a natural, indispensable self-conceit which acts as the sheath to the bud, and is the condition of healthy development. Break it down and you bruise and jeopardise the flower of life.

Jim Wigson! — the coarse, ignorant lout with whom he had been, more or less, at feud since his first day in Kinder, whom he had despised with all the strength of his young vanity. By to-morrow all Kinder would know, and all Kinder would laugh. ‘What! yo whopped Reuben Grieve’s nevvie, Jim? Wal, an a good tiling, too! A lick now an aorain ud do *him* noa harm — a cantankerous yoong rascot — pert an proud, like t passon’s pig, I say.’ David could hear the talk to be as though it were actually beside him. It burnt into his ear.

He groped his way through the lane and on to the moor — trembling with physical exhaustion, the morbid frenzy within him choking his breath, the storm beating

in his face. What was that black mass to his right? — the Smithy? A hard sob rose in his throat. Oh, he had been so near to an ideal world of sweetness, purity, holiness! Was it a year ago?

With great difficulty he found the crossing-place in the brook, and then the gap in the wall which led him into the farm fields. When he was still a couple

[234]

of fields off the house he heard the dogs beginning. But he heard them as though in a dream.

At last he stood at the door and fumbled for the handle. Locked! Why, what time could it be? He tried to remember what time he had left home, but failed. At last he knocked, and just as he did so he perceived through a chink of the kitchen shutter a light on the scrubbed deal table inside, and Hannah's figure beside it. At the sound of the knocker Hannah rose, put away her work with deliberation, snuffed the candle, and then moved with it to the door of the kitchen. The boy watched her with a quickly beating heart and whirling brain. She opened the door.

'Whar yo bin?' she demanded sternly. 'I'd like to know what business yo have to coom in this time o' neet, an your uncle fro whoam. Yo've bin in mischief, I'll be bound. Theer's Louie coom back wi a black eye, an jes because she woan't say nowt about it, I know as it's yo are at t' bottom o' 't. I'm reg'lar sick o' sich doins in a decent house. Whar yo bin, I say?'

And this time she held the candle up so as to see him. She had been sitting fuming by herself, and was in one of her blackest tempers. David's misdemeanour was like food to a hungry instinct.

'I went to prayer -meetin,' the lad said thickly. It seemed to him as though the words came all in the wrong order.

Hannah bent forward and gave a sudden cry.

[235]

‘Why, yo bin fightin! Yo’re all ower blood! Yo bin figlitin, and I’ll bet a thousand pund yo draw’d in Louie too. And *sperrits*! Why, yo *smell* o’ sperrits! Yo’re jes *reekin* wi ’em! Wal, upon my word!’ — and Hannah drew herself back, flinging every slow word in his face like a blow. ‘Yo feature your mither, yo do, boath on you, pretty close. I allus said it ud coom out i’ yo too. Prayer-meetin! Yo yoong hypocrite! Gang your ways! Yo may sleep i’ th’ stable; it’s good enough liggin for yo this neet.’

And before he had taken in her words she had slammed the door in his face, and locked it. He made a feeble rush for it in vain. Hannah marched back into the kitchen, listening instinctively first to him left outside, and then for any sound there might be from upstairs. In a minute or two she heard uneven steps going away; but there was no movement in the room overhead. Louie was sleeping heavily. As for Hannah, she sat down again with a fierce decision of gesture, which seemed to vibrate through the kitchen and all it held. Who could find fault with her? It would be a lesson to him. It was not a cold night, and there was straw in the stable — a deal better lying than such a boy deserved. As she thought of his ‘religious’ turn she shrugged her shoulders with a bitter scorn.

The night wore on in the high Kinder valley. The stormy wind and rain beat in great waves of sound and flood against the breast of the mountain; the Kinder

[236]

stream and the Red Brook danced under the heavy drops. The grouse lay close and silent in the sheltering heather; even the owls in the lower woods made no sound. Still, the night was not perfectly dark, for towards midnight a watery moon rose, and showed itself at intervals between the pelting showers.

In the Dawsons’ little cottage on Frimley Moor there were still lights showing when that pale moon appeared. Margaret was watching late. She and another woman sat by the fire talking under their breaths. A kettle was beside her with a long spout, which sent the steam far into the room, keeping the air of it moist and warm for the poor

bronchitic old man who lay close-curtained from the draughts on the wooden bed in the corner.

The kettle sang, the fire crackled, and the wind shook the windows and doors. But suddenly, through the other sounds, Margaret was aware of an intermittent knocking — a low, hesitating sound, as of some one outside afraid, and yet eager, to make himself heard.

She started up, and her companion — a homely neighbour, one of those persons whose goodness had, perhaps, helped to shape poor Margaret's philosophy of life — looked round with a scared expression.

'Whoiver can it be, this time o' neet?' said Margaret — and she looked at the old clock — 'why, it's close on middle-neet!'

She hesitated a moment, then she went to the door, and bent her mouth to the chink —

[237]

'Who are yo? What d' yo want?' she asked, in a distinct but low voice, so as not to disturb 'Lias.

No answer for a minute. Then her ear caught some words from outside. With an exclamation she unlocked the door and threw it open.

'Davy! Davy!' she cried, almost forgetting her patient.

The boy clung to the lintel without a word.

'Coom your ways in!' she said peremptorily, catching him by the sleeve. 'We conno ha no draughts on th' owd man.'

And she drew him into the light, and shut the door. Then as the shaded candle and firelight fell on the tall lad, wavering now to this side, now to that, as though unable to support himself, his clothes dripping on the flags, his face deadly white, save for the smears of blood upon it, the two women fell back in terror.

'Will yo gie me shelter?' said the boy, hoarsely; 'I bin lying hours i' th' wet. Aunt Hannah turned me out.'

Margaret came close to him and looked him all over.

‘What for did she turn yo out, Davy?’

‘I wor late. I’d been fightin Jim Wigson, an she smelt me o’ drink.’

And suddenly the lad sank down on a stool near, and laid his head in his hands, as though he could hold it up no longer.

Margaret’s blanched old face melted all in a minute.

[238]

‘Howd ’un up quick!’ she said to her companion, still in a whisper. ‘He hanno got a dry thread on — an luke at that cut on his yed — why, he’ll be laid up for weeks, maybe, for this. Get his cloos off, an we’ll put him on my bed then.’

And between them they dragged him up, and. Margaret began to strip off his jacket. As they held him — David surrendering himself passively — the curtain of the bed was drawn back, and ’Lias, raising himself on an elbow, looked out into the room. As he caught sight of the group of the boy and the two women, arrested in their task by the movement of the curtain, the old man’s face expressed, first a weak and agitated bewilderment, and then in an instant it cleared.

His dream wove the sight into itself, and ’Lias knew all about it. His thin long features, with the white hair hanging about them, took an indulgent amused look.

‘*Bony* — eh, Bony, is that *yo*, man? Eh, but yo’re cold an pinched, loike! A gude glass o’ English grog ud not come amiss to yo. An your coat, an your boots — what is ‘t drippin? *Snaw*? Yo make a man’s backbane freeze t’ see yo. An there’s hot wark behind yo, too. Moscow might ha warmed yo, I’m thinkin, an —’

But the weak husky voice gave way, and ’Lias fell back, still holding the curtain, though, in his emaciated hand, and straining his dim eyes on David. Margaret, with tears, ran to him, tried to quiet him and to shut

[239]

out the light from him again. But lie pushed her irritably aside.

‘No, Margaret, — doan’t intrude. What d’ yo know about it? Yo know nowt, Margaret. When did yo iver heer o’ the Moscow campaign? Let me be, woan’t yo?’

But perceiving that he would not be quieted, she turned him on his pillows, so that he could see the boy at his ease.

‘He’s bin out i’ th’ wet, ‘Lias dear, has Davy’ she said; ‘and it’s nobbut a clashy night. We mun gie him summat hot, and a place to sleep in.’

But the old man did not listen to her. He lay looking at David, his pale blue eyes weirdly visible in his haggard face, muttering to himself. He was still tramping in the snow with the French army.

Then, suddenly, for the first time, he seemed troubled. He stared up at the pale miserable boy who stood looking at him with trembling lips. His own face began to work painfully, his dream struggled with recognition.

Margaret drew David quickly away. She hurried him into the further comer of the cottage, where he was out of sight of the bed. There she quickly stripped him of his wet garments, as any mother might have done, found an old flannel shirt of ‘Lias’s for him, and, wrapping him close in a blanket, she made him lie down on her own bed, he being now much too weak to realise what was done with him. Then

[240]

she got an empty bottle, filled it from the kettle, and put it to his feet; and finally she brought a bowlful of warm water and a bit of towel, and, sitting down by him, she washed the blood and dirt away from his face and hand, and smoothed down the tangled black hair. She, too, noticed the smell of spirits, and shook her head over it; but her motherliness grew with every act of service, and when she had made him warm and comfortable, and he was dropping into the dead sleep of exhaustion, she drew her old hand tenderly across his brow.

‘He do feature yan o’ my own lads so as he lies theer,’ she said tremulously to her friend at the fire, as though explaining herself ‘When they’d coom home late fro

wark, I'd use to hull 'em up so mony a time. Ay, I'd been woonderin what had coom to th' boy. I thowt he'd been goin wrang soomhow, or he'd ha coom aw these weeks to see 'Lias an me. It's a poor sort o' family he's got. That Hannah Grieve's a hard un, I'll uphowd yo. Theer's a deal o' her fault in 't, yo may mak sure.'

Then she went to give 'Lias some brandy — he lived on little else now. He dropped asleep again, and, coming back to the hearth, she consented to lie down before it while her friend watched. Her failing frame was worn out with nursing and want of rest, and she was soon asleep.

When Davy awoke the room was full of a chill daylight. As he moved he felt himself stiff all over. The sensation brought back memory, and the boy's whole

[241]

being seemed to shrink together. He burrowed first under his coverings out of the light, then suddenly he sat up in bed, in the shadow of the little staircase — or rather ladder — which led to the upper story, and looked about him.

The good woman who had shared Margaret's watch was gone back to her own home and children. Margaret had made up the fire, tidied the room, and, at Lias's request, drawn up the blinds. She had just given him some beef-tea and brandy, sponged his face, and lifted him on his pillows. There seemed to be a revival of life in the old man, death was for the moment driven back; and Margaret hung over him in an ecstasy, the two crooning together. David could see her thin bent figure — the sharpened delicacy of the emaciated face set in the rusty black net cap which was tied under the chin, and fell in soft frills on the still brown and silky hair. He saw her weaver's hand folded round 'Lias's, and he could hear 'Lias speaking in a weak thread of a voice, but still sanely and rationally. It gave him a start to catch some of the words — he had been so long accustomed to the visionary 'Lias.

'Have yo rested, Margaret?'

'Ay, dear love, three hours an' moor. Betsy James wor here; she saw yo wanted for nowt. She's a gude creetur, ain't she, 'Lias?'

‘Ay, but noan so good as my Margaret,’ said the old man, looking at her wistfully. ‘But yo’ll wear

[242]

yorsel down, Margaret; yo’ve had no rest for neets. Yo’re allus toilin’ and moilin’, an’ I’m no worth it, Margaret.’

The tears gushed to the wife’s eyes. It was only with the nearness of death that ’Lias seemed to have found out his debt to her. To both, her lifelong service had been the natural offering of the lower to the higher; she had not been used to gratitude, and she could not bear it.

‘Dear heart! dear love!’ David heard her say; and then there came to his half-reluctant ear caresses such as a mother gives her child. He laid his head on his knees, trying to shut them out. He wished with a passionate and bitter regret that he had not been so many weeks without coming near these two people; and now ’Lias was going fast, and after to-day he would see them both no more — for ever?

Margaret heard him moving, and nodded back to him over her shoulder.

‘Yo’ve slept well, Davy, — better nor I thowt yo would. Your cloos are by yo — atwixt yo an t’ stairs.’

And there he found them, dry and brushed. He dressed hastily and came forward to the fire. ’Lias recognised him feebly, Margaret watching anxiously to see whether his fancies would take him again. In this tension of death and parting his visions had become almost more than she could bear. But ’Lias lay quiet.

‘Davy wor caught i’ th’ rain, and I gave him a bed,’

[243]

she explained again, and the old man nodded without a word.

Then as she prepared him a bowl of oatmeal she stood by the fire giving the boy motherly advice. He must go back home, of course, and never mind Hannah; there

would come a time when he would get his chance like other people; and he mustn't drink, for, 'i' th' first place, drink wor a sad waste o' good wits,' and David's were 'better 'n most;' and in the second, 'it wor a sin agen the Lord.'

David sat with his head drooped in his hand apparently listening. In reality, her gentle babble passed over him almost unheeded. He was aching in mind and body; his strong youth, indeed, had but just saved him from complete physical collapse; for he had lain an indefinite time on the soaking moor, till misery and despair had driven him to Margaret's door. But his moral equilibrium was beginning to return, in virtue of a certain resolution, the one thing which now stood between him and the black gulf of the night. He ate his porridge and then he got up.

'I mun goo, Margaret.'

He would fain have thanked her, but the words choked in his throat.

'Ay, soa yo mun, Davy,' said the little body briskly. 'If theer's an onpleasant thing to do it's best doon quickly — yo mun go back and do your duty. Coom and see us when yo're passin again. An say good-bye to 'Lias. He's that wick this mornin — ain't yo, 'Lias?'

[244]

And with a tender cheerfulness she ran across to 'Lias and told him Davy was going.

'Good-bye, Davy, my lad, good-bye,' murmured the old man, as he felt the boy's strong fingers touching his. 'Have yo been readin owt, Davy, since we saw yo? It's a long time, Davy.'

'No, nowt of ony account,' said David, looking away.

'Ay, but yo mun keep it up. Coom when yo like; I've not mony books, but yo know yo can have 'em aw. I want noan o' them now, do I, Marg'ret? But I want for nowt — nowt. Dyin 's long, but it's varra — varra peaceful. Margaret!'

And withdrawing his hand from Davy, 'Lias laid it in his wife's with a long, long sigh. David left them so. He stole out unperceived by either of them.

When he got outside he stood for a moment under the sheltering sycamores and laid his cheek against the door. The action contained all he could not say.

Then he sped along towards the farm. The sun was rising through the autumn mists, striking on the gold of the chestnuts, the red of the cherry trees. There were spaces of intense blue among the rolling clouds, and between the storm past and the storm to come the whole moorland world was lavishly, garishly bright.

He paused at the top of the pasture-fields to look at the farm. Smoke was already rising from the chimney. Then Aunt Hannah was up, and he must mind himself.

[245]

He crept on under walls, till he got to the back of the farmyard. Then he slipped in, ran into the stable, and got an old coat of his left there the day before. There was a copy of a Methodist paper lying near it. He took it up and tore it across with passion. But his rage was not so much with the paper. It was his own worthless, unstable, miserable self he would have rent if he could. The wreck of ideal hopes, the defacement of that fair image of itself which every healthy youth bears about with it, could not have been more pitifully expressed.

Then he looked round to see if there was anything else that he could honestly take. Yes — an ash stick he had cut himself a week or two ago. Nothing else — and there was Tibby moving and beginning to bark in the cowhouse.

He ran across the road, and from a safe shelter in the fields on the farther side he again looked back to the farm. There was Louie's room, the blind still down. He thought of his blow of the night before — of his promises to her. Aye, she would fret over his going — he knew that — in her own wild way. She would think he had been a beast to her. So he had — so he had! There surged up in his mind inarticulate phrases of remorse, of self-excuse, as though he were talking to her.

Some day he would come back and claim her. But when! His buoyant self-dependence was all gone. It had nothing to do with his present departure. That

[246]

came simply from the fact that it was impossible for him to go on living in Kinder any longer — he did not stop to analyse the whys and wherefores.

But suddenly a nervous horror of seeing anyone he knew, now that the morning was advancing, startled him from his hiding-place. He ran up towards the Scout again, so as to make a long circuit round the Wigsons' farm. As he distinguished the walls of it a shiver of passion ran through the young body. Then he struck off straight across the moors towards Glossop.

One moment he stood on the top of Mardale Moor. On one side of him was the Kinder valley, Needham Farm still showing among its trees; the white cataract of the Downfall cleaving the dark wall of the Scout, and calling to the runaway in that voice of storm he knew so well; the Mermaid's Pool gleaming like an eye in the moorland. On the other side were hollow after hollow, town beyond town, each with its cap of morning smoke. There was New Mills, there was Stockport, there in the far distance was Manchester.

The boy stood a moment poised between the two worlds, his ash-stick in his hand, the old coat wound round his arm. Then at a bound he cleared a low stone wall beside him and ran down the Glossop road.

Twelve hours later Reuben Grieve climbed the long hill to the farm. His wrinkled face was happier than it had been for months, and his thoughts were so pleasantly occupied that he entirely failed to perceive,

[247]

for instance, the behaviour of an acquaintance, who stopped and started as he met him at the entrance of the Kinder lane, made as though he would have spoken, and, thinking better of it, walked on. Reuben — the mendacious Reuben — had done very well with his summer stock — very well indeed. And part of his earnings was now safely housed in the hands of an old chapel friend, to whom he had confided them under pledge of

secrecy. But he took a curious, excited pleasure in the thought of the ‘poor mouth’ he was going to make to Hannah. He was growing reckless in his passion for restitution — always provided, however, that he was not called upon to brave his wife openly. A few more such irregular savings, and, if an opening turned up for David, he could pay the money and pack off the lad before Hannah could look round. He could never do it under her opposition, but he thought he could do it and take the consequences — he *thought* he could.

He opened his own gate. There on the house doorstep stood Hannah, whiter and grimmer than ever.

‘Reuben Grieve,’ she said quickly, ‘your nevv’y’s run away. An if yo doan’t coom and keep your good-for-nothin niece in her place, and make udder foak keep a civil tongue i’ their head to your wife, I’ll leave your house this neet, as sure as I wor born a Martin!’

Reuben stumbled into the house. There was a wild rush downstairs, and Louie fell upon him, David’s blow showing ghastly plain in her white quivering face.

[248]

‘Whar’s Davy?’ she said. ‘Yo’ve got him! — he’s hid soomwhere — yo know whar he is! I’ll not stay here if yo conno find him! It wor *her* fault’ — and she threw out a shaking hand towards her aunt — ‘she druv him out last neet — an Dawsons took him in — an iverybody’s cryin shame on her! An if yo doan’t mak her find him — she knows where he is — I’ll not stay in this hole! — I’ll kill her! — I’ll burn th’ house! — I’ll — —’

The child stopped — panting, choked — beside herself.

Hannah made a threatening step, but at her gesture Reuben sprang up, and seizing her by both wrists he looked at her from a height, as a judge looks. Never had those dull eyes met her so before.

‘Woman!’ he cried fiercely. ‘Woman! what ha yo doon wi Sandy’s son?’

[249]

BOOK II

*YOUTH*

[251]

CHAPTER I

A TALL youth carrying a parcel of books under his arm was hurrying along Market Place, Manchester. Beside him were covered flower stalls bordering the pavement, in front of him the domed mass of the Manchester Exchange, and on all sides he had to push his way through a crowd of talking, chaffering, hurrying humanity. Presently he stopped at the door of a restaurant bearing the idyllic and altogether remarkable name — there it was in gilt letters over the door — of the ‘Fruit and Flowers Parlour.’ On the side post of the door a bill of fare was posted, which the young man looked up and down with careful eyes. It contained a strange medley of items in all tongues —

Marrow pie

*Haricots à la Lune de Miel*

*Vol-au-Vent à la bonne Santé*

Tomato fritters

Cheese ’Ticements

*Salad saladorum*

And at the bottom of the *menu* was printed in bold red characters, ‘No meat, no disease. *Ergo* no meat,

[252]

no sin. Fellow-citizens, leave your carnal foods, and try a more excellent way. I. E. Push the door and walk in. The Fruit and Flowers Parlour invites everybody and overcharges nobody.’

The youth did not trouble, however, to read the notice. He knew it and the ‘Parlour’ behind it by heart. But he moved away, pondering the *menu* with a smile.

In his amused abstraction — at the root of which lay the appetite of eighteen — he suddenly ran into a passer-by, who stumbled against a shop window with an exclamation of pain. The youth's attention was attracted and he stopped awkwardly.

'People of your height, young man, should look before them,' said the victim, rubbing what seemed to be a deformed leg, while his lips paled a little.

'Mr. Ancrum,' cried the other, amazed.

'Davy!'

The two looked at each other. Then Mr. Ancrum gripped the lad's arm.

'Help me along, Davy. It's only a bruise. It'll go off. Where are you going?'

'Up Piccadilly way with a parcel,' said Davy, looking askance at his companion's nether man. 'Did I knock your bad leg, sir?'

'Oh no, nothing — never mind. Well now, Davy, this is queer — decidedly queer. Four years! — and we run against each other in Market Street at last. Tell me the truth, Davy — have you long ago given me up as

[253]

a man who could make promises to a lad in difficulties and forget 'em as soon as he was out of sight? Say it out, my boy.'

David flushed and looked down at his companion with some embarrassment. Their old relation of minister and pupil had left a deep mark behind it. Moreover, in the presence of that face of Mr. Ancrum's, a long, thin, slightly twisted face, with the stamp somehow of a tragic sincerity on the eyes and mouth, it was difficult to think as slightly of his old friend as he had done for a good while past, apparently with excellent reason.

'I supposed there was something the matter,' he blurted out at last.

'Well, never mind, Davy,' said the other, smiling sadly. 'We can't talk here in this din. But now I've got you, I keep you. Where are you?'

'I'm in Half Street, sir — Purcell's, the bookseller.'

‘Don’t know him. I never go into a shop. I have no money. Are you apprentice there?’

‘Well, there was no binding. I’m assistant. I do a lot of business one way and another, buying and selling both.’

‘How long have you been in Manchester?’

‘Four years, sir.’

The minister looked amazed.

‘And I have been here, off and on, for the last three. How have we missed each other all that time? I made inquiries at Clough End, when — ah, well, no matter;

[254]

but it was too late. You had decamped, no one could tell me anything.’

David walked on beside his companion, silent and awkward. The explanation seemed a lame one. Mr. Ancrum had left Clough End in May, promising to look out for a place for the lad at once, and to let him know. Six whole months elapsed between that promise and David’s own departure. Yes, it was lame; but it was so long ago, and so many things had happened since, that it did not signify. Only he did not somehow feel much effusion in meeting his old friend and playfellow again.

‘Getting on, Davy?’ said Ancrum presently, looking the lad up and down.

David made a movement of the shoulders which the minister noticed. It was both more free and more graceful than ordinary English gesture. It reawakened in Ancrum at once that impression of something alien and unusual which both David and his sister had often produced in him while they were still children.

‘I don’t know,’ said the boy slowly ; and then, after a hesitation or two, fell silent.

‘Well, look here,’ said Ancrum, stopping short; ‘this won’t do for talk, as I said before; but I must know all about you, and I must tell you what I can about myself. I lodge in Mortimer Road, you know, up Fallowfield way. You can get there by tram in twenty minutes; when will you come and see me? To-night?’

The lad thought a moment.

[255]

‘Would Wednesday night do, sir? I — I believe I’m going to the music to-night.’

‘What, to the “Elijah,” in the Free Trade Hall? Appoint me a place to meet — we’ll go together — and you shall come home to supper with me afterwards.’

David flushed and looked straight before him. ‘I promised to take two young ladies,’ he said, after a moment, abruptly.

‘Oh!’ said Mr. Ancrum, laughing. ‘I apologise. Well, Wednesday night, then, — Don’t you forget, Davy — half-past seven? Done. 14, Mortimer Road. Good- bye.’

And the minister turned and retraced his steps towards Market Place. He walked slowly, like one much preoccupied, and might have run into fresh risks but for the instinctive perception of most passers-by that he was not a person to be hustled. Suddenly he laughed out — thinking of David and his ‘young ladies,’ and comparing the lad’s admission with his former attitude towards ‘gells.’ Well, time had but wrought its natural work. What a brilliant noticeable creature altogether — how unlike the ordinary run of north-country lads! But that he had been from the beginning — the strain of some nimbler blood had always shown itself.

Meanwhile, David made his way up Piccadilly — did some humourist divert himself, in days gone by, with dropping a shower of London names on Manchester streets? — and deposited his parcel. Then the

[256]

great clock of the Exchange struck twelve, and the Cathedral followed close upon it, the sounds swaying and vibrating above the crowds hurrying through Market Street. It was a damp October day. Above, the sky was hidden by a dark canopy of cloud and smoke; the Cathedral on its hill rose iron-black above the black streets and river; black mud

encrusted all the streets, and bespattered those that walked in them. Nothing more dreary than the smoke-grimed buildings on either hand, than the hideous railway station across the bridge, or the mud-sprinkled hoardings covered with flaring advertisements, which led up to the bridge, could be well imagined. Manchester was at its darkest and grimmest.

But as David Grieve walked back along Market Street his heart danced within him. Neither mud nor darkness, neither the squalor of the streets, nor the penetrating damp of the air, affected him at all. The crowd, the rush of life about him, the gas in the shops, the wares on which it shone, the endless faces passing him, the sense of hurry, of business, of quick living — he saw and felt nothing else; and to these his youth was all atune.

Arrived in Market Place again he made his way with alacrity to the ‘Parlour.’ For it was dinner time; he had a free half-hour, and nine times out of ten he spent it at the ‘Parlour.’

He walked in, put his hat on its accustomed peg, took his seat at a table near the door, and looked round

[257]

for some one. The low widespreading room was well filled, mostly with clerks and shopmen; the gas was lit because of the darkness outside, and showed off the gay panels on the walls filled with fruit and flower subjects, for which Adrian O’Connor Lomax, commonly called ‘Daddy,’ the owner of the restaurant, had given a commission to some students at the Mechanics’ Institute, and whereof he was inordinately proud. At the end of the room near the counter was a table occupied by about half a dozen young men, all laughing and talking noisily, and beside them — shouting, gesticulating, making dashes, now for one, now for another — was a figure, which David at once set himself to watch, his chin balanced on his hand, his eyes dancing. It was the thin tall figure of an oldish man in a long frock-coat, which opened in front over a gaily flowered silk waistcoat. On the bald crown of his head he wore a black skull-cap, below which certain grotesque

and scanty tails of fair hair, carefully brushed, fell to his shoulders. His face was long and sharply pointed, and the surface of it bronzed and wrinkled by long exposure, out of all likeness to human skin. The eyes were weirdly prominent and blue; the gestures had the deliberate extravagance of an actor; and the whole man recalled a wizard of pantomime.

David had hardly time to amuse himself with the ‘chaffing’ of Daddy, which was going on, and which went on habitually at the Parlour from morning till night, when Daddy perceived a new-comer.

[258]

He turned round sharp upon his heels, surveyed the room with the frown of a general.

‘Ah!’ he said with a theatrical air, as he made out the lad at the further table. ‘Gentlemen, I let you off for the present,’ and waving his hand to them with an indulgent self-importance, which provoked a roar of laughter, he turned and walked down the restaurant, with a quick swaying gait, to where David sat.

David made room for him in a smiling silence. Lomax sat down, and the two looked at each other.

‘Davy,’ said Daddy severely, ‘why weren’t you here yesterday?’

‘When did you begin opening on Sundays, Daddy?’ said the youth, attacking a portion of marrow pie, which had just been laid before him, his gay curious eyes still wandering over Daddy’s costume, which was to-day completed by a large dahlia in the buttonhole, as grotesque as the rest.

‘Ah bedad, but I’m losing my memory entirely; — and you know it, you varmint. Well then, it was Saturday you weren’t here.’

‘You’re about right there. I was let off early, and got a walk out Ramsbottom way with a fellow. I hadn’t stretched my legs for two months, and — I’ll confess to you, Daddy — that when we got down from the moor, I was — overtaken — as the pious people say — by a mutton chop.’

The lad looked up at him laughing. Daddy surveyed him with chagrin.

[259]

‘I knew you were a worthless lukewarm sort of a creature. Flesh-eating ’s as bad as drink for them that have got it in ’em. It ’ll come out. Well, go your ways! *You’ll* never be Prime Minister.’

‘Don’t distress yourself, Daddy. As long as marrow pies are good, I shall eat ’em — you may count on that. What’s that cheese affair down there?’ and he pointed towards the last item but one in the bill of fare. Instead of answering, the old man turned on his seat, and called to one of the waitresses near. In a second David had a ‘Cheese ’Ticement’ before him, at which he peered curiously. Daddy watched him, not without some signs of nervousness.

‘Daddy,’ said David calmly looking up, ‘when I last saw this article it was called “Welsh rabbit.” ’

‘Davy, you’ve no soul for fine distinctions,’ said the other hastily. ‘Change the subject. How have my dear brother-in-law and you been hitting it off lately?’

David went on with his ‘ ‘Ticement,’ the corners of his mouth twitching, for a minute or so, then he raised his head and slowly shook it, looking Daddy in the face.

‘We shall bear up when we say good-bye. Daddy, and I don’t think that crisis is far off. It would have come long ago, only I do happen to know a provoking deal more about books than any assistant he ever had before. Last week I picked him up a copy of “Bells and Pomegranates” for one and nine, and he sold it next day for two pound sixteen. There’s business for you, Daddy. That put off our breach at least a fortnight,

[260]

but unless I discover a first folio of Shakespeare for sixpence between now and then, I don’t see what’s to postpone the agony after that — and if I did I should probably

speculate in it myself. No, Daddy, it's coming to the point, as the tiger said when he reached the last joint of the cow's tail. And it's your fault.'

'My fault, Davy,' said Lomax, half tremulous, half delighted, drawing a chair close up to the table that he might lose nothing of the youth's confidences. 'What d'ye mean by that, ye spalpeen?'

'Well, wasn't it you took me to the Hall of Science, Daddy, and couldn't keep a quiet tongue in your head about it afterwards? Wasn't it you lent me the "Secularist," which got me into the worst rumpus of the season? Oh, Daddy, you're a bad un!'

And the handsome lad leant back in his chair, stretching his long legs and studying Daddy with twinkling eyes. As for Lomax, he received the onslaught with a curious mixture of expressions, in which a certain malicious pleasure, crossed by an uneasy sense of responsibility, was the most prominent. He sat drumming on the table, his straggling beard falling forward on to his chest, his mouth pursing itself up. At last he threw back his head with energy.

'I'll not excuse myself, Davy; you're well out of it. You'll be a great man yet — always provided you can manage yourself in the matter of flesh meat. It was to come one way or the other — you couldn't put up much longer with such a puke-stocking as my precious

[261]

brother-in-law. (That's one of the great points of Shakespeare, Davy, my lad — perhaps you haven't noticed it — you get such a ruck of bad names out of him for the asking! Puke-stocking is good — real good. If it wasn't made for a sanctimonious hypocrite of a Baptist like Purcell it ought to have been.) And "Spanish- pouch" too! Oh, I love "Spanish-pouch"! When I've called a man "Spanish-pouch," I'm the better for it, Davy — the bile's relieved.'

'Thank you, Daddy; I'll remember the receipt. I say, were you ever in Purcell's shop?'

‘Purcell’s shop? Why, of course I was, you varmint! Wasn’t it there I met my Isabella, his sister? Ah, the poor thing! He led her a life; and when I was his assistant I took sides with her — that was the beginning of it all. At first we hadn’t got on so badly — I had a pious fit on myself in those days — but one day at tea, I had been making free — taking Isabella’s part. There had been a neighbour there, and the laugh had been against him. Well, after tea we marched back to the shop, and says he to me, as black as thunder, “I’m quite willing, Lomax, to be your Christian brother in here: when we’re in society I’d have you remember it’s different. You should know your place.” “Oh, should I?” says I. (Isabella had been squeezing my hand under the table and I didn’t care what I said.)” Well, you’d better find some one as will, and be d — d to your Christian brotherhood.” And I took my cap up and marched out, leaving him struck a pillar of salt

[262]

with surprise, and that mad! — for we were in the middle of issuing the New Year’s catalogue, and he’d left most of it to me. And three weeks after —’

Daddy rose quivering with excitement, put his thumbs into his waistcoat pocket, and bent over the back of his chair towards David. As he stood there, on tip-toe, the flaps of the long coat falling back from him like wings, his skull-cap slightly awry, two red spots on either wrinkled cheek, and every feature of the sharp brown face alive with the joy of his long-past vengeance, he was like some strange perching bird.

‘ — Three weeks after, Davy, I married my Isabella under his puritanical nose, at the chapel across the way ; and the bit of spite in it — bedad! — it was like mustard to beef. (Pish! what am I about!) And I set up shop almost next door to the chapel, and took the trade out of his mouth, and enjoyed myself finely for six months. At the end of that time he gave out that the neighbourhood was too “low” for him, and he moved up town. And though I’ve been half over the world since, I’ve never ceased to keep an eye on him. I’ve had a finger in more pies of his than he thinks for!’

And Daddy drew himself up, pressing his hands against his sides, his long frame swelling out, as it seemed, with sudden passion. David watched him with a look half sympathetic, half satirical.

‘I don’t see that he did you much harm. Daddy.’

‘Harm!’ said the little man, irascibly. ‘Harm!’

[263]

I must say you’re uncommon slow at gripping a situation, Davy. I’d my wife’s score to settle, too, I tell you, as well as my own. He’d sat on his poor easy-going sister till she hadn’t a feature left. I knew he had. He’s made up of all the mean vices — and at the same time, if you were to hear him at a prayer meeting, you’d think that since Enoch went up to heaven the wrong way, the world didn’t happen to have been blessed with another saint to match Tom Purcell.’ And stirred by his own eloquence, Daddy looked down frowning on the youth before him.

‘What made you give up the book-trade, Daddy?’ asked David, with a smile.

It was like the pricking of a bladder. Daddy collapsed in a moment. Sitting down again, he began to arrange his coat elaborately over his knees, as though to gain time.

‘David, you’re an inquisitive varmint,’ he said at last, looking up askance at his companion. ‘Some one’s been telling you tales, by the look of you. Look here — if Tom Purcell’s a blathering hypocrite, that is not the same thing precisely as saying that Adrian O’Connor Lomax is a perfect specimen of the domestic virtues. Never you mind, my boy, what made me give up book-selling. I’ve chucked so many things overboard since, that it’s hardly worth inquiring. Try any trade you like and Daddy ’ll be able to give you some advice in it — that’s the only thing that concerns you. Well now, tell me —’ and he turned round and put his elbows on

[264]

the table, leaning over to David — ‘When are you coming away, and what are your prospects?’

‘I told you about a fortnight would see it out. Daddy. And there’s a little shop in — But it’s no good, Daddy. You can’t keep secrets.’

The old man turned purple, drew himself up, and looked fiercely at David from behind his spectacles. But in a second his mood changed and he stretched his hand slowly out across the table.

‘On the honour of a Lomax,’ he said solemnly.

There was a real dignity about the absurd action which melted David. He shook the hand and repented him. Leaning over he whispered some information in Daddy’s ear. Daddy beamed. And in the midst of the superfluity of nods and winks that followed David called for his bill.

The action recalled Daddy to his own affairs, and he looked on complacently while David paid.

‘’Pon my word, Davy, I can hardly yet believe in my own genius. Where else, my boy, in this cotton-spinning hole, would you find a dinner like that for sixpence? Am I a benefactor to the species, sir, or am I not?’

‘Looks like it. Daddy, by the help of Miss Dora.’

‘Aye, aye,’ said the old man testily, — ‘I’ll not deny that Dora’s useful to the business. But the *inspiration*, Davy, ’s all mine. You want genius, my boy, to make a tomfool of yourself like this,’ and he looked himself proudly up and down. ‘Twenty

[265]

customers a week come here for nothing in the world but to see what new rigs Daddy may be up to. The invention — the happy ideas, man, I throw into one day of this place would stock twenty ordinary businesses.’

‘All the same, Daddy, I’ve tasted Welsh rabbit before,’ said David drily, putting on his hat.

‘I scorn your remark, sir. It argues a poorly furnished mind. Show me anything new in this used-up world, eh? but for the name and the dishing up — Well, good-bye, Davy, and good luck to you!’

David made his way across Hanging Ditch to a little row of houses bearing the baldly appropriate name of Half Street. It ran along the eastern side of the Cathedral close. First came the houses, small, irregular, with old beams and projections here and there, then a paved footway, then the railings round the Close. In full view of the windows of the street rose the sixteenth-century church which plays as best it can the part of Cathedral to Manchester. Round it stretched a black and desolate space paved with tombstones. Not a blade of grass broke the melancholy of those begrimed and time-worn slabs. The rain lay among them in pools, squalid buildings overlooked them, and the church, with its manifest inadequacy to a fine site and a great city, did but little towards overcoming the mean and harsh impression made — on such a day especially — by its surroundings.

[266]

David opened the door of a shop about halfway up the row. A bell rang sharply, and as he shut the outer door behind him, another at the back of the shop opened hastily, and a young girl came in.

‘Mr. Grieve, father’s gone out to Eccles to see some books a gentleman wants him to buy. If Mr. Stephens comes, you’re to tell him father’s found him two or three more out of the list he sent. You know where all his books are put together, if he wants to see them, father says.’

‘Yes, thank you, Miss Purcell, I do. No other message?’

‘No.’ The speaker lingered. ‘What time do we start for the music to-night? But you’ll be down to tea?’

‘Certainly, if you and Miss Dora don’t want it to yourselves.’ The speaker smiled. He was leaning on the counter, while the girl stood behind it.

‘Oh dear, no!’ said Miss Purcell with a half-pettish gesture. ‘I don’t know what to talk to Dora about now. She thinks of nothing but St. Damian’s and her work. It’s worse than father. And, of course, I know she hasn’t much opinion of *me*. Indeed, she’s always telling me so — well, not exactly — but she lets me guess fast enough.’

The speaker put up two small hands to straighten some of the elaborate curls and twists with which her pretty head was crowned. There was a little consciousness in the action. The thought of her cousin had

[267]

evidently brought with it the thought of some of those things of which the stern Dora disapproved.

David looked at the brown hair and the slim fingers as he was meant to look at them. Yet in his smiling good humour there was not a trace of bashfulness or diffidence. He was perfectly at his ease, with something of a proud self-reliant consciousness in every movement; nothing in his manner could have reminded a spectator of the traditional apprentice making timid love to his master’s daughter.

‘I’ve seen you stand up to her though,’ he said laughing. ‘It’s like all pious people. Doesn’t it strike you as odd that they should never be content with being pious for themselves?’

He looked at her with bright sarcastic eyes.

‘Oh, I know what you mean!’ she said with an instant change of tone; ‘I didn’t mean anything of the sort. I think it’s shocking of you to go to that place on Sundays — so there, Mr. Grieve.’

She threw herself back defiantly against the books which walled the shop, her arms folded before her. The attitude showed the long throat, the rounded bust, and the slender waist compressed with some evident rigour into a close-fitting brown dress. That Miss Purcell thought a great deal of the fashion of her hair, the style of her bodices, and the size of her waist was clear; that she was conscious of thinking about

them to good purpose was also plain. But on the whole the impression of artificiality, of something over-studied

[268]

and over-done which the first sight of her generally awakened, was soon, as a rule, lost in another more attractive — in one of light, tripping youth, perfectly satisfied with itself and with the world.

‘I don’t think you know much about the place,’ he said quietly, still smiling.

She flushed, her foolish little sense of natural superiority to ‘the assistant’ outraged again, as it had been outraged already a hundred times since she and David Grieve had met.

‘I know quite as much as anybody need know — any respectable person —’ she maintained angrily. ‘It’s a low, disgraceful place — and they talk wicked nonsense. Everyone says so. It doesn’t matter a bit where Uncle Lomax goes — he’s mad — but it *is* a shame he should lead other people astray.’

She was much pleased with her own harangue, and stood there frowning on him, her sharp little chin in the air, one foot beating the ground.

‘Well, yes, really,’ said David in a reflective tone; ‘one would think Miss Dora had her hands full at home, without —’

He looked up, significantly, smiling. Lucy Purcell was enraged with him — with his hypocritical sympathy as to her uncle’s misdoings — his avoidance of his own Crime.

‘It’s not uncle at all, it’s you!’ she cried, with more logic than appeared. ‘I tell you, Mr. Grieve, father won’t stand it.’

[269]

The young man drew himself up from the counter.

‘No,’ he said with great equanimity, ‘I suppose not.’

And taking up a parcel of books from the counter lie turned away. Lucy, flurried and pouting, called after him.

‘Mr. Grieve!’

‘Yes.’

‘I — I didn’t mean it. I *hope* you won’t go. I know father’s hard. He’s hard enough with me.’

And she raised her hands to her flushed face. David was terribly afraid she was going to cry. Several times since the orphan girl of seventeen had arrived from school three months before to take her place in her father’s house, had she been on the point of confiding her domestic woes to David Grieve. But though under the terms of his agreement with her father, which included one meal in the back parlour, the assistant and she were often thrown together, he had till now instinctively held her aloof. His extraordinary good looks and masterful energetic ways had made an impression on her schoolgirl mind from the beginning. But for him she had no magnetism whatever. The little self-conceited creature knew it, or partially knew it, and smarted under it.

Now, he was just beginning an awkward sentence, when there was a sound at the outer door. With another look at him, half shy, half appealing, Lucy fled. Conscious of a distinct feeling of relief, David went to attend to the customer.

[270]

## CHAPTER II

THE customer was soon content and went out again into the rain. David mounted a winding iron stair which connected the downstairs shop with an upper room in which a large proportion of the books were stored. It was a long, low, rambling place made by throwing together all the little bits of rooms on the first floor of the old house. One corner of it had a special attraction for David. It was the corner where, ranged partly on the floor, partly on the shelves which ran under the windows, lay the collection of books that Purcell had been making for his customer, Mr. Stephens.

Out of that collection Purcell's assistant had extracted a very varied entertainment. In the first place it had amused him to watch the laborious pains and anxiety with which his pious employer had gathered together the very sceptical works of which Mr. Stephens was in want, showing a knowledge of contents, and editions, and out-of-the-way profanities, under the stimulus of a paying customer, which drew many a sudden laugh from David when he was left to think of it in private.

[271]

In the next place the books themselves had been a perpetual feast to him for weeks, enjoyed all the more keenly because of the secrecy in which it had to be devoured. The little gathering represented with fair completeness the chief books of the French 'philosophers,' both in the original French, and in those English translations of which so plentiful a crop made its appearance during the fifty years before and after 1800. There, for instance, lay the seventy volumes of Voltaire. Close by was an imperfect copy of the Encyclopaedia, which Mr. Stephens was getting cheap; on the other side a motley gathering of Diderot and Rousseau; while Holbach's 'System of Nature,' and Helvetius 'On the Mind,' held their rightful place among the rest.

Through these books, then, which had now been on the premises for some time — Mr. Stephens being a person of uncertain domicile, and unable as yet to find them a home — David had been freely ranging. Whenever Purcell was out of the way and customers were slack, he invariably found his way to this spot in the upper room. There, with his elbows on the top of the bookcase which ran under the window, and a book in front of him — or generally two, the original French and a translation — he had read Voltaire's tales, a great deal of the Encyclopaedia, a certain amount of Diderot, for whom he cherished a passionate admiration, and a much smaller smattering of Rousseau. At the present moment he was grappling with the 'Dictionnaire

[272]

Philosophique' and the 'Système de la Nature,' fortified in both cases by English versions.

The gloom of the afternoon deepened, and the increasing rain had thinned the streets so much that during a couple of hours David had but three summonses from below to attend to. For the rest of the time he was buried in the second volume of the 'Dictionnaire Philosophique,' now skipping freely, now chewing and digesting, his eyes fixed vacantly on the darkening church outside. Above all, the article on Contradictions had absorbed and delighted him. There are few tones in themselves so fascinating to the nascent literary sense as this mock humility tone of Voltaire's. And in David's case all that passionate sense of a broken bubble and a scattered dream, which had haunted him so long after he left Kinder, had entered into and helped forward his infatuation with his new masters. They brought him an indescribable sense of freedom — omniscience almost.

For instance:—

'We must carefully distinguish in all writings, and especially in the sacred books, between real and apparent contradictions. Venturous critics have supposed a contradiction existed in that passage of Scripture which narrates how Moses changed all the waters of Egypt into blood, and how immediately afterwards the magicians of Pharaoh did the same thing, the book of Exodus allowing no interval at all between the miracle of Moses and the magical operation of the enchanters. Certainly it seems at first sight impossible that these magicians should change into

[273]

blood what was already blood; but this difficulty may be avoided by supposing that Moses had allowed the waters to reassume their proper nature, in order to give time to Pharaoh to recover himself. This supposition is all the more plausible, seeing that the text, if it does not favour it expressly, is not opposed to it.

'The same sceptics ask how when all the horses had been killed by the hail in the sixth plague Pharaoh could pursue the Jews with cavalry. But this contradiction is

not even apparent, because the hail, which killed all the horses in the fields, could not fall upon those which were in the stables.’

And so on through a long series of paragraphs, leading at last to matters specially dear to the wit of Voltaire, the contradictions between St. Luke and St. Matthew — in the story of the census of Quirinus, of the Magi, of the massacre of the Innocents, and what not — and culminating in this innocent conclusion:—

‘After all it is enough that God should have deigned to reveal to us the principal mysteries of the faith, and that He should have instituted a Church in the course of time to explain them. All these contradictions, so often and so bitterly brought up against the Gospels, are amply noticed by the wisest commentators; far from harming each other, one explains another; they lend each other a mutual support, both in the concordance and in the harmony of the four Gospels.’

David threw back his head with a laugh which came from the very depths of him. Then, suddenly, he was conscious of the church standing sombrely without,

[274]

spectator as it seemed of his thoughts and of his mirth. Instantly his youth met the challenge by a rise of passionate scorn! What! a hundred years since Voltaire, and mankind still went on believing in all these follies and fables, in the ten plagues, in Balaam’s ass, in the walls of Jericho, in miraculous births, and Magi, and prophetic stars! — in everything that the mockery of the eighteenth century had slain a thousand times over. Ah, well! — Voltaire knew as well as anybody that superstition is perennial, insatiable — a disease and weakness of the human mind which seems to be inherent and ineradicable. And there rose in the boy’s memory lines he had opened upon that morning in a small Elizabethan folio he had been cataloguing with much pains as a rarity — lines which had stuck in his mind —

Vast superstition! glorious style of weakness,  
Sprung from the deep disquiet of man’s passion  
To dissolution and despair of Nature! —

He flung them out at the dark mass of building opposite, as though he were his namesake flinging at Goliath. Only a few months before that great church had changed masters — had passed from the hands of an aristocratic and inaccessible bishop of the old school into those of a man rich in all modern ideas and capacities, full of energy and enthusiasm, a scholar and administrator both. And lie believed all those absurdities, David wanted to know? Impossible! No honest man could, thought the lad defiantly, with the rising colour of

[275]

crude and vehement feeling, when his attention had been once challenged, and he had developed mind enough to know what the challenge meant.

Except, perhaps, Uncle Reuben and Dora Lomax, and people like that. He stood thinking and staring out of window, one idea leading to another. The thought of Reuben brought with it a certain softening of mood — the softening of memory and old association. Yes, he would like to see Uncle Reuben again — explain to him, perhaps, that old story — so old, so distant! — of his running away. Well, he *would* see him again, as, soon as he got a place of his own, which couldn't be long now, whether Purcell gave him the sack or not. Instinctively, he felt for that inner pocket, which held his purse and his savings-bank book. Yes, he was near freedom now, whatever happened!

Then it occurred to him that it was unlucky he should have stumbled across Mr. Ancrum just at this particular juncture. The minister, of course, had friends at Clough End still. And he, David, didn't want Louie down upon him just yet — not just yet — or a month or two.

Then the smile which had begun to play about the mouth suddenly broadened into a merry triumph. When Louie knew all about him and his contrivances these last four years, wouldn't she be mad! If she were to appear at this moment, he could tell her that she wore a pink dress at the 'wake' last week, — when she was at chapel last, — what young men were supposed

[276]

to be courting her since the summer, and a number of other interesting particulars —

‘Mr. Grieve! Tea!’

His face changed. Reluctantly shutting his book and putting it into its place, he took his way to the staircase.

As David opened the swing door leading to the Purcells’ parlour at the back of the shop he heard Miss Purcell saying in a mournful voice, ‘It’s no good, Dora; not a haporth of good. Father won’t let me. I might as well have gone to prison as come home.’

The assistant emerged into the bright gaslight of the little room as she spoke. There was another girl sitting beside Lucy, who got up with a shy manner and shook hands with him.

‘Will you take your tea, Mr. Grieve?’ said Lucy, with a pettish sigh, handing it to him, and then throwing herself vehemently back in her hostess’s chair, behind the tea-tray. She let her hands hang over the arms of it — the picture of discontent. The gaslight showed her the possessor of bright brown eyes, under fine brows slenderly but clearly marked, of a pink and white skin slightly freckled, of a small nose quite passable, but no ways remarkable, of a dainty little chin, and a thin-lipped mouth, slightly raised at one comer, and opening readily over some irregular but very white teeth. Except for the eyes and eyebrows the features could claim nothing much in the way of beauty. Yet at this moment of seventeen — thanks to her clear

[277]

colours, her small thinness, and the beautiful hair so richly piled about her delicate head — Lucy Purcell was undeniably a pretty girl, and since her arrival in Manchester she had been much more blissfully certain of the fact than she had ever succeeded in being

while she was still under the repressive roof of Miss Pym's boarding-school for young ladies, Pestalozzi House, Blackburn.

David sat down, perceiving that something had gone very wrong, but not caring to inquire into it. His whole interest in the Purcell household was, in fact, dying out. He would not be concerned with it much longer.

So that, instead of investigating Miss Purcell's griefs, he asked her cousin whether it had not come on to rain. The girl opposite replied in a quiet, musical voice. She was plainly dressed in a black hat and jacket; but the hat had a little bunch of cowslips to light it up, and the jacket was of an ordinary fashionable cut. There was nothing particularly noticeable about the face at first sight, except its soft fairness and the gentle steadfastness of the eyes. The movements were timid, the speech often hesitating. Yet the impression which, on a first meeting, this timidity was apt to leave on a spectator was very seldom a lasting one. David's idea of Miss Lomax, for instance, had radically changed during the three months since he had made acquaintance with her.

Rain, it appeared, *had* begun, and there must be umbrellas and waterproofs for the evening's excursion. As the two others were settling at what time David

[278]

Grieve and Lucy should call for Dora in Market Place, Lucy woke up from a dream, and broke in upon them.

‘And, Dora, you know, I *could* have worn that dress with the narrow ribbons I showed you last week. It's all there — upstairs — in the cupboard — not a crease in it!’

Dora could not help laughing, and the laugh sent a charming light into her grey, veiled eyes. The tone was so inexpressibly doleful, the manner so childish. David smiled too, and his eyes and Dora's met in a sort of friendly understanding — the first time, perhaps, they had so met. Then they both turned themselves to the task of consolation. The assistant inquired what was the matter.

‘I wanted her to go with me to the dance at the Mechanics’ Institute next week,’ said Dora. ‘Mrs. Alderman Head would have taken us both. It’s very nice and respectable. I didn’t think uncle would mind. But Lucy’s sure he will.’

‘Sure! Of course, I’m sure,’ said Lucy sharply. ‘I’ve heard him talk about dancing in a way to make anybody sick. If he only knew all the dancing we had at Pestalozzi House!’

‘Does he think all dancing wrong?’ inquired David.

‘Yes — unless it’s David dancing before the Ark, or some such nonsense,’ replied Lucy, with the same petulant gloom.

David laughed out. Then he fell into a brown study,

[279]

one hand playing with his tea-cup, an irrepressible smile still curving about his mouth. Dora, observing him across the table, could not but remember other assistants of Uncle Purcell whom she had seen sitting in that same place, and the airs which Miss Purcell in her rare holidays had given herself towards those earlier young men. And now, this young man, whenever Purcell himself was out of the way, was master of the place. Anyone could see that, so long as he was there, Lucy was sensitively conscious of him in all that she said or did.

She did not long endure his half-mocking silence now.

‘You see, Dora,’ she began again, with an angry glance towards him, ‘father’s worse than ever just now. He’s been so aggravated.’

‘Yes,’ said Dora timidly. She perfectly understood what was meant, but she shrank from pursuing the subject. But David looked up.

‘I should be very sorry, Pm sure, Miss Purcell, to get in your way at all, or cause you any unpleasantness, if that’s what you mean. I don’t think you’ll be annoyed with me long.’

He spoke with a boyish exaggerated dignity. It became him, however, for his fine and subtle physique somehow supported and endorsed it.

Both the girls started. Lucy looked suddenly as miserable as she had before looked angry. But in her confused state of feeling she renewed her attack.

[280]

‘I don’t understand anything about it,’ she said, with plaintive incoherence. ‘Only I can’t *think* why people should always be making disturbances. Dora! Doesn’t everybody you know think it wicked to go to the Hall of Science?’

She drew herself up peremptorily. David resumed the half smiling, half meditative attitude which had provoked her before. Dora looked from one to the other, a pure bright colour rising in her cheek.

‘I don’t know anything about that,’ she said in a low voice. ‘I don’t think that would matter, Lucy. But, oh, I do wish father wouldn’t go — and Mr. Grieve wouldn’t go.’

Her voice and hand shook. Lucy looked triumphantly at David. Instinctively she realised that, especially of late, David had come to feel more respectfully towards Dora than she had ever succeeded in making him feel towards herself. In the beginning of their acquaintance he had often launched into argument with Dora about religious matters, especially about the Ritualistic practices in which she delighted. The lad, overflowing with his Voltaire and d’Holbach, had not been able to forbear, and had apparently taken a mischievous pleasure in shocking a bigot — as he had originally conceived Lucy Purcell’s cousin to be. The discussion, indeed, had not gone very far. The girl’s horror and his own sense of his position and its difficulties had checked them in the germ. Moreover, as has been said, his conception of Dora had gradually changed on further

[281]

acquaintance. As for her, she had now for a long time avoided arguing with him, which made her outburst on the present occasion the more noticeable.

He looked up quickly.

‘Miss Lomax, how do you suppose one makes up one’s mind — either about religion or anything else? Isn’t it by hearing both sides?’

‘Oh, no — no!’ she said, shrinking. ‘Religion isn’t like anything else. It’s by — by growing up into it — by thinking about it — and doing what the Church tells you. You come to *know* it’s true.’

That the Magi and Balaam’s ass are true! "What folly! But somehow even his youthful ardour could not say it, so full of pure and tremulous pain was the gaze fixed upon him. And, indeed, he had no time for any answer, for she had just spoken when the bell of the outer door sounded, and a step came rapidly through the shop.

‘Father!’ said Lucy, lifting the lid of the teapot in a great hurry. ‘Oh, I wonder if the tea’s good enough.’

She was stirring it anxiously with a spoon, when Purcell entered, a tall heavily built man, with black hair, a look of command, and a step which shook the little back room as he descended into it. He touched Dora’s hand with a pompous politeness, and then subsided into his chair opposite Lucy, complaining about the weather, and demanding tea, which his daughter gave him with a timid haste, looking

[282]

to see whether he were satisfied as he raised the first spoonful to his lips.

‘Anything worth buying?’ said David to his employer. He was leaning back in his chair, with his arm round the back of another. Again Dora was reminded by contrast of some of the nervous lads she had seen in that room before, scarcely daring to eat their tea under Purcell’s eye, flying to cut him bread, or pass him the sugar.

‘No.’ said Purcell curtly.

‘And a great price, I suppose?’

Purcell looked up. Apparently the ease of the young man’s tone and attitude put the finishing stroke to an inward process already far advanced.

‘The price, I conceive, is my business,’ he said, in his most overbearing manner. ‘When you have to pay, it will be yours.’

David flushed, without, however, changing his position, and Lucy made a sudden commotion among the teacups.

‘Father,’ she said, with a hurried agitation which hardly allowed her to pick up the cup she had thrown over, ‘Dora and I want to speak to you. You mustn’t talk business at tea. Oh, I ‘know you won’t let me go; but I should like it, and Dora’s come to ask. I shouldn’t want a new dress, and it will be most respectable, everyone says; and I *did* learn dancing at school, though you didn’t know it. Miss Georgina said it was stuff" and nonsense, and I must — ’

[283]

‘What is she talking about?’ said Purcell to Dora, with an angry glance at Lucy.

‘I want to take her to a dance,’ said Dora quietly, ‘ if you would let her come. There’s one at the Mechanics’ Institute next week, given by the Unicorn benefit society. Mrs. Alderman Head said I might go with her, and Lucy too if you’ll let her come. I’ve got a ticket.’

‘I’m much obliged to Mrs. Alderman Head,’ said Purcell sarcastically. ‘Lucy knows very well what I think of an unchristian and immodest amusement. Other people must decide according to their conscience. *I* judge nobody.’

At this point David got up, and disappeared into the shop.

‘Oh yes, you do judge, uncle,’ cried Dora, roused at last, and colouring. ‘You’re always judging. You call everything unchristian you don’t like, whether it’s dancing, or — or — early celebration, or organ music, or altar-cloths. But you can’t be always right — nobody can.’

Purcell surveyed her with a grim composure. ‘If you suppose I make any pretence to be infallible, you are quite mistaken,’ he said, with slow solemnity — no one in disclaiming Papistry could have been more the Pope — ‘I leave that to your

priests at St. Damian's, Dora. But there is an infallible guide, both for you and for me, and that's the Holy Scriptures. If you can show me any place where the *Bible* approves of

[284]

promiscuous dancing between young Christian men and women, or of a woman exposing her person for admiration's sake, or of such vain and idle talking as is produced by these entertainments, I will let Lucy go. But you can't. "Whose adorning let it not be"'

And he quoted the Petrine admonition with a harsh triumphant emphasis on every syllable, looking hard all the time at Dora, who had risen, and stood confronting him in a tremor of impatience and disagreement.

'Father Russell — 'she began quickly, then changed her form of expression — 'Mr. Russell says you can't settle things by just quoting a text. The Bible has to be explained, he says.'

Purcell's eyes flamed. He launched into a sarcastic harangue, delivered in a strong thick voice, on the subject of 'Sacerdotalism,' 'priestly arrogance,' 'lying traditions,' 'making the command of God of no effect,' and so forth. While his sermon rolled along, Dora stood nervously tying her bonnet strings, or buttoning her gloves. Her heart was full of a passionate scorn. Beside the bookseller's muscular figure and pugnacious head she saw with her mind's eye the spare forms and careworn faces of the young priests at St. Damian's. Outraged by this loud-voiced assurance, she called to mind the gentleness, the suavity, the delicate consideration for women which obtained among her friends.

'There's not a pin to choose,' Purcell wound up, brutally, ' between you and that young infidel in there,'

[285]

and he jerked his thumb towards the shop. 'It all comes of pride. He's bursting with his own wisdom, — you will have the "Church" and won't have the Bible. What's the Church! — a pack of sinners, and a million sinners are no better than one.'

'Good-bye, Lucy,' said Dora, stooping to kiss her cousin, and not trusting herself to speak. 'Call for me at the quarter.'

Lucy hardly noticed her kiss, she sat with her elbows on the table, holding her little chin disconsolately, something very like tears in her eyes. In the first place, she was reflecting dolefully that it was all true — she was never to have any amusement like other girls — never to have any good of her life; she might as well be a nun at once. In the second, she was certain her father meant to send young Grieve away, and the prospect drew a still darker pall over a prospect dark enough in all conscience before.

Purcell opened the door for Dora more punctiliously than usual, and came back to the hearthrug still inflated as it were with his own eloquence. Meanwhile Lucy was washing up the tea things. The little servant had brought her a bowl of water and an apron, and Lucy was going gingerly through an operation she detested. Why shouldn't Mary Ann do it? What was the good of going to school and coming back with Claribel's songs and Blumenthal's *Deux Anges* lying on the top of your box, — with a social education, moreover, so advanced that the dancing-mistress had invariably made you

[286]

waltz alone round the room for the edification and instruction of the assembled company, — if all you had to do at home was to dust and wash up, and die with envy of girls with reprobate fathers? As she pondered the question, Lucy began to handle the cups with a more and more unfriendly energy.

'You'll break some of that china, Lucy!' said Purcell, at last disturbed in his thoughts. 'What's the matter with you?'

'Nothing!' said Lucy, taking, however, a saucer from the line as she spoke so viciously that the rest of them slipped with a clatter and only just escaped destruction.

‘Mind what you’re about,’ cried Purcell angrily, fearing for the household stuff that had been in the establishment so much longer and was so much more at home there than Lucy.

‘I know what it is,’ he said, looking at her severely, while his great black presence seemed to fill the little room. ‘You’ve lost your temper because I refused to let you go to the dance.’

Lucy was silent for a moment, trying to contain herself; then she broke out like a child, throwing down her apron, and feeling for her handkerchief.

‘It’s *too* bad — it’s *too* bad — I’d rather be Mary Ann — *she’s* got friends, and evenings out — and — and parties sometimes ; and I see nobody, and go nowhere. What did you have me home for at all?’

[287]

And she sat down and dried her eyes piteously. She was in real distress, but she liked a scene, and Purcell knew her peculiarities. He surveyed her with a sort of sombre indulgence.

‘You’re a vain child of this world, Lucy. If I didn’t keep a look-out on you, you’d soon go rejoicing down the broad way. What do you mean about amusements? There’s the missionary tea to-morrow night, and the magic-lantern at the schools on Saturday.’

Lucy gave a little hysterical laugh.

‘Well,’ said Purcell loudly, ‘there’ll be plenty of young people there. What have you got to say against them?’

‘A set of *frights* and *gawks*,’ said Lucy, sitting bolt upright in a state of flat mutiny, and crushing her handkerchief on her knee between a pair of trembling hands. ‘The way they do their hair, and the way they tie their ties, and the way they put a chair for you — it’s enough to make one faint. At the Christmas treat there was one young man asked me to trim his shirt-cuffs for him with scissors he took out of his pocket. I told him I wasn’t his nurse, and people who weren’t dressed ought to stay at home. You

should have seen how he and his sister glared at me afterwards. I don't care! None of the chapel people like me — I know they don't, and I don't want them to, and I wouldn't *marry* one of them.'

[288]

The gesture of Lucy's curly head was superb.

'It seems to me,' said Purcell sarcastically, 'that what you mostly learnt at Blackburn was envy, malice, and all uncharitableness. As to marrying, child, the less you think of it for the present the better, till you get more sense.'

But the eyes which studied her were not unkindly. Purcell liked this slim red and white creature who belonged to him, whose education had cost him hard money which it gave him pleasure to reckon up, and who promised now to provide him with a fresh field for the management and the coarse moral experiment which he loved. She would be restive at first, but he would soon break her in. The idea that under her folly and childishness she might possibly inherit some of his own tenacity never occurred to him.

'I can't imagine,' said Lucy inconsequently, with eyes once more swimming, 'why you can't let me do what Dora does! She's *much* better than I am. She's a saint, she is. She's always going to church; she's always doing things for poor people; she never thinks about herself, or whether she's pretty, or — Why shouldn't I dance if she does?'

Purcell laughed.

'Aye!' he said grimly, 'that's the Papistical way all over. So many services, so much fasting, so much money, so much knocking under to your priest, so much "church work" — and who cares a brass farthing what you do with the rest of your time? Do as I tell you,

[289]

and dance away! But I tell you, Christianity wants a *new heart*!’

And the bookseller looked at his daughter with a frowning severity. Conversation of this kind was his recreation, his accomplishment, so to speak. He had been conducting a difficult negotiation all day of the diamond-cut-diamond order, and was tired out and disgusted by the amount of knowledge of books which even a gentleman may possess. But here was compensation. A warm hearthrug, an unwilling listener, and this sense of an incomparable soundness of view, — he wanted nothing more to revive him, unless, indeed, it were a larger audience.

As for Lucy, as she looked up at her father, even her childish intelligence rose to a sense of absurdity. As if Dora hadn’t a new heart; as if Dora thought it was enough to go to church and give sixpences in the offertory!

But her father overawed her. She had been left motherless at ten years old, and brought up since away from home, except for holidays. At the bottom of her, she was quite conscious that she knew nothing at all about this big contemptuous person, who ordered her about and preached to her, and never let himself be kissed and played with and coaxed as other girls’ fathers did.

So she went on with her washing up in a crushed silence, very sorry for herself in a vague passionate way, the corners of her mouth drooping. Purcell too

[290]

fell into a reverie, the lower jaw pushed forward, one hand playing with the watch-chain which adorned his black suit.

‘Did you give Grieve that message?’ he asked at last.

Lucy, still sulky, nodded in reply.

‘What time did he come in from dinner?’

‘On the stroke of the half-hour,’ said Lucy quickly. ‘I think he keeps time better than anybody you ever had, father.’

‘Insolent young whelp!’ said Purcell in a slow, deliberate voice. ‘He was at that place again yesterday.’

‘Yes, I know he was,’ said Lucy, with evident agitation. ‘I told him he ought to have been ashamed.’

‘Oh, you talked to him, did you? What business had you to do that, I wonder? Well, what did he say?’

‘He said — well, I don’t know what he said. He don’t seem to think it matters to anybody where he goes on Sunday!’

‘Oh, indeed — don’t he? I’ll show him some cause to doubt the truth of that proposition,’ said Purcell ponderously; ‘or I’ll know the reason why.’

Lucy looked unhappy, and said nothing for a minute or two. Then she began insistently, ‘Well, *does* it matter to you?’

This deplorable question — viewed from the standpoint of a Baptist elder — passed unnoticed, for with the last words the shop-bell rang, and Purcell went off,

[291]

transformed on the instant into the sharp, attentive tradesman.

Lucy sat wiping her cups mechanically for a little while. Then, when they were all done, and Mary Ann had been loftily commanded to put them away, she slipped upstairs to her own room, a little attic at the top of the house. Here she went to a deal press, which had been her mother’s, opened it, and took out a dress which hung in a compartment by itself, enveloped in a holland wrapper, lest Manchester smuts should harm it. She undid the wrapper, and laid it on the bed. It was an embroidered white muslin, adorned with lace and full knots of narrow pink ribbon.

‘What a trouble I had to get the ribbon just that width,’ she thought to herself ruefully, ‘and everybody said it was so uncommon. I might as well give it Dora. I don’t believe I shall ever wear it. I don’t know what’ll become of me. I don’t get any chances.’

And shaking her head mournfully from side to side, she sat on beside the dress, in the light of her solitary candle, her hands clasped round her knee, the picture of girlish despair, so far as anything so daintily gowned, and shoed, and curled, could

achieve it. She was thinking drearily of some people who were coming to supper, one of her father's brother elders at the chapel, Mr. Baruch Barton, and his daughter. Mr. Barton had a speciality for the prophet Zephaniah, and had been several times shocked because Lucy could not help him

[292]

out with his quotations from that source. His daughter, a little pinched asthmatic creature, in a dress whereof every gore and seam was an affront to the art of dressmaking, was certainly thirty, probably more. And between thirty and the Psalmist's limit of existence, there is the very smallest appreciable difference, in the opinion of seventeen. What *could* she have to say to Emmy Barton? Lucy asked herself. She began yawning from sheer dulness, as she thought of her. If it were only time to go to bed!

Suddenly she heard a sound of raised voices in the upper shop on the floor below. What could it be? She started up. 'Mr. Grieve and father quarrelling! 'She knew it must come to that!

She crept down the stairs with every precaution possible till she came to the door behind which the loud talk which had startled her was going on. Here she listened with all her ears, but at first to very little purpose. David was speaking, but so rapidly, and apparently so near to the other end of the room, that she could hear nothing. Then her father broke in, and by dint of straining very hard, she caught most of what he said before the whole colloquy came abruptly to an end. She heard Purcell's heavy tread descending the little iron spiral staircase leading from the lower shop to the upper. She heard David moving about, as though he were gathering up books and papers, and then, with a loud childish sob which burst from her unawares, she ran upstairs again to her own room.

[293]

‘Oh, lie’s going, he’s going!’ she cried under her breath, as she stood before the glass winking to keep the tears back, and biting her handkerchief hard between her little white teeth. ‘Oh, what shall I do? what shall I do? It’ll be always the same; just when anyone *might* like me, it all stops. And he won’t care one little, little bit. He’ll never think of me again. Oh, I do think somebody might care about me — might be sorry for me!’

And she locked her hands tight before her, and stared at the glass, while the tears forced their way. But all the time she was noticing how prettily she stood, how slim she was. And though she smarted, she would not for the world have been without her smart, her excitement, her foolish secret, which, for sheer lack of something to do and think about, had suddenly grown to such magnitude in her eyes. It was hard to cherish a hopeless passion for a handsome youth, without a halfpenny, who despised you, but it was infinitely better than to have nothing in your mind but Emmy Barton and the prophet Zephaniah. Nay, as she washed her hands and smoothed her dress and hair with trembling fingers, she became quite friendly with her pain — in a sense, even proud of it, and jealous for it. It was a sign of mature life — of something more than mere school-girlishness. Like the lover in the Elizabethan sonnet, ‘She had been vexed, if vexed she had not been!’

[294]

### CHAPTER III

‘COME in, David,’ said Mr. Ancrum, opening the door of his little sitting-room in Mortimer Street. ‘You’re rather late, but I don’t wonder. Such a wind! I could hardly stand against it myself. But, then, I’m an atomy. What, no top-coat in such weather! What do you mean by that, sir? You’re wet through. There, dry yourself.’

David, with a grin at Mr. Ancrum’s unnecessary concern for him, deposited himself in the carpet chair which formed the minister’s only lounge, and held out his legs and arms to the blaze. He was wet indeed, and bespattered with the blackest mud in the three kingdoms. But the battle with wind and rain had so brought into play all the

physical force of him, had so brightened eye and cheek, and tossed the black hair into such a fine confusion, that, as he sat there bending over the glow of the fire, the crippled man opposite, sickly with long confinement and over-thinking, could not take his eyes from him. The storm with all its freshness, youth with all its reckless joy in itself, seemed to have come in with the lad and transformed the little dingy room.

[295]

‘What do you wear trash like that for in a temperature like this?’ said the minister, touching his guest’s thin and much-worn coat. ‘Don’t you know, David, that your health is money? Suppose you get lung trouble, who’s to look after you?’

‘It don’t do me no harm, sir. I can’t get into my last year’s coat, and I couldn’t afford a new one this winter.’

‘What wages do you earn?’ asked Ancrum. His manner was a curious mixture of melancholy gentleness and of that terse sharpness in practical things which the south country resents and the north country takes for granted.

‘Eighteen shillings a week, since last November, sir.’

‘That ought to be enough for a top-coat, you rascal, with only yourself to feed,’ said Mr. Ancrum, stretching himself in his hard armchair, so as to let his lame leg with its heavy boot rest comfortably on the fender. David had noticed at first sight of him that his old playfellow had grown to look much older than in the Clough End days. His hair was nearly white, and lay in a large smooth wave across the broad brow. And in that brow there were deep furrows, and many a new and premature line in the hollow cheeks. Something withering and blighting seemed to have passed over the whole man since those Sunday school lessons in the Christian Brethren’s upper room, which David still remembered so well. But the eyes with

[296]

their irresistible intensity and force were the same. In them the minister's youth — he was not yet thirty-five — still spoke, as from a last stronghold in a failing realm. They had a strange look too, the look as of a secret life, not for the passer-by.

David smiled at Ancrum's last remark, and for a moment or two looked into the fire without speaking.

'Well, if I'd bought clothes or anything else this winter, I should be in a precious worse hole than I am,' he said reflectively.

'Hole? What's wrong, Davy?'

'My master gave me the sack Monday.'

'Humph!' said Ancrum, surveying him. 'Well, you don't look much cast down about it, I must say.'

'Well, you see, I'd laid my plans,' said the young man, an irrepressible gaiety and audacity in every feature. 'It isn't as though I were taken by surprise.'

'Plans for a new place, I suppose?'

'No; I have done with that. I am going to set up for myself. I know the trade, and I've got some money.'

'How old are you, Davy?'

'Just upon twenty,' said the lad, quietly.

The minister pursed up his lips and whistled a little.

'Well, that's bold,' he said. 'Somehow I like it, though by all the laws of prudence I ought to jump down your throat for announcing such a thing. But how did you get your money? and what have you been

[297]

doing these four years? Come, I'm an old friend, — though I dare say you don't think me much of a fellow Out with it! Pay me anyway for all those ships I made you long ago.'

And he held out his blanched hand, little more now than skin and bone. David put his own into it awkwardly enough. At this period of his life he was not demonstrative.

The story he had to tell was, to Ancrum's thinking, a remarkable one. He had come into Manchester on an October evening with five shillings and three-pence in his pocket. From a point on the south-western border of the city he took a 'bus for Deansgate and Victoria Street. As he was sitting on the top feeding his eyes on the lights and the crowd of the streets, but wholly ignorant where to go and what first step to take, he fell into talk with a decent working-man and his wife sitting beside him. The result of the talk was that they offered him shelter at fourpence a night. He dismounted with them at Blackfriars Bridge, and they made their way across the river to a street in Salford, where he lodged with them for a week. During that week he lived on oatmeal and an occasional baked potato, paying his hostess eighteenpence additional for the use of her fire, and the right to sit in her kitchen when he was not tramping about in search of work. By the end of the week he had found a post as errand-boy at a large cheap bookseller's and stationer's in Deansgate, at eight shillings a week, his good looks, manner, and

[298]

education evidently helping him largely, as Mr. Ancrum could perceive through the boy's very matter-of-fact account of himself. He then made an agreement for bed, use of fire, and kitchen, with his new friends at four shillings a week, and by the end of six months he was receiving a wage of fourteen shillings as salesman and had saved close on five pounds.

'Well, now, come, how did you manage that, Davy?' said Mr. Ancrum, interrupting. 'Don't run on in that fashion. Details are the only interesting things in life, and details I'll have. You must have found it a precious tight fit to save that five pounds.'

Whereupon David, his eye kindling, ran out Benjamin Franklin and the ‘Vegetarian News,’ his constant friends from the first day of his acquaintance with the famous autobiography till now, in spite of such occasional lapses into carnal feeding as he had confessed to Daddy. In a few minutes Ancrum found himself buried in ‘details’ as to ‘flesh-forming’ and ‘bone-forming’ foods, as to nitrogen and albumen, as to the saving qualities of fruit, and Heaven knows what besides. Long before the enthusiast had spent his breath or his details, the minister cried ‘Enough!’

‘Young materialist,’ he said growling, ‘what do you mean at your age by thinking so much about your body?’

‘It wasn’t my body, sir,’ said David, simply, ‘it was just business. If I had got ill, I couldn’t have worked; if I had lived like other chaps, I couldn’t have

[299]

saved. So I had to know something about it, and it wasn’t bad fun. After a bit I got the people I lodged with to eat a lot of the things I eat — and that was cheaper for me of course. The odd thing about vegetarianism is that you come not to care a rap what you eat. Your taste goes somehow. So long as you’re nourished and can do your work, that’s all you want.’

The minister sat studying his visitor a minute or two in silence, though the eyes under the care-worn brow were bright and restless. Any defiance of the miserable body was in itself delightful to a man who had all but slain himself many times over in the soul’s service. He, too, had been living on a crust for months, denying himself first this, then that ingredient of what should have been an invalid’s diet. But it had been for cause — for the poor — for self-mortification. There was something just a little jarring to the ascetic in this contact with a self-denial of the purely rationalistic type, so easy so — cheerful — put forward without the smallest suspicion of merit, as a mere business measure.

David resumed his story. By the end of another six months it appeared that he had grown tired of his original shop, with its vast masses of school stationery and cheap

new books. As might have been expected from his childish antecedents, he had been soon laid hold of by the old bookstalls, had read at them on his way from work, had spent on them all that he could persuade himself to spare from his hoard, and in a year

[300]

from the time he entered Manchester, thanks to wits, reading, and chance friendships, was already a budding bibliophile. Slates and primers became suddenly odious to a person aware of the existence of Aldines and Elzevirs, and bitten with the passion, then just let loose on the book-buying world, for first editions of the famous books of the century. Whenever that sum in the savings bank should have reached a certain height, he would become a second-hand bookseller with a stall. Till then he must save more and learn his trade. So at the end of his first year he left his employers, and by the help of excellent recommendations from them got the post of assistant in Purcell's shop in Half Street, at a rise of two shillings, afterwards converted into four shillings a week.

'And I've been there three years — very near,' said David, straightening himself with a little nervous gesture peculiar to him. 'If you'd been anywhere about, sir, you'd have wondered how I could have stayed so long. But I wanted to learn the trade and I've learnt it — no thanks to old Purcell.'

'What was wrong with him?'

'Mostly brains!' said the lad, with a scornful but not unattractive conceit. 'He was a hard master to live with — that don't matter. But he is a fool! I don't mean to say he don't know a lot about some things — but he thinks he knows everything — and he don't. And he'll not let anyone tell him — not he! Once, if you'll believe it, he got the Aldine Virgil of 1501, for

[301]

twenty-five shillings — came from a gentleman out Eccles way — a fellow selling his father's library and didn't know bad from good, — real fine tall copy, — binding poor,

— but a *stunner* take it altogether — worth twenty pounds to Quaritch or Ellis, any day. Well, all I could do, he let a man have it for five shillings profit next day, just to spite me, I believe, because I told him it was a good thing. Then he got sick about that, I believe, though he never let out, and the next time he found anything that looked good, — giminy! — but he put it on. Now you know, sir’ — Mr. Ancrum smiled at the confidential eagerness of the expert — ‘you know, sir, it’s not many of those Venice or Florence Dantes that are worth anything. If you get the first edition of Landino’s ‘Commentary,’ or the other man’s, Imola’s, isn’t it —’

The minister lifted his eyebrows — the Italian came out pat, and, so far as he knew, right —

‘Well, of course, *they’re* worth money — always fetch their price. But the later editions are no good at all — nobody but a gentleman-collector, very green, you know, sir’ — the twinkle in the boy’s eye showed how much his subject was setting him at his ease — ‘would be bothered with them. Well, if lie didn’t get hold or an edition of 1540 or so — worth about eight shillings, and dear at that — and send it up to one of the London men as a good thing. He makes me pack it and send it and register it — you might have thought it was the Mazarin Bible, bar size. And then, of course, next

[302]

day, down comes the book again flying, double quick. I kept out of his way, post-time! But I’d have given something to see the letter he got.’

And David, rising, put his hands in his pockets, and stood before the fire chuckling with irrepressible amusement.

‘Well, then you know there’s the first editions of Rousseau — not a bit rare, as rare goes — lucky if you get thirty shillings for the “Contrat Social,” or the “Nouvelle Heloise,” even good copies —’

Again the host’s eyebrows lifted. The French names ran remarkably; there was not the least boggling over them. But he said nothing, and David rattled on, describing, with a gusto which never failed, one of Purcell’s book-selling enormities after another.

It was evident that he despised his master with a passionate contempt. It was evident also that Purcell had shown a mean and unreasoning jealousy of his assistant. The English tradesman inherits a domineering tradition towards his subordinates, and in Purcell's case, as we know, the instincts of an egotistical piety had reinforced those of the employer. Yet Mr. Ancrum felt some sympathy with Purcell.

‘Well, Davy,’ he said at last, ‘so you were too ’cute for your man, that’s plain. But I don’t suppose he put it on that ground when he gave you the sack?’

And he looked up, with a little dry smile.

‘No!’ cried David, abruptly. ‘No! not he. If you go and ask *him* he’ll tell you he sent me off

[303]

because I would go to the Secularist meetings at the Hall of Science, and air myself as an atheist; that’s his way of putting it. And it was doing him harm with his religious customers! As if I was going to let him dictate where I went on Sundays!’

‘Of course not’ said Ancrum, with a twist of his oddly shaped mouth. ‘Even the very youngest of us might sometimes be the better for advice; but, hang it, let’s be free — free to “make fools of ourselves,” as a wise man hath it. Well, Davy, no offence,’ for his guest had flushed suddenly. ‘So you go to the Hall of Science? Did you hear Holyoake and Bradlaugh there the other night? You like that kind of thing?’

‘I like to hear it,’ said the lad, stoutly, meeting his old teacher’s look, half nervously, half defiantly. ‘It’s a great deal more lively than what you hear at most churches, sir. And why shouldn’t one hear everything?’

This was not precisely the tone which the same culprit had adopted towards Dora Lomax. The Voltairean suddenly felt himself to be making excuses — shabby excuses — in the presence of somebody connected, however distantly, with *l’infâme*. He drew himself up with an angry shake of his whole powerful frame.

‘Oh, why not?’ said Ancrum, with a shrug, ‘if life’s long enough’ — and he absently lifted and let fall a book which lay on the table beside him; it was Newman’s ‘Dream of Gerontius’ — ‘if life’s long

[304]

enough, and — happy enough! Well, so you’ve been learning French, I can hear. Teaching yourself?’

‘No; there’s an old Frenchman, old Barbier — do you know him, sir? He gives lessons at a shilling an hour. Very few people go to him now; they want younger men. And there’s lots of them about. But old Barbier knows more about books than any of them, I’ll be bound.’

‘Has he introduced you to French novels? I never read any; but they’re bad, of course — must be. In all those things I’m a Britisher and believe what the Britishers say.’

‘We’re just at the end of “Manon Lescaut,”’ said David, doggedly. ‘And partly with him, partly by myself, I’ve read a bit of Rousseau — and a good lot of Diderot, — and Voltaire.’

David threw an emphasis into the last name, which was meant to atone to himself for the cowardice of a few minutes before. The old boyish feeling towards Mr. Ancrum, which had revived in him when he entered the room, had gradually disappeared again. He bore the minister no real grudge for having forgotten him, but he wished it to be clearly understood that the last fragments of the Christian Brethren yoke had dropped from his neck.

‘Ah! don’t know anything about them,’ said Ancrum, slowly; ‘but then, as you know, I’m a very ignorant person. Well, now, was it Voltaire took you to the secularists, or the secularists to Voltaire?’

[305]

David laughed, but did not give a reply immediately.

‘Well, never mind,’ said the minister. ‘All Christians are fools, of course — that’s understood. — Is that all you have been learning these four years?’

‘I work at Latin every morning,’ said David, very red, and on his dignity. ‘I’ve begun Greek, and I go to the science classes, mathematics and chemistry, at the Mechanics’ Institute.’

Mr. Ancrum’s face softened.

‘Why, I’ll be bound you have to go to work pretty early, Davy?’

‘Seven o’clock, sir, I take the shutters down. But I get an hour and a half first, and three hours in the evening. This winter I’ve got through the “Aeneid,” and Horace’s “Epistles” and “Ars Poetica.” Do you remember, sir?’ — and the lad’s voice grew sharp once more, tightening as it were under the pressure of eagerness and ambition from beneath — ‘do you remember that Scaliger read the “Iliad” in twenty days, and was a finished Greek scholar in two years? Why can’t one do that now?’

‘Why shouldn’t you?’ said Mr. Ancrum, looking up at him. ‘Who helps you in your Greek?’

‘No one; I get translations.’

‘Well, now, look here, Davy. I’m an ignorant person, as I told you, but I learnt some Latin and Greek at Manchester New College. Come to me in the

[306]

evenings, and I’ll help you with your Greek, unless you’ve got beyond me. Where are you?’

The budding Scaliger reported himself. He had read the ‘Anabasis,’ some Herodotus, three plays of Euripides, and was now making some desperate efforts on Eschylus and Sophocles. Any Plato? David made a face. He had read two or three dialogues in English; didn’t want to go on, didn’t care about him. Ah! Ancrum supposed not.

‘Twelve hours’ shop,’ said the minister reflecting, ‘more or less, — two hours’ work before shop, — three hours or so after shop; that’s what you may call driving it hard. You couldn’t do it, Richard Ancrum,’ and he shook his head with a whimsical melancholy. ‘But you were always a poor starveling. Youth that is youth ‘s tough. Don’t tell me, sir,’ and he looked up sharply, ‘that you don’t amuse yourself. I wouldn’t believe it. There never was a man built like you yet that didn’t amuse himself.’

David smiled, but said nothing.

‘Billiards?’

‘No, sir.’

‘Betting?’

‘No, sir. They cost money.’

‘Niggardly dog! Drink? — no, I’ll answer that for myself.’

The minister dropped his catechism, and sat nursing his lame leg and thinking. Suddenly he broke out with,

‘How many young women are you in love with, David?’

[307]

David showed his white teeth.

‘I only know two, sir. One’s my master’s daughter — she’s rather a pretty girl, I think ——’

‘That’ll do. You’re not in love with her. Who’s the other?’

‘The other’s Mr. Lomax’s daughter, — Lomax of the Parlour, that queer restaurant, sir, in Market Place. She — well, I don’t know how to describe her. She’s not good-looking — at least, I don’t think so,’ he added dubiously. ‘She’s very High Church, and fasts all Lent. I think she does Church embroidery.’

‘And doesn’t think any the better of you for attending the Hall of Science? Sensible girl! Still, when people mean to fall in love, they don’t think twice of that sort of thing. I make a note of Lomax’s daughter. Ah! enter supper. David, if you let any ‘ism stand between you and that veal pie, I despair of your future.’

David, however, in the course of the meal, showed himself as superior to narrowness of view in the matter of food-stuffs as in other matters. The meal went merrily. Mr. Ancrum dropped his half-sarcastic tone, and food, warmth, and talk loosened the lad's fibres, and made him more and more human, handsome, and attractive. Soon his old friend knew all that he wanted to know, — the sum David had saved — thirty pounds in the savings-bank — the sort of stock he meant to set up, the shop he had taken — with a stall, of course — no beginner need hope to prosper without a stall. Customers

[308]

must be delicately angled for at a safe distance — show yourself too much, and, like trout, they flashed away. See everything, force nothing. Let a book be turned over for nineteen days, the chances were that on the twentieth you would turn over the price. As to expecting the class of cheap customers to commit themselves by walking into a shop, it was simple madness. Of course, when you were 'established,' that was another matter.

By the help of a certain wealthy Unitarian, one Mr. Doyle, with whom he had made friends in Purcell's shop, and whom he had boldly asked for the use of his name as a reference, the lad had take — so it appeared — a small house in Potter Street, a narrow but frequented street in the neighbourhood of Deansgate and all the great banks and insurance offices in King Street.

His shop took up the ground floor. The two floors above were let, and the tenants would remain. But into the attics and the parlour kitchen behind the shop, he meant, ultimately, when he could afford it, to put himself and his sister. He could only get the house on a yearly tenancy, as it and the others near it were old, and would probably be rebuilt before long. But meanwhile the rent was all the lower because of the insecurity of tenure.

At the mention of the boy's sister, Ancrum looked up with a start.

‘Ah, to be sure! What became of that poor child after you left? The Clough  
End friends who wrote to

[309]

me of your disappearance had more pity for her, Davy, than they had for you.’

A sudden repulsion and reserve darkened the black eyes opposite.

‘There was no helping it,’ he said with hasty defiance. There was a moment’s  
silence. Then a wish to explain himself rose in David.

‘I couldn’t have stayed, sir,’ he said, with a curious half-reproachful accent. ‘I  
told you about how it was before you left. And there were other things. I should have  
cut my own throat or some one else’s if it had gone on. But I haven’t forgotten Louie.  
You remember Tom Mullins at the foundry. He’s written me every month. I paid him  
for it. I know all about Louie, and they don’t know anything about me. They think I’m  
in America.’

His eyes lit again with the joy of contrivance.

‘Is that kind, Davy?’

‘Yes, sir —’ and for the first time the minister heard in the boy’s voice the  
tone of a man’s judgment. ‘I couldn’t have Louie on me just yet. I was going to ask you,  
sir, not to tell the people at Clough End you’ve seen me. It would make it very hard.  
You know what Louie is — and she’s all right. She’s learnt a trade.’

‘What trade?’

‘Silk- weaving — from Margaret Dawson.’

‘Poor soul — poor saint! There’d be more things than her trade to be learnt  
from Margaret Dawson if anyone had a mind to learn them. What of ’Lias?’

[310]

‘Oh, he died, sir, a week after I left.’ The lad’s voice dropped. Then he added slowly, looking away, ‘Tom said he was very quiet — he didn’t suffer much — not at the end.’

‘Aye, the clouds lift at sunset,’ said Mr. Ancrum in an altered tone; ‘the air clears before the night!’

His head fell forward on his breast, and he sat drumming on the table. They had finished supper, the little, bustling landlady had cleared away, and Davy was thinking of going. Suddenly the minister sprang up and stood before the fire, looking down at his guest.

‘Davy, do you want to know why I didn’t write to you? I was ill first — very ill; then — *I was in hell!*’

David started. Into the thin, crooked face, with the seeking eyes, there had flashed an expression — sinister, indescribable, a sort of dumb rage. It changed the man altogether.

‘I was in hell!’ he repeated slowly. ‘I know no more about it. Other people may tell you, perhaps, if you come across them — I can’t. There were days at Clough End — always a certain number in the year — when this earth slipped away from me, and the fiends came about me, but this was mouths. They say I was overdone in the cotton famine years ago just before I came to Clough End. I got pneumonia after I left you that May — it doesn’t matter. When I knew there was a sun again, I wrote to ask about you. You had left Kinder and gone — no one knew where.’

David sat nervously silent, not knowing what to

[311]

say, his mind gradually tilling with the sense of something tragic, irreparable. Mr. Ancrum, too, stood straight before him, as though turned to stone.

At last David got up and approached him. Had Ancrum been looking he must have been touched by the change in the lad’s expression. The hard self-reliant force of the face had melted into feeling.

‘Are you better now, sir? I knew you must have been ill,’ he stammered.

Ancrum started as though just wakened.

‘Ill? Yes, I was pretty bad,’ he said briskly, and in his most ordinary tone, though with a long breath. ‘But I’m as fit as anything now. Good night, Davy, good night. Come a walk with me some day? Sunday afternoon? Done. Here, write me your new address.’

The tall form and curly black head disappeared, the little lodging-house room, with its round rosewood table, its horsehair sofa, its chiffonnier, and its prints of ‘Sport at Balmoral’ and ‘The Mother’s Kiss,’ had resumed the dingy formality of every day.

The minister sank into his seat and held his hands out over the blaze. He was in pain. All life was to him more or less a struggle with physical ill. But it was not so primarily that he conceived it. The physical ill was nothing except as representing a philosophical necessity.

That lad, with all his raw certainties — of himself, his knowledge, his Voltaire — the poor minister felt once or twice a piteous envy of him, as he sat on through the

[312]

night hours. Life was ill-apportioned. The poor, the lonely, the feeble — it is they who want certainty, want hope most. And because they are lonely and feeble, because their brain tissues are diseased, and their life from no fault of their own unnatural, nature who has made them dooms them to despair and doubt. Is there any ‘soul,’ any ‘personality’ for the man who is afflicted and weakened with intermittent melancholia? Where is his identity, where his responsibility? And if there is none for him, how does the accident of health bestow them on his neighbour?

Questions of this sort had beset Richard Ancrum for years. On the little book-table to his right lay papers of Huxley’s, of Clifford’s, and several worn volumes of mental pathology. The brooding intellect was for ever raising the same problem, the same spectre world of universal doubt, in which God, conscience, faith, were words without a meaning.

But side by side with the restlessness of the intellect there had always gone the imperious and prevailing claim of temperament. Beside Huxley and Clifford, lay Newman's 'Sermons' and 'Apologia,' and a little High Church manual of self-examination. And on the wall above the book-table hung a memorandum-slate on which were a number of addresses and dates — the addresses of some forty boys whom the minister taught on Sunday in one of the Unitarian Sunday schools of Manchester, and visited in the week. The care and training of street arabs had been his passion when he was still a student at Manchester New College. Then

[313]

had come his moment of utterance — a thirst for preaching, for religious influence; though he could not bring himself to accept any particular shibboleth or take any kind of orders. He found something congenial for a time to a deep though struggling faith in the leadership of the Christian Brethren. Now, however, something had broken in him; he could preach no more. But he could go back to his old school; he could teach his boys on Sundays and week days; he could take them out country walks in spite of his lame limb; he could deny himself even the commonest necessities of life for their sake; he could watch over each of them with a fervour, a moral intensity which wore him out. In this, in some insignificant journalism for a religious paper, and in thinking, he spent his life.

There had been a dark page in his history. He had hardly left Manchester New College when he married suddenly a girl of some beauty, but with an undeveloped sensuous temperament. They were to live on a crust and give themselves to the service of man. His own dream was still fresh when she deserted him in the company of one of his oldest friends. He followed them, found them both in black depths of remorse, and took her back. But the strain of living together proved too much. She implored him to let her go and earn her living apart. She had been a teacher and she proposed to return to her profession. He saw her established in Glasgow in the house of some good people

who knew her history, and who got her a post in a small school. Then he returned to Manchester and threw himself with

[314]

reckless ardour into the work of feeding the hungry, and nursing the dying, in the cotton famine. He emerged a broken man, physically and morally, liable thence-forward to recurrent crises of melancholia; but they were not frequent or severe enough to prevent his working. He was at the time entirely preoccupied with certain religious questions, and thankfully accepted the call to the little congregation at Clough End.

Since then he had visited his wife twice every year. He was extremely poor. His family, who had destined him for the Presbyterian ministry, were estranged from him; hardly anyone in Manchester knew him intimately ; only in one house, far away in the Scotch lowlands, were there two people, who deeply loved and thoroughly understood him, There he went when his dark hours came upon him; and thence, after the terrible illness which overtook him on his leaving Clough End, he emerged again, shattered but indomitable, to take up the battle of life as he understood it.

He was not an able nor a literary man. His mind was a strange medley, and his mental sight far from clear. Of late the study of Newman had been a revelation to him. But he did not cease for that to read the books of scientific psychology which tortured him — the books which seemed to make of mind a function of matter, and man the slave of an immoral nature. The only persistent and original gift in him — yet after all it is the gift which for ever divides the sheep from the goats — was that of a ‘hunger and thirst after righteousness.’

[315]

#### CHAPTER IV

IT was towards noon on a November day, and Dora Lomax sat working at her embroidery frame in the little sitting-room overlooking Market Place. The pale wintry

sun touched her bent head, her deftly moving hand, and that device of the risen Christ circled in golden flame on which she was at work. The room in which she sat was old and low; the ceiling bulged here and there, the floor had unexpected slopes and declivities. The furniture was of the cheapest, the commonest odds and ends of a broker's shop, for the most part. There was the usual horsehair suite, the usual cheap side-board, and dingy druggeting of a large geometrical pattern. But amid these uninviting articles there were a few things which gave the room individuality — some old prints of places abroad, of different shapes and sizes, which partly disguised the blue and chocolate paper on the walls; some bits of foreign carving, Swiss and Italian; some eggs and shells and stuffed birds, some of these last from the Vosges, some from the Alps; a cageful of canaries, singing their best against the noise of Manchester; and, lastly, an old bookcase full of miscellaneous volumes, mostly large and worthless

[316]

'sets' of old magazines and encyclopaedias, which represented the relics of Daddy's bookselling days.

The room smelt strongly of cooking, a mingled odour of boiling greens and frying onions and stored apples which never deserted it, and produced a constant slight sense of nausea in Dora, who, like most persons of sedentary occupation, was in matters of eating and digestion somewhat sensitive and delicate. From below, too, there seemed to spread upwards a general sense of bustle and disquiet. Doors banged, knives and plates rattled perpetually, the great swing-door into the street was for ever opening and shutting, each time shaking the old, frail house with its roughly built additions through and through, and there was a distant skurry of voices that never paused. The restaurant indeed was in full work, and Daddy's voice could be heard at intervals, shouting and chattering. Dora had been at work since half-past seven, marketing, giving orders, making up accounts, writing bills of fare, and otherwise organising the work of the day. Now she had left the work for an hour or two to her father, and the stout Lancashire cook with her various hand-maidens. Daddy's irritable pride liked to get her out of the

way and make a lady of her as much as she would allow, and in her secret heart she often felt that her embroidery, for which she was well paid as a skilled and inventive hand, furnished a securer basis for their lives than this restaurant, which, in spite of its apparent success, was a frequent source of dread and discomfort

[317]

to her. The money obligation it involved filled her sometimes with a kind of panic. She knew her father so well!

Now, as she sat absorbed in her work, sewing her heart into it, for every stitch in it delighted not only her skilled artistic sense but her religious feeling, little waves of anxious thought swept across her one after another. She was a person of timid and brooding temperament, and her father's eccentricities and past history provided her with much just cause for worry. But to-day she was not thinking much of him.

Again and again there came between her and her silks a face, a face of careless pride and power, framed in strong waves of black hair. It had once repelled her quite as much as it attracted her. But at any rate, ever since she had first seen it, it had taken a place apart in her mind, as though in the yielding stuff of memory and feeling one impression out of the thousands of every day had, without warning, yet irrevocably, stamped itself deeper than the rest. The owner of it — David Grieve — filled her now, as always, with invincible antagonisms and dissents. But still the thought of him had in some gradual way become of late part of her habitual consciousness, associated always, and on the whole painfully associated, with the thought of Lucy Purcell.

For Lucy was such a little goose! To think of the way in which she had behaved towards young Grieve in the fortnight succeeding his notice to quit, before he

[318]

finally left Purcell's service, made Dora hot all over. How could Lucy demean herself so? and show such tempers and airs towards a man who clearly did not think anything at

all about her? And now she had flung herself upon Dora, imploring her cousin to help her, and threatening desperate things unless she and David were still enabled to meet. And meanwhile Purcell had flatly forbidden any communication between his household and the young reprobate he had turned out, whose threatened prosperity made at this moment the angry preoccupation of his life.

What was Dora to do? Was she to aid and abet Lucy, against her father's will, in pursuing David Grieve? And if in spite of all appearances the little self-willed creature succeeded, and Dora were the means of her marrying David, how would Dora's conscience stand? Here was a young man who believed in nothing, and openly said so, who took part in those terrible atheistical meetings and discussions, which, as Father Russell had solemnly said, were like a plague- centre in Manchester, drawing in and corrupting soul after soul. And Dora was to help in throwing her young cousin, while she was still almost a child with no 'Church principles' to aid and protect her, into the hands of this enemy of the Lord and His Church?

Then, when it came to this point, Dora would be troubled and drawn away by memories of young Grieve's talk and ways, of his dashes into Market Place to see Daddy since he had set up for himself, of his

[319]

bold plans for the future which delighted Daddy and took her breath away; of the flash of his black eyes; the triumphant energy of his youth; and those indications in him, too, which had so startled her of late since they — she and he — had dropped the futile sparrings in which their acquaintance began, of an inner softness, a sensitive magnetic something — indescribable.

Dora's needle paused in mid-air. Then her hand dropped on her lap. A slight but charming smile — born of youth, sympathy, involuntary admiration — dawned on her face. She sat so for a minute or two lost in reminiscence.

The clock outside struck twelve. Dora with a start felt along the edge of her frame under her work and brought out a book. It was a little black, worn manual of

prayers for various times and occasions compiled by a High Church dignitary. For Dora it had a talismanic virtue. She turned now to one of the ‘Prayers for Noonday,’ made the sign of the cross, and slipped on to her knees for an instant. Then she rose happily and went back to her work. It was such acts as this that made the thread on which her life of mystical emotion was strung.

But her father was a Secularist of a pronounced type, and her mother had been a rigid Baptist, old-fashioned and sincere, filled with a genuine horror of Papistry and all its ways.

Adrian O’Connor Lomax, to give Daddy his whole

[320]

magnificent name, was the son of a reed-maker, of Irish extraction, at Hyde, and was brought up at first to follow his father’s trade — that of making the wire ‘reed,’ or frame, into which the threads of the warp are fastened before weaving. But such patient drudgery, often continued, as it was in those days, for twelve and fourteen hours out of the twenty-four, was gall and worm-wood to a temperament like Daddy’s. He developed a taste for reading, fell in with Byron’s poems, and caught the fever of them; then branched out into politics just at the time of the first Reform Bill, when all over Lancashire the memory of Peterloo was still burning, and when men like Henry Hunt and Samuel Bamford were the political heroes of every weaver’s cottage. He developed a taste for itinerant lecturing and preaching, and presently left his family and tramped to Manchester.

Here after many vicissitudes — including an enthusiastic and on the whole creditable participation, as an itinerant lecturer, in the movement for the founding of Mechanics’ Institutes, then spreading all over the north — Daddy, to his ill-fortune, came across his future brother-in-law, the bookseller Purcell. At the moment Daddy was in a new and unaccustomed phase of piety. After a period of revolutionary spouting, in which Byron, Tom Paine, and the various publications of Richard Carlile had formed

his chief scriptures, a certain Baptist preacher laid hold of the Irishman's mercurial sense. Daddy was awakened and converted, burnt his Byron and his

[321]

Tom Paine in his three-pair back with every circumstance of insult and contumely, and looked about for an employer worthy of one of the elect. Purcell at the time had a shop in one of the main streets connecting Manchester and Salford; he was already an elder at the chapel Daddy frequented; the two made acquaintance and Lomax became Purcell's assistant. At the moment the trade offered to him attracted Daddy vastly. He had considerable pretensions to literature; was a Shakespearian, a debater, and a haunter of a certain literary symposium, held for a long time at one of the old Manchester inns, and attended by most of the small wits and poets of a then small and homely town. The gathering had nothing saintly about it; free drinking went often hand in hand with free thought Daddy's infant zeal was shocked, but Daddy's instincts were invincible, and he went.

The result of the bookselling experiment has been already told by Daddy himself. It was, of course, inevitable. Purcell was then a young man, but in his dealings with Daddy he showed precisely the same castiron self-importance, the same slowness of brain coupled with the same assumptions of an unbounded and righteous authority, the same unregenerate greediness in small matters of gain and loss which now in his later life had made him odious to David Grieve. Moreover, Daddy, by a happy instinct, had at once made common cause with Purcell's downtrodden sister, going on even, as his passionate sense of opposition developed,

[322]

to make love to the poor humble thing mainly for the sake of annoying the brother. The crisis came; the irritated tyrant brought down a heavy hand, and Daddy and Isabella disappeared together from the establishment in Chapel Street.

By the time Daddy had set up as the husband of Purcell's sister in a little shop precisely opposite to that of his former employer, he had again thrown over all pretensions to sanctity, was, on the contrary, convinced afresh that all religion was one vast perennial imposture, dominated, we may suppose, in this as in most other matters, by the demon of hatred which now possessed him towards his brother-in-law. His wife, poor soul, was beginning to feel herself tied for good to the tail of a comet destined to some mad career or other, and quite uncontrollable by any efforts of hers. Lomax had married her for the most unpromising reasons in the world, and he soon tired of her, and of the trade, which required a sustained effort, which he was incapable of giving. As long as Purcell remained opposite, indeed, hate and rivalry kept him up to the mark. He was an attractive figure at that time, with his long fair hair and his glancing greenish eyes; and his queer discursive talk attracted many a customer, whom he would have been quite competent to keep had his character been of the same profitable stuff as his ability.

But when Purcell vanished across the river into Manchester, the zest of Daddy's bookselling enterprise departed also. He began to neglect his shop,

[323]

was off here and there lecturing and debating, and when he came back again it was plain to the wife that their scanty money had been squandered on other excesses than those of talk. At last the business fell to ruins, and debts pressed. Then suddenly Daddy was persuaded by a French commercial traveller to take up his old trade of reed-making, and go and seek employment across the Channel, where reed-makers were said to be in demand.

In ecstasy at the idea of travel thus presented to him, Daddy devoured what books about France he could get hold of, and tried to teach himself French. Then one morning, without a word to his wife, he stole downstairs and out of the shop, and was far on the road to London before his flight was discovered. His poor wife shed some tears, but he had ceased to care for her she believed, largely because she had brought

him no children, and his habits had begun to threaten to lead her with unpleasant rapidity to the workhouse. So she took comfort, and with the help of some friends set up a little stationery and fancy business, which just kept her alive.

Meanwhile Lomax found no work in Picardy, whither he had first gone, and ultimately wandered across France to Alsace, in search of bread, a prey to all possible hardships and privations. But nothing daunted him. The glow of adventure and romance was on every landscape. Cathedrals, forests, the wide river-plains of central France, with their lights and distances,

[324]

— all things on this new earth and under these new heavens ‘haunted him like a passion.’ He travelled in perpetual delight, making love no doubt here and there to some passing Mignon, and starving with the gayest of hearts.

At Mulhausen he found work, and being ill and utterly destitute, submitted to it for a while. But as soon as he had got back his health and saved some money, he set out again, walking this time, staff in hand, over the whole Rhine country and into the Netherlands. There in the low Dutch plains he fell ill again, and the beauty of the Rhineland was no longer there to stand like a spell between him and the pains of poverty. He seemed to come to himself, after a dream in which the world and all its forms had passed him by ‘apparelled in celestial light.’ And the process of self-finding was attended by some at least of those salutary pangs which eternally belong to it. He suddenly took a resolution, crept on board a coal smack going from a Dutch port to Grimsby, toiled across Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, and appeared one evening, worn to a shadow, in his wife’s little shop in Salford.

He was received as foolish women in whom there is no ineradicable taint of cruelty or hate will always receive the prodigal who returns. And when Daddy had been fed and clothed, he turned out for a time to be so amiable, so grateful a Daddy, such good company, as he sat in the chair by his wife’s fire and told stories of his travels to her and anybody else who might drop in,

[325]

that not only the wife but the neighbourhood was appeased. His old friends came back to him, he began to receive overtures to write in some of the humbler papers, to lecture on his adventures in the Yorkshire and Lancashire towns. Daddy expanded, harangued, grew daily in good looks and charm under his wife's eyes.

At last one day the papers came in with news of Louis Philippe's overthrow. Daddy grew restless, and began to study the foreign news with avidity. Revolution spread, and what with democracy abroad and Chartism at home, there was more stimulus in the air than such brains as Daddy's could rightly stand. One May day he walked into the street, looked hesitatingly up and down it, shading his eyes against the sun. Then with a shake of his long hair, as of one throwing off a weight, he drew his hat from under his arm, put it on felt in his pockets, and set off at a run, head downwards, while poor Isabella Lomax was sweeping her kitchen. During the next few days he was heard of, rumour said, now here, now there, but one might as well have attempted to catch and hold the Pied Piper.

He was away for rather more than twenty months. Then one day, as before, a lean, emaciated, sun-browned figure came slowly up the Salford street, looking for a familiar door. It was Daddy. He went into the shop, which was empty, stared, with a countenance in which relief and repulsion were oddly mingled, at the boxes of stationery, at the dusty counter with its string and

[326]

glass cases, when suddenly the inside door, which was standing ajar, was pushed stealthily inwards, and a child stood in the doorway. It was a tottering baby of a year old, holding in one fat hand a crust of bread which it had been sucking. When it saw the stranger it looked at him gravely for a second. Then without a trace of fear or shyness it came forward, holding up its crust appealingly, its rosy chin and lips still covered with bread-crumbs.

Daddy stared at the apparition, which seemed to him the merest witchcraft. For it was himself, dwarfed to babyhood and pinafores. His eyes, his prominent brow, his colour, his trick of holding the head — they were all there, absurdly there

He gave a cry, which was answered by another cry from behind. His wife stood in the door. The stout, foolish Isabella was white to the lips. Even she felt the awe, the poetry of the moment.

‘Aye,’ she said, trembling. ‘Aye! it’s yourn. It was born seven months after you left us.’

Daddy, without greeting his wife, threw himself down by the babe, and burst into tears. He had come back in a still darker mood than on his first return, his egotistical belief in himself more rudely shaken than ever by the attempts, the failures, the miseries of the last eighteen months. For one illuminating moment he saw that he was a poor fool, and that his youth was squandered and gone. But in its stead, there — dropped suddenly beside him by the forgiving gods — stood this

[327]

new youth sprung from his, and all his own, this child — Dora.

He took to her with a passion which the trembling Isabella thought a great deal too excessive to last. But though the natural Daddy very soon reappeared, with all the aggravating peculiarities which belonged to him, the passion did last, and the truant strayed no more. He set up a small printing business with the help of some old customers — it was always characteristic of the man that, be his failings what they might, he never lacked friends — and with lecturing and writing, and Isabella’s shop, they struggled on somehow. Isabella’s life was hard enough. Daddy was only good when he was happy; and at other times he dipped recklessly into vices which would have been the ruin of them all had they been persistent. But by some kind fate he always emerged, and more and more, as years went on, owing to Dora. He drank, but not hopelessly; he gambled, but not past salvation ; and there was generally, as we have said, some friend at hand to pick the poor besmirched featherbrain out of the mire.

Dora grew up not unhappily. There were shifts and privations to put up with; there were stormy days when life seemed a hurricane of words and tears. But there were bright spaces in between, when Daddy had good resolutions, or a little more money than usual; and with every year the daughter instinctively knew that her spell over her father strengthened. She was on the whole a serious child, with fair pale hair, much

[328]

given to straying in long loose ends about her prominent brow and round cheeks. Yet at the Baptist school, whither she was sent, she was certainly popular. She had a passion for the little ones; and her grey-blue eyes, over which in general the fringed lids drooped too much, had a charming trick of sudden smiles, when the soft soul behind looked for an instant clearly and blithely out. At home she was a little round-shouldered drudge in her mother's service. At chapel she sat very patiently and happily under a droning minister, and when the inert and despondent Isabella would have let most of her religious duties drop, in the face of many troubles and a scoffing husband, the child of fourteen gently and persistently held her to them.

At last, however, when Dora was seventeen, Isabella died of cancer, and Daddy, who had been much shaken and terrified by her sufferings in her last illness, fell for a while into an irritable melancholy, from which not even Dora could divert him. It was then that he seemed for the first time to cross the line which had hitherto divided him from ruin. The drinking at the White Horse, where the literary circle met of which Lomax had been so long an ornament, had been of late going from bad to worse. The households of the wits concerned were up in arms; neighbourhood and police began to assert themselves. One night the trembling Dora waited hour after hour for her father. About midnight he staggered in, maddened with drink and fresh from a skirmish with the police. Finding her there

[329]

waiting for him, pale and silent, he did what he had never done before under any stress of trouble — struck and swore at her. Dora sank down with a groan, and in another minute Lomax was dashing his head against the wall, vowing that he would beat his brains out. In the hours that followed, Dora's young soul was stretched as it were on a rack, from which it rose, not weakened, but with new powers and a loftier stature. All her girlish levities and illusions seemed to drop away from her. She saw her mission, and took her squalid Oedipus in charge.

Next morning she went to some of her father's friends, unknown to Daddy, and came back with a light in her blanched face, bearing the offer of some work on a Radical paper at Leicester. Daddy, now broken and miserable, submitted, and off" they went.

At Leicester the change of moral and physical climate produced for a while a wonderful effect. Daddy found himself marvellously at ease among the Secularist and Radical stockingers of the town, and soon became well known to them as a being half butt, half oracle. Dora set herself to learn dressmaking, and did her best to like the new place and the new people. It was at Leicester, a place seething with social experiment in its small provincial way, with secularism, Owenism, anti-vaccination, and much else, that Lomax fell a victim to one 'ism the more — to vegetarianism. It was there that, during an editorial absence, and in the

[330]

first fervour of conversion, Daddy so belaboured a carnivorous world in the columns of the 'Penny Banner' for which he worked, and so grotesquely and persistently reduced all the problems of the time to terms of nitrogen and albumen, that curt dismissal came upon him, and for a time Dora saw nothing but her precarious earnings between them and starvation. It was then also that, by virtue of that queer charm he could always exercise when he pleased, he laid hold on a young Radical manufacturer and got out of him a loan of 200l. for the establishment of a vegetarian restaurant wherein Leicester was to be taught how to feed.

But Leicester, alas! remained unregenerate. In the midst of Daddy's preparations a commercial traveller, well known both to Manchester and Leicester, repeated to him one day a remark of Purcell's, to the effect that since Daddy's migration Manchester had been well rid of a vagabond, and he, Purcell, of a family disgrace. Daddy, bursting with fatuous rage, and possessed besides of the wildest dreams of fortune on the strength of his 2001., straightway made up his mind to return to Manchester, 'pull Purcell's nose,' and plant himself and his prosperity that was to be in the bookseller's eyes. He broke in upon Dora at her work, and poured into her astonished ears a stream of talk, marked by a mad inventiveness, partly in the matter of vegetarian receipts, still more in that of Purcell's future discomforts. When Daddy was once launched into a subject that suited him, he was inexhaustible.

[331]

His phrases flowed for ever; of words he was always sure. Like a certain French talker, 'his sentences were like cats; he showered them into air and they found their feet without trouble.'

Dora sat through it, bewildered and miserable. Go back to Manchester where they had been so unhappy, where the White Horse and its crew were waiting for her father, simply to get into debt and incur final ruin for the sake of a mad fancy she humoured but could not believe in, and a still madder thirst for personal vengeance on a man who was more than a match for anything Daddy could do! She was in despair.

But Daddy was obdurate, brutal in his determination to have his way; and when she angered him with her remonstrances, he turned upon her with an irritable —

'I know what it is — damn it! It's that Puseyite gang you've taken up with — you think of nothing but them. As if you couldn't find antics and petticoats and priests in Manchester — they're everywhere — like weeds. Wherever there's a dunghill of human credulity they swarm.'

Dora looked proudly at her father, as though disdaining to reply, gentle creature that she was; then she bent again over her work, and a couple of tears fell on the seam she was sewing.

Aye, it was true enough. In leaving Leicester, after these two years, she was leaving what to her had been a spiritual birthplace, — tearing asunder a new and tender growth of the soul.

[332]

This was how it had come about.

On her first arrival in Leicester, in a *milieu* that is to say, where at the time ‘Gavroche,’ as M. Renan calls him — the street philosopher who is no less certain and no more rational than the street preacher — reigned supreme, where her Secularist father and his associates, hot-headed and early representatives of a phase of thought which has since then found much abler, though hardly less virulent, expression in such a paper, say, as the ‘National Reformer,’ were for ever rending and trampling on all the current religious images and ideas, Dora shrank into herself more and more. She had always been a Baptist because her mother was. But in her deep reaction against her father’s associates, the chapel which she frequented did not now satisfy her. She hungered for she knew not what, certain fastidious artistic instincts awakening the while in unexpected ways.

Then one Easter Eve, as she came back from an errand into the outskirts of the town, she passed a little iron church standing in a very poor neighbourhood, where, as she knew, a ‘Puseyite’ curate in charge officiated, and where a good many disturbances which had excited the populace had taken place. She went in. The curate, a long, gaunt figure, of a familiar monkish type, was conducting ‘vespers’ for the benefit of some twenty hearers, mostly women in black. The little church was half decorated for Easter, though the altar had still its Lenten bareness. Something

[333]

in the ordering of the place, in its colours, its scents, in the voice of the priest, in the short address he delivered after the service, dwelling in a tone of intimate emotion, the tone of the pastor to the souls he guides and knows, on the preparation needful for the Easter Eucharist, struck home to Dora. Next day she was present at the Easter festival. Never had religion spoken so touchingly to her before as through these hymns, these flowers, this incense, this Eucharistic ceremonial wherein — being the midday celebration — the congregation were merely hushed spectators of the most pathetic and impressive act in the religious symbolism of mankind. In the dark corner where she had hidden herself, Dora felt the throes of some new birth within her. In six weeks from that time she had been admitted, after instruction, to the Anglican communion.

Thenceforward another existence began for this child of English Dissent, in whom, however, some old Celtic leaven seems to have always kept up a vague unrest, till the way of mystery and poetry was found.

Daddy — the infidel Daddy — stormed a good deal, and lamented himself still more, when these facts became known to him. Dora had become a superstitious, priest-ridden dolt, of no good to him or anyone else any more. What, indeed, was to become of him? Natural affection cannot stand against the priest. A daughter cannot love her father and go to confession. Down with the abomination — *écrasez l'infâme!*

[334]

Dora smiled sadly and went her way. Against her sweet silent tenacity Daddy measured himself in vain. She would be a good daughter to him, but she would be a good churchwoman first. He began to perceive in her that germ of detachment from things earthly and human which all ceremonialism produces, and in a sudden terror gave way and opposed her no more. Afterwards, in a curious way, he came even to relish the change in her. The friends it brought her, the dainty ordering of the little flower-decked oratory she made for herself in one corner of her bare attic room, the sweet sobriety and refinement which her new loves and aspirations and self-denials

brought with them into the house, touched the poetical instincts which were always dormant in the queer old fellow, and besides flattered some strong and secret ambitions which he cherished for his daughter. It appeared to him to have raised her socially, to have made a lady of her — this joining the Church. Well, the women must have some religious bag or other to run their heads into, and the Church bag perhaps was the most seemly.

On the day of their return to Manchester, Daddy, sitting with crossed arms and legs in a corner of the railway carriage, might have sat for a fairy-book illustration of Rumpelstilzchen. His old peaked hat, which he had himself brought from the Tyrol, fell forward over his frowning brow, his cloak was caught fiercely about him, and, as the quickly-passing milltowns

[335]

began to give notice of Manchester as soon as the Derbyshire vales were left behind, his glittering eyes disclosed an inward fever — a fever of contrivance and of hate. He was determined to succeed, and equally determined to make his success Purcell's annoyance.

Dora sat opposite, with her bird-cage on her knee, looking sad and weary. She had left behind, perhaps for ever, the dear friends who had opened to her the way of holiness, and guided her first steps. Her eyes filled with tears of gratitude and emotion as she thought of them.

Two things only were pleasant to remember. One was that the Church embroidery she had begun in her young zeal at Leicester, using her odds and ends of time, to supplement the needs of a struggling church depending entirely on voluntary contributions, was now probably to become her trade. For she had shown remarkable aptitude for it; and she earned introductions to a large church-furniture shop in Manchester which would almost certainly employ her.

The other was the fact that somewhere in Manchester she had a girl-cousin — Lucy Purcell — who must be about sixteen. Purcell had married after his migration to

Half Street; his wife proved to be delicate and died in a few years; this little girl was all that was left to him. Dora had only seen her once or twice in her life. The enmity between Lomax and Purcell of course kept the families apart, and, after her mother's early death.

[336]

Purcell sent his daughter to a boarding-school and so washed his hands of the trouble of her bringing up. But in spite of these barriers Dora well remembered a slim, long-armed schoolgirl, much dressed and becurled, who once in a by-street of Salford had run after her and, looking round carefully to see that no one was near, had thrust an eager face into hers and kissed her suddenly. 'Dora, — is your mother better? I wish I could come and see you. Oh, it's horrid of people to quarrel! But I mustn't stay, — some one 'll see, and I should just catch it! Good-bye, Dora!' and so another kiss, very hasty and frightened, but very welcome to the cheek it touched.

As they neared Manchester, Dora, in her loneliness of soul, thought very tenderly of Lucy — wondered how she had grown up, whether she was pretty and many other things. She had certainly been a pretty child. Of course they must know each other and be friends. Dora could not let her father's feud come between her and her only relation. Purcell might keep them apart; but she would show him she meant no harm; and she would bring her father round — she would and must.

Two years had gone by. Of Daddy's two objects in leaving Leicester, one had so far succeeded better than any rational being would have foreseen.

On the first morning after their arrival he went out, giving Dora the slip lest she might cramp him inconveniently in his decision; and came back radiant, having

[337]

taken a deserted seed-shop in Market Place, which had a long, irregular addition at the back, formerly a ware-house, providentially suited, so Daddy declared, to the purposes

of a restaurant. The rent he had promised to give seemed to Dora a crime, considering their resources. The thought of it, the terror of the servants he was engaging, the knowledge of the ridicule and blame with which their old friends regarded her father's proceedings, these things kept the girl awake night after night.

But he would hear no remonstrances, putting all she had to say aside with an arrogant boastfulness, which never failed.

In they went. Dora set her teeth and did her best, keeping as jealous a watch on the purse-strings as she could, and furnishing their three rooms above the shop for as few shillings as might be, while Daddy was painting and decorating, composing *menus*, and ransacking recipes with the fever of an artist, now writing letters to the Manchester papers, or lecturing to audiences in the Mechanics' Institute and the different working men's clubs, and now plastering the shop-front with grotesque labels, or posing at his own doorway and buttonholing the passers-by in the Tyrolese brigand's costume which was his favourite garb.

The thing took. There is a certain mixture of prophet and mountebank which can be generally counted upon to hit the popular fancy, and Daddy attained to it. Moreover, the moment was favourable.

[338]

After the terrible strain of the cotton-famine and the horrors of the cholera, Manchester was prosperous again. Trade was brisk, and the passage of the new Reform Bill had given a fresh outlet and impulse to the artisan mind which did but answer to the social and intellectual advance made by the working classes since '32. The huge town was growing fast, was seething with life, with ambitions, with all the passions and ingenuities that belong to gain and money-making and the race for success. It was pre-eminently a city of young men of all nationalities, three-fourths constantly engaged in the chase for money, according to their degrees — here for shillings, there for sovereigns, there for thousands. In such a *milieu* any man has a chance who offers to deal afresh on new terms with those daily needs which both goad and fetter the

struggling multitude at every step. Vegetarianism had, in fact, been spreading in Manchester; one or two prominent workmen's papers were preaching it; and just before Daddy's advent there had been a great dinner in a public hall, where the speedy advent of a regenerate and frugivorous mankind, with length of days in its right hand, and a captivating abundance of small moneys in its waistcoat pocket, had been freely and ardently prophesied.

So Daddy for once seized the moment, and succeeded like the veriest Philistine. On the opening day the restaurant was crowded from morning till night. Dora, with her two cooks in the suffocating kitchen

[339]

behind, had to send out the pair of panting, perspiring kitchen-boys again and again for fresh supplies; while Daddy, at his wits' end for waiters, after haranguing a group of customers on the philosophy of living, amid a tumult of mock cheers and laughter, would rush in exasperated to Dora, to say that never again would he trust her niggardly ways — she would be the ruin of him with her economies.

When at night the doors were shut at last on the noise and the crowd, and Daddy sat, with his full cash-box open on his knee, while the solitary gaslight that remained threw a fantastic and colossal shadow of him over the rough floor of the restaurant, Dora came up to him dropping with fatigue. He looked at her, his gaunt face working, and burst into tears.

'Dora, we never had any money before, not when — when — your mother was alive.'

And she knew that by a strange reaction there had come suddenly upon him the memory of those ghastly months when she and he through the long hours of every day had been forced — baffled and helpless — to watch her mother's torture, and when the sordid struggle for daily bread was at its worst, robbing death of all its dignity, and pity of all its power to help.

Do what she would, she could hardly get him to give up the money and go to bed. He was utterly unstrung, and his triumph for the moment lay bitter in the mouth.

It was now two years since that opening day.

[340]

During that time the Parlour had become a centre after its sort — a scandal to some and a delight to others. The native youth got his porridge, and apple pie, and baked potato there; but the place was also largely haunted by the foreign clerks of Manchester. There was, for instance, a company of young Frenchmen who lunched there habitually, and in whose society the delighted Daddy caught echoes from that unprejudiced life of Paris or Lyons, which had amazed and enlightened his youth. The place assumed a stamp and character. To Daddy the development of his own popularity, which was like the emergence of a new gift, soon became a passion. He deliberately ‘ran’ his own eccentricities as part of the business. Hence his dress, his menus, his advertisements, and all the various antics which half regaled, half scandalised the neighbourhood. Dora marvelled and winced, and by dint of an habitual tolerance retained the power of stopping some occasional enormity.

As to finances, they were not making their fortune; far from it; but to Dora’s amazement, considering her own inexperience and her father’s flightiness, they had paid their way and something more. She was no born woman of business, as any professional accountant examining her books might have discovered. But she had a passionate determination to defraud no one, and somehow, through much toil her conscience did the work. Meanwhile every month it astonished her freshly that they two should be succeeding! Success was so

[341]

little in the tradition of their tattered and variegated lives. Could it last? At the bottom of her mind lay a constant presentiment of new change, founded no doubt on her knowledge of her father.

But outwardly there was little to justify it. The craving for drink seemed to have left him altogether — a not uncommon effect of this particular change of diet. And his hatred of Purcell, though in itself it had proved quite unmanageable by all her arts, had done nobody much harm. In a society dependent on law and police there are difficulties in the way of a man's dealing primitively with his enemy. There had been one or two awkward meetings between the two in the open street; and at the Parlour, among his special intimates, Daddy had elaborated a Purcell myth of a Pecksniffian character which his invention perpetually enriched. On the whole, however, it was in his liking for young Grieve, originally a casual customer at the restaurant, that Dora saw the chief effects of the feud. He had taken the lad up eagerly as soon as he had discovered both his connection with Purcell and his daring rebellious temper; had backed him up in all his quarrels with his master; had taken him to the Hall of Science, and introduced him to the speakers there; and had generally paraded him as a secularist convert, snatched from the very jaws of the Baptist.

And now! — now that David was in open opposition, attracting Purcell's customers, taking Purcell's water, Daddy was in a tumult; of delight: wheeling off old

[342]

books of his own, such as 'The Journal of Theology' and the 'British Controversialist,' to fill up David's stall, running down whenever business was slack to see how the lad was getting on; and meanwhile advertising him with his usual extravagance among the frequenters of the Parlour.

All through, however, or rather since Miss Purcell had returned from school, Dora and her little cousin Lucy had been allowed to meet. Lomax saw his daughter depart on her visits to Half Street, in silence; Purcell, when he first recognised her, hardly spoke to her. Dora believed, what was in fact the truth, that each regarded her as

a means of keeping an eye on the other. She conveyed information from the hostile camp — therefore she was let alone.

[343]

## CHAPTER V

‘WHY — Lucy!’

Dora was still bending over her work when a well-known tap at the door startled her meditations.

Lucy put her head in, and, finding Dora alone, came in with a look of relief. Settling herself in a chair opposite Dora, she took off her hat, smoothed the coils of hair to which it had been pinned, unbuttoned the smart little jacket of pilot cloth, and threw back the silk handkerchief inside; and all with a feverish haste and irritation as though everything she touched vexed her.

‘What’s the matter, Lucy?’ said Dora, after a little pause. At the moment of Lucy’s entrance she had been absorbed in a measurement.

‘Nothing!’ said Lucy quickly. ‘Dora, you’ve got your hair loose!’

Dora put up her hand patiently. She was accustomed to be put to rights. It was characteristic at once of her dreaminess and her powers of self-discipline that she was fairly orderly, though she had great difficulty in being so. Without a constant struggle, she would have had loose plaits and hanging strings about

[344]

her always. Lucy’s trimness was a perpetual marvel to her. It was like the contrast between the soft indeterminate lines of her charming face and Lucy’s small, sharply cut features.

Lucy, still restless, began tormenting the feather in her hat.

‘When are you going to finish that, Dora?’ she asked, nodding towards the frame.

‘Oh it won’t be very long now,’ said Dora, putting her head on one side that she might take a general survey, at once loving and critical, of her work.

‘You oughtn’t to sit so close at it,’ said Lucy decidedly; ‘you’ll spoil your complexion.’

‘I’ve none to spoil.’

‘Oh, yes, you have, Dora — that’s so silly of you. You aren’t sallow a bit. It’s pretty to be pale like that. Lots of people say so — not quite so pale as you are sometimes, perhaps — but I know why *that* is,’ said Lucy, with a half-malicious emphasis.

A slight pink rose in Dora’s cheeks, but she bent over her frame and said nothing.

‘Does your clergyman *tell* you to fast in Lent, Dora — who tells you?’

‘The Church!’ replied Dora, scandalised and looking up with bright eyes. ‘I wish you understood things a little more, Lucy.’

‘I can’t,’ said Lucy, with a pettish sigh, ‘and I don’t care twopence!’

She threw herself back in her rickety chair. Her

[345]

arm dropped over the side, and she lay staring at the ceiling. Dora went on with her work in silence for a minute, and then looked up to see a tear dropping from Lucy’s cheek on to the horsehair covering of the chair.

‘Lucy, what is the matter? — I knew there was something wrong!’

Lucy sat up and groped energetically for her handkerchief.

‘You wouldn’t care,’ she said, her lips quivering — ‘nobody cares!’

And, sinking down again, she hid her face and fairly burst out sobbing. Dora, in alarm, pushed aside her frame and tried to caress and console her. But Lucy held her off, and in a second or two was angrily drying her eyes.

‘Oh, you can’t do any good, Dora — not the least good. It’s father — you know well enough what it is — I shall never get on with father if I live to be a hundred!’

‘Well, you haven’t had long to try in,’ said Dora, smiling.

‘Quite long enough to know,’ replied Lucy, drearily. ‘I know I shall have a horrid life — I must. Nobody can help it. Do you know we’ve got another shopman, Dora?’

The tone of childish scorn she threw into the question was inimitable. Dora with difficulty kept from laughing.

[346]

‘Well, what’s he like?’

‘*Like?* He’s like — like nothing,’ said Lucy, whose vocabulary was not extensive. ‘He’s fat and ugly — wears spectacles. Father says he’s a treasure — to me — and then when they’re in the shop I hear him going on at him like anything for being a stupid. And I have to give the creature tea when father’s away. He’s so shy he always upsets something. Mary Ann and I have to clear up after him as though he were a school-child. — And father gets in a regular passion if I ask him about the dance — and there’s a missionary tea next week, and he’s made me take a table — and he wants me to teach in Sunday School — and the minister’s wife has been talking to him about my dress — and — and — No, I can’t stand it, Dora — I can’t and I won’t!’

And Lucy, gulping down fresh tears, sat intensely upright, and looked frowningly at Dora as though defying her to take the matter lightly.

Dora was perplexed. Deep in her dove-like soul lay the fiercest views about Dissent — that rent in the seamless vesture of Christ, as she had learnt to consider it. Her mother had been a Baptist till her death, she herself till she was grown up. But now she had all the zeal — nay, even the rancour — of the convert. It was one of her inmost griefs that her own change had not come earlier — before her mother’s death. Then perhaps her mother, her poor — poor — mother, might have changed with her. It went against her to urge Lucy to make herself a good Baptist.

[347]

‘It’s no wonder Uncle Tom wants you to do what he likes,’ she said slowly. ‘But if you don’t take to chapel, Lucy — if you want something different, perhaps —’

‘Oh, I don’t want any *church* thank you,’ cried Lucy, up in arms. ‘I don’t want *anybody* ordering me about. Why can’t I go my own way a bit, and amuse myself as I please? It is too, *too* bad!’

Dora did not know what more to say. She went on with her work, thinking about it all. Suddenly Lucy astonished her by a question in another voice.

‘Have you seen Mr. Grieve’s shop, Dora?’

‘Dora looked up.

‘No. Father’s been there a good many times. He says it’s capital for a beginning and he’s sure to get on fast. There’s one or two very good sort of customers been coming lately. There’s the Earl of Driffield, I think it is — don’t you remember, Lucy, it was he gave that lecture with the magic lantern at the Institute you and I went to last summer. He’s a queer sort of gentleman. Well, he’s been coming several times and giving orders. And there’s some of the college gentlemen; oh, and a lot of others. They all seem to think he’s so clever, father says —’

‘I know the Earl of Driffield quite well,’ said Lucy loftily. ‘He used to be always coming to our place, and I’ve tied up his books for him sometimes. I don’t see what’s the good of being an earl — not to go about like that. And father says he’s got a grand place near

[348]

Stalybridge too. Well, if *he’s* gone to Mr. Grieve, father ’ll be just mad.’ Lucy pursed up her small mouth with energy. Dora evaded the subject.

‘He says when he’s quite settled,’ she resumed presently, ‘we’re to go and have supper with him for a house-warming.’

Lucy looked ready to cry again.

‘He couldn’t ask me — of course he couldn’t,’ she said, indistinctly. ‘Dora — Dora!’

‘Well? Oh, don’t mix up my silks, Lucy; I shall never get them right again.’

Lucy reluctantly put them down.

‘Do you think, Dora, Mr. Grieve cares anything at all about me?’ she said at last, hurrying out the words, and looking Dora in the face, very red and bold.

Dora laughed outright.

‘I knew you were going to ask that!’ she said. ‘Perhaps I’ve been asking myself!’

Lucy said nothing, but the tears dropped again down her cheeks and on to her small quivering hands — all the woman awake in her.

Dora pushed her frame away, and put her arm round her cousin, quite at a loss what to say for the best.

Another woman would have told Lucy plumply that she was a little fool; that in the first place young Grieve had never shown any signs of making love to her at all; and that, in the second, if he had, her father would never let her marry him without a struggle which

[349]

nobody could suppose Lucy capable of waging with a man like Purcell. It was all a silly fancy, the whim of a green girl, which would make her miserable for nothing. Mrs. Alderman Head, for instance, Dora’s chaperon for the Institute dance, the sensible, sharp-tongued wife of a wholesale stationer in Market Street, would certainly have taken this view of the matter, and communicated it to Lucy with no more demur than if you had asked her, say, for her opinion on the proper season for bottling gooseberries. But Dora, whose inmost being was one tremulous surge of feeling and emotion, could not approach any matter of love and marriage without a thrill, without a sense of tragedy almost. Besides, like Lucy, she was very young still — just twenty — and youth answers to youth.

‘You know Uncle Tom wouldn’t like it a bit, Lucy,’ she began in her perplexity.

‘I don’t care!’ cried Lucy, passionately. ‘Girls can’t marry to please their fathers. I should have to wait, I suppose. I would get my own way somehow. But what’s the good of talking about it, Dora? I’m sick of thinking about it — sick of everything. He’ll marry somebody else — I know he will — and I shall break my heart, or —’

‘Marry somebody else, too,’ suggested Dora slyly.

Lucy drew herself angrily away, and had to be soothed into forgiving her cousin. The child had, in fact, thought and worried herself by now into such a sincere belief in her own passion, that there was nothing

[350]

for it but to take it seriously. Dora yielded herself to Lucy’s tears and her own tenderness. She sat pondering.

Then, suddenly, she said something very different from what Lucy expected her to say.

‘Oh! if I could get him to go and talk to Father Russell! He’s so wonderful with young men.’

Her hand dropped on to her knee; she looked away from Lucy out of the window, her sweet face one longing.

Lucy was startled, and somewhat annoyed. In her disgust with her father and her anxiety to attract David’s notice, she had so entirely forgotten his religious delinquencies that it seemed fussy and intrusive on Dora’s part to make so much of them. She instinctively resented, too, what sounded to her like a tone of proprietary interest. It was not Dora that was his friend — it was she!

‘I don’t see what you have to do with his opinions, Dora,’ she said stiffly; ‘he isn’t rude to you now as he used to be. Young men are always wild a bit at first.’

And she tossed her head with all the worldly wisdom of seventeen.

Dora sighed and was silent. She fell to her work again, while Lucy wandered restlessly about the room. Presently the child stopped short.

‘Oh! look here, Dora — ’

‘Yes.’

‘Do come round with me and look at some spring

[351]

patterns I’ve got. You might just as well. I know you’ve been slaving your eyes out, and it’s a nice day.’

Dora hesitated, but finally consented. She had been at work for many hours in hot rooms, and meant to work a good many more yet before night. A break would revive her, and there was ample time before the three o’clock dinner which she and her father took together after the midday rush of the restaurant was over. So she put on her things.

On their way Dora looked into the kitchen. Everything was in full work. A stout, red-faced woman was distributing and superintending. On the long charcoal stove which Daddy under old Barbier’s advice had just put up, on the hot plates near, and the glowing range in the background, innumerable pans were simmering and steaming. Here was a table covered with stewed fruits; there another laden with round vegetable pies just out of the oven — while a heap of tomatoes on a third lent their scarlet to the busy picture. Some rays of wintry sun had slipped in through the high windows, and were contending with the steam of the pies and the smoke from the cooking. And in front of all on an upturned box sat a pair of Lancashire lasses, peeling apples at lightning speed, yet not so fast but they could laugh and chat the while, their bright eyes wandering perpetually through the open serving hatches which ran along one side of the room, to the restaurant stretching beyond, with its rows

[352]

of well-filled tables and its passing waitresses in their white caps and aprons.

Dora slipped in among them in her soft deprecating way, smiling at this one and that till she came to the stout cook. There she stopped and asked something. Lucy, standing at the door, saw the huge woman draw a corner of her apron across her eyes.

‘What did you want, Dora?’ she inquired as her cousin rejoined her.

‘It’s her poor boy. He’s in the Infirmary and very bad. I’m sure they think he’s dying. I wanted to send her there this morning and do her work, but she wouldn’t go. There’s no more news — but we mustn’t be long.’

She walked on, evidently thinking with a tender absorption of the mother and son, while Lucy was conscious of her usual impatience with all this endless concern for unknown people, which stood so much in the way of Dora’s giving her full mind to her cousin’s affairs.

Yet, as she knew well, Sarah, the stout cook, had been the chief prop of the Parlour ever since it opened. No other servant had stayed long with Daddy. He was too fantastic and exacting a master. She had stayed — for Dora’s sake — and, from bearing with him, had learnt to manage him. When she came she brought with her a sickly, overgrown lad, the only son of her widowhood, to act as kitchen-boy. He did his poor best for a while, his mother in truth getting through

[353]

most of his work as well as her own, while Dora, who had the weakness for doctoring inherent in all good women, stuffed him with cod-liver oil and ‘strengthening mixtures.’ Then symptoms of acute hip-disease showed themselves, and the lad was admitted to the big Infirmary in Piccadilly. There he had lain for some six or eight weeks now, toiling no more, fretting no more, living on his mother’s and Dora’s visits, and quietly loosening one life-tendril after another. During all this time Dora had thought of him, prayed for him, taught him — the wasted, piteous creature.

When they arrived at Half Street, they let themselves in by the side-door, and Lucy hurried her cousin into the parlour that there might be no meeting with her father, with whom she was on decidedly uncomfortable terms.

The table in the parlour was strewn with patterns from several London shops. To send for them, examine them, and imagine what they would look like when made up was now Lucy's chief occupation. To which might be added a little strumming on the piano, a little visiting — not much, for she hated most of her father's friends, and was at present too closely taken up with self-pity and speculations as to what David Grieve might be doing to make new ones — and a great deal of ordering about of Mary Ann.

Dora sat down, and Lucy pounced on one pattern after another, folding them between her fingers and

[354]

explaining eagerly how this or that would look if it were cut so, or trimmed so.

'Oh, Dora, look — this pink gingham with white spots! Don't you think it's a love? And, you know, pink always suits me, except when it's a blue-pink. But you don't call that a blue-pink, do you? And yet it isn't salmon, certainly — it's something between. It *ought* to suit me, but I declare —' and suddenly, to Dora's dismay, the child flung down the patterns she held with a passionate vehemence — 'I declare nothing seems to suit me now! Dora!' — in a tone of despair — 'Dora! don't you think I'm going off? My complexion's all dull, and — and — why I might be thirty! 'and running over to the glass, draped in green cut-paper, which adorned the mantelpiece, Lucy stood before it examining herself in an agony. And, indeed, there was a change. A touch of some withering blight seemed to have swept across the whole dainty face, and taken the dewy freshness from the eyes. There was fever in it — the fever of fret and mutiny and of a starved self-love.

Dora looked at her cousin with less patience than usual — perhaps because of the inevitable contrast between Lucy's posings and the true heartaches of the world.

‘Lucy, what nonsense! You’re just a bit worried, and you make such a lot of it. Why can’t you be patient?’

‘Because I can’t!’ said Lucy, sombrely, dropping

[355]

into a chair, and letting her arm fall over the back. ‘It’s all very well, Dora. You aren’t in love with a man whom you never see, and whom your father has a spite on! And you won’t do anything to help me — you won’t move a finger. And, of *course* you might!’

‘What could I do, Lucy?’ cried Dora, exasperated. ‘I can’t go and ask young Grieve to marry you. I do wish you’d try and put him out of your head, that I do. You’re too young, and he’s got his business to think about. And while Uncle Tom’s like this, I can’t be always putting myself forward to help you meet him. It would be just the way to make him think something bad — to make him suspect ——’

‘Well, and why shouldn’t he suspect?’ said Lucy, obstinately, her little mouth set and hard; ‘it’s all rubbish about girls leaving it all to the men. If a girl doesn’t show she cares about a man, how’s he to know — and when she don’t meet him — and when her father keeps her shut up — *shameful!*’

She flung the word out through her small, shut teeth, the brows meeting over her flashing eyes.

‘Oh! it’s shameful, is it — eh, Miss Purcell?’ said a harsh, mimicking voice coming from the dark passage leading into the shop.

Lucy sprang up in terror. There on the steps stood her father, bigger, blacker, more formidable than he had ever been in the eyes of the two startled girls. All unknown to them, the two doors which parted them

[356]

from the shop had been slightly ajar, and Purcell, catching their voices as they came in, and already on the watch for his daughter, had maintained a treacherous quiet behind

them. Now he was entirely in his element. He surveyed them both with a dark, contemptuous triumph. What fools women were to be sure!

As he descended the two steps into the parlour the floor shook under his heavy tread. Dora had instinctively thrown her arm round Lucy, who had begun to cry hysterically. She herself was very pale, but after the first start she looked her uncle in the face.

‘Is it you that’s been teaching Lucy these *beautiful* sentiments?’ said Purcell, with ironical emphasis, stopping a yard from them and pointing at Dora, ‘and do you get ‘em from St. Damian’s?’

Dora threw up her head, and flushed. ‘I get nothing from St. Damian’s that I’m ashamed of,’ she said in a proud voice, ‘and I’ve done nothing with Lucy that I’m ashamed of.’

‘No, I suppose not,’ said Purcell dryly; ‘the devil don’t deal much in shame. It’s a losing article.’

Then he looked at Lucy, and his expression suddenly changed. The flame beneath leapt to sight. He caught her arm, dragged her out of Dora’s hold, and shook her as one might shake a kitten.

‘Who were you talking of just now?’ he said to her, holding her by both shoulders, his eyes blazing down upon her.

[357]

Lucy was much too frightened to speak. She stood staring back at him, her breast heaving violently.

Dora came forward in indignation.

‘You’ll get nothing out of her if you treat her like that,’ she said, with spirit, ‘nor out of me either.’

Purcell recovered himself with difficulty. He let Lucy go, and walking up to the mantelpiece stood there, leaning his arm upon it, and looking at the girls from under his hand.

‘What do I want to get out of you?’ he said, with scorn. ‘As if I didn’t know already everything that’s in your silly minds! I guessed already, and now that you have been so obliging as to let your secrets out under my very nose — I *know*! That chit there’ — he pointed to Lucy — all his gestures had a certain theatrical force and exaggeration, springing, perhaps, from his habit of lay preaching — ‘imagines she’s going to marry the young infidel I gave the sack to a while ago. Now don’t she? Are you going to say no to that?’

His loud challenge pushed Dora to extremities, and it was all left to her. Lucy was sobbing on the sofa.

‘I don’t know what she imagines,’ said Dora, slowly, seeking in vain for words; the whole situation was so ridiculous. ‘Are you going to prevent her falling in love with the man she chooses?’

‘Certainly!’ said Purcell, with mocking emphasis. ‘Certainly — since she chooses wrong. The only concern of the godly in these matters is to see that their children are not yoked with unbelievers. Whenever

[358]

I see that young reprobate in the street now, I smell the pit. And it’ll not be long before the Lord tumbles him into it; there’s an end comes to such devil’s fry as that. Oh, they may prosper and thrive, they may revile the children of the Lord, they may lift up the hoof against the poor Christian, but the time comes — *the time comes*.’

His solemnity, at once unctuous and full of vicious meaning, only irritated Dora. But Lucy raised herself from the sofa, and looked suddenly round at her father. Her eyes were streaming, her hair in disorder, but there was a suspicion and intelligence in her look which seemed to give her back self-control. She watched eagerly for what her father might say or do next.

As soon as he saw her sitting up he walked over to her and took her again by the shoulder.

‘Now look here,’ he said to her, holding her tight, ‘let’s finish with this. That young man’s the Lord’s enemy — he’s my enemy — and I’ll teach him a lesson before I’ve done. But that’s neither here nor there. You understand this. If you ever walk out of this door with him, you’ll not walk back into it, with him or without him. I’d have done with you, and *my money* ’Id have done with you. But there’ — and Purcell gave a little scornful laugh, and let her go with a push — ‘*he* don’t care twopence about you — I’ll say that for him.’

Lucy flushed fiercely, and getting up began mechanically to smooth her hair before the glass, with

[359]

will tremulous movements, will and defiance settling on her lip, as she looked at herself and at the reflection of her father.

‘And as for you. Miss Lomax,’ said Purcell deliberately, standing opposite Dora, ‘you’ve been aiding and abetting somehow — I don’t care how. I don’t complain. There was nothing better to be expected of a girl with your parentage and bringing up, and a Puseyite into the bargain. But I warn you you’ll go meddling here once too often before you’ve done. If you’ll take my advice you’ll let other people’s business alone, and mind *your own*. Them that have got Adrian Lomax on their hands needn’t go poaching on their neighbours for something to do.’

He spoke with a slow, vindictive emphasis, and Dora shrank and quivered as though he had struck her. Then by a great effort — the effort of one who had not gone through a close and tender training of the soul for nothing — she put from her both her anger and her fear.

‘You’re cruel to father,’ she said, her voice fluttering; ‘you might be thinking sometimes how straight he’s kept since he took the Parlour. And I don’t believe young Grieve means any harm to you or anybody — and I’m sure I don’t.’

A sob rose in her throat. Anybody less crassly armoured in self-love than Purcell must have been touched. As for him, he turned on his heel.

‘I’ll protect myself, thank you,’ he said dryly; ‘and

[360]

I’ll judge for myself. You can do as you like, and Lucy too, so long as she takes the consequences. Do you understand, Lucy?’

‘Yes,’ said Lucy, facing round upon him, all tremulous passion and rebellion, but she could not meet his fixed, tyrannical eye. Her own wavered and sank. Purcell enjoyed the spectacle of her for a second or two, smiled, and went.

As soon as he was gone, Lucy dragged her cousin to the stairs, and never let her go till Dora was safe in her room and the door bolted.

Dora implored to be released. How could she stay in her uncle’s house after such a scene? and she must get home quickly anyway, as Lucy knew.

Lucy took no notice at all of what she was saying.

‘Look here,’ she said, breaking into the middle of Dora’s appeal, and speaking in an excited whisper — ‘he’s going to do him a mischief I’m certain he is. That’s how he looks when he’s going to pay some one out. Now, what’s he going to do? I’ll know somehow — trust me !’

She was sitting on the edge of the bed, her arms behind her, supporting her, her little feet beating each other restlessly — a hot, vindictive anger speaking from every feature, every movement. The pretty chit of seventeen seemed to have disappeared. Here was every promise of a wilful and obstinate woman, with more of her father’s stuff in her than anyone could have yet surmised.

[361]

A pang rose in Dora. She rose impulsively, and throwing herself down by Lucy, drew the ruffled, palpitating creature into her arms.

‘Oh, Lucy, isn’t it only because you’re angry and vexed, and because you want to fight Uncle Purcell? Oh, don’t go on just for that! When we’re — we’re

Christians, we mustn't want our own way — we must give it up — *we must give it up.*' Her voice sank in a burst of tears, and she drooped her head on Lucy's, kissing her cousin's brown hair.

Lucy extricated herself with a movement of impatience.

'When one *loves* anybody,' she said, sitting very upright and twisting her fingers together, 'one must stick to him!'

Dora started at the word 'love.' It seemed to her a profanation. She dried her eyes, and got up to go without another word.

'Well, Dora,' said Lucy, frowning, 'and so you'll do nothing for me — *nothing?*'

Dora stood a moment in a troubled silence. Then she turned, and took gentle hold of her cousin.

'If I get a chance, Lucy, I'll try and find out whether he's thinking of marrying at all. And if he isn't — and I'm sure he isn't — will you give it all up, and try and live comfortable with Uncle Purcell, and think of something else?'

Her eyes had a tender, nay a passionate entreaty in them.

[362]

'No!' said Lucy with energy; 'but I'll very likely drown myself in the river some fine night.'

Dora still held her, standing above her, and looking down at her, trying hard to read her true mind. Lucy bore it defiantly for a minute; then suddenly two large tears rose. A quiver passed over Dora's face; she kissed her cousin quickly, and went towards the door.

'And I'll find out what father's going to do, or my name isn't what it is!' said the girl behind her, in a shrill, shaking voice, as she closed the door.

Dora ran back to Market Place, filled with a presentiment that she was late, though the hand of the Cathedral clock was still far from three.

At the side door stood a woman with a shawl over her head, looking distractedly up the street.

‘Oh, Miss Dora! Miss Dora! they’ve sent. He’s gooin — gooin quick. An’ he keeps wearyin’ for “mither an’ Miss Dora.”’

The powerful scarred face had the tremulous helplessness of grief. Dora took her by the arm.

‘Let us run, Sarah — at once. Oh, never mind the work!’

The two women hurried through the crowded Saturday streets. But halfway up Market Street Sarah stopped short, looking round her in an agony.

‘Theer’s his feyther, Miss Dora. Oh, he wor a bad ’un to me, but he had allus a soft spot for t’ lad. I’d

[363]

be reet glad to send worrud. He wor theer in the ward, they tell’t me, last week.’

Three years before she had separated from her husband, a sawyer, by mutual consent. He was younger than she, and he had been grossly unfaithful to her; she came of a good country stock and her dales woman’s self-respect could put up with him no longer. But she had once been passionately in love with him, and, as she said, he had been on the whole kind to the boy.

‘Where is he?’ said Dora.

‘At Mr. Whitelaw’s yard, Edgell Street, Great Ancoats.’

They had just entered the broad Infirmary Square. Dora, looking round her in perplexity, suddenly saw coming towards them the tall figure of David Grieve. The leap of the heart of which she was conscious through all her preoccupation startled her. But she went up to him without a moment’s hesitation. David, swinging along as though Manchester belonged to him, found himself arrested and, looking down, saw Dora’s pale and agitated face.

‘Mr. Grieve, will you help me?’

She drew him to the side and explained as quickly as she could. Sarah stood by, and threw in directions.

‘He’ll be to be found at Mr. Whitelaw’s yard — Edgell Street — an’ whoever goos mun just say to him, “Sarah says to tha — Wilt tha coom, or wilt tha not coom? t’ — lad’s deen.” ’

She threw out the words with a sombre simplicity

[364]

and force, then, her whole frame quivering with impatience, she crossed the road to the Infirmary without waiting for Dora.

‘Can you send some one?’ said Dora.

‘I will go myself at once. I’ll find the man if he’s there, and bring him. You leave it to me.’

He turned without more ado, broke into a run, and disappeared round the corner of Oldham Street.

Dora crossed to the Infirmary, her mind strangely divided for a moment between the solemn image of what was coming, and the vibrating memory of something just past.

But, once in the great ward, pity and death possessed her wholly. He knew them, the poor lad — made, as it seemed, two tremulous movements, — once, when his mother’s uncontrollable crying passed into his failing ear — once when Dora’s kiss was laid upon his hollow temple. Then again he lay unconscious, drawing gently to the end.

Dora knelt beside him praying, his mother on the other side, and the time passed. Then there were sounds about the bed, and looking up, Dora saw two figures approaching. In front was a middle-aged man, with a stupid, drink-stained face. He came awkwardly and unsteadily up to the bedside, almost stumbling over his wife, and laying his hand on the back of a chair to support himself. He brought with him an overpowering smell of beer, and Dora thought as she looked at him that he had only a very vague idea of

[365]

what was going on. His wife took no notice of him whatever.

Behind at some little distance, his hat in his hand, stood David Grieve. Why did he stay? Dora could not get him out of her mind. Even in her praying she still saw the dark, handsome head and lithe figure thrown out against the whiteness of the hospital walls.

There was a slight movement in the bed, and the nurse, standing beside the boy, looked up and made a quick sign to the mother. What she and Dora saw was only a gesture as of one settling for sleep. Without struggle and without fear, the little lad who had never lived enough to know the cost of dying, went the way of all flesh.

‘They die so easily, this sort,’ said the nurse to Dora, as she tenderly closed the patient eyes; ‘it’s like a plant that’s never rooted.’

A few minutes later Dora was blindly descending the long stairs. The mother was still beside her dead, making arrangements for the burial. The father, sobered and conscious, had already slouched away. But at the foot of the stairs Dora, looking round, saw that David was just behind her.

He came out with her.

‘He was drunk when I found him,’ he explained, ‘he had been drinking in the dinner hour. I had him by the arm all the way, and thought I had best bring

[366]

him straight in. And then — I had never seen anyone die,’ he said simply, a curious light in his black eyes.

Dora, still choked with tears, could not speak. With shaking hands she searched for a bit of veil she had with her to hide her eyes and cheeks. But she could not find it.

‘Don’t go down Market Street,’ he said, after a shy look at her. ‘Come this way, there isn’t such a crowd.’

And turning down Mosley Street, all the way he guided her through some side streets where there were fewer people to stare. Such forethought, such gentleness in him were quite new to her. She gradually recovered herself, feeling all the while this young sympathetic presence at her side — dreading lest it should desert her.

He meanwhile was still under the tremor and awe of the new experience. So this was dying! He remembered ’Lias holding Margaret’s hand. ‘*Deein ‘s long — but it’s varra, varra peaceful.*’ Not always, surely! There must be vigorous, tenacious souls that went out with tempests and agonies; and he was conscious of a pang of fear, feeling himself so young and strong.

Presently he led her into St. Ann’s Square, and then they shook hands. He hurried off to his business, and she remained standing a moment on the pavement outside the church which makes one side of the square. An impulse seized her — she turned and went into the church instead of going home.

[367]

There, in one of the old oak pews where the little tarnished plates still set forth the names of their eighteenth-century owners, she fell on her knees and wrestled with herself and God.

She was very simple, very ignorant, but religion, as religion can, had dignified and refined all the elements of character. She said to herself in an agony — that he must love her — that she had loved him in truth all along. And then a great remorse came upon her — the spiritual glory she had just passed through closed round her again. What! she could see the heaven opened — the Good Shepherd stoop to take His own — and then come away to feel nothing but this selfish, passionate craving? Oh, she was ashamed, she loathed herself!

*Lucy!* — Lucy had no claim! should have no claim! He did not care for her.

Then again the pale dead face would flash upon her with its submissive look, — so much gratitude for so little, and such a tender ease in dying! And she, possessed by all these bad and jealous feelings, these angry desires, fresh from such a presence!

*‘Oh! Lamb of God — Lamb of God — that takest away the sins of the world!’*

[368]

## CHAPTER VI

AND David, meanwhile, was thinking of nothing in the world but the fortunes of a little shop, about twelve feet square, and of the stall outside that shop. The situation — for a hero — is certainly one of the flattest conceivable. Nevertheless it has to be faced.

If, however, one were to say that he had marked none of Lucy Purcell’s advances, that would be to deny him eyes as well as susceptibilities. He had, indeed, said to himself in a lordly way that Lucy Purcell was a regular little flirt, and was beginning those ways early. But a certain rough young modesty, joined with a sense of humour at his own expense, prevented him from making any more of it, and he was no sooner in his own den watching for customers than Lucy vanished from his mind altogether. He thought much more of Purcell himself, with much vengeful chuckling and speculation.

As for Dora, he had certainly begun to regard her as a friend. She had sense and experience, in spite of her Ritualism, whereas Lucy in his eyes had neither. So that to run into the Parlour, after each new day was over, and discuss with Paddy and her the ups and

[369]

downs, the fresh chances and prospects of his infant business, was pleasant enough. Daddy and he met on the common ground of wishing to make the world uncomfortable for Purcell; while Dora supplied the admiring uncritical wonder, in which, like a warm

environment, an eager temperament expands, and feels itself under the stimulus more inventive and more capable than before.

But marrying! The lad's careless good-humoured laugh under Ancrum's probings was evidence enough of how the land lay. Probably at the bottom of him, if he had examined, there lay the instinctive assumption that Dora was one of the girls who are not likely to marry. Men want them for sisters, daughters, friends — and then go and fall in love with some minx that has a way with her.

Besides, who could be bothered with 'gells,' when there was a stall to be set out and a career to be made? With that stall, indeed, David was truly in love. How he fingered and meddled with it! — setting out the cheap reprints it contained so as to show their frontispieces, and strewing among them, in an artful disorder a few rare local pamphlets, on which he kept a careful watch, either from the door or from inside. Behind these, again, within the glass, was a precious shelf, containing in the middle of it about a dozen volumes of a kind dear to a collector's eye — thin volumes in shabby boards, then just beginning to be sought after — the first editions of nineteenth-century poets. For months

[370]

past David had been hoarding up a few in a corner of his little lodging, and on his opening day they decoyed him in at least five inquiring souls, all of whom stayed to talk a bit. There was a 'Queen Mab,' and a 'Lyrical Ballads,' an 'Endymion,' a few Landors thrown in, and a 'Bride of Abydos' — this last not of much account, for its author had the indiscretion, from the collector's point of view, to be famous from the beginning, and so to flood the world with large editions.

Round and about these dainty morsels were built in with solid rubbish, with Daddy's 'Journals of Theology,' 'British Controversialist,' and the rest. In one top corner lurked a few battered and cut-down Elzevirs, of no value save to the sentiment of the window, while a good many spaces were filled up with some new and attractive

editions of standard books just out of copyright, contributed, these last, by the enterprising traveller of a popular firm, from whom David had them on commission.

Inside, the shop was of the roughest: a plank or two on a couple of trestles served for a counter, and two deal shelves, put up by David, ran along the wall behind. The counter held a few French scientific books, very fresh, and ‘in the movement,’ the result of certain inquiries put by old Barbier to a school friend of his, now professor at the Sorbonne — meant to catch the ‘college people;’ while on the other side lay some local histories of neighbouring towns and districts, a sort of commodity always in demand in a great

[371]

expanding city, where new men have risen rapidly and families are in the making. For these local books the lad had developed an astonishing *flair*. He had the geographical and also the social instincts which the pursuit of them demands.

On his first day David netted in all a profit of seventeen shillings and twopence, and at night he curled himself up on a mattress in the little back kitchen, with an old rug for covering and a bit of fire, and slept the sleep of liberty.

In a few days more several of the old-established book-buyers of the town, a more numerous body, perhaps, in Manchester than in other northern centres, had found him out; a certain portly and wealthy lady, connected with one of the old calico-printing families, a person of character, who made a hobby of Lancashire Nonconformity, had walked into the shop, and given the boyish owner of it much good advice and a few orders; the Earl of Driffield had looked in, and, caught by the lures of the stall, customers had come from the most unlikely quarters, desiring the most heterogeneous wares. The handsome, intelligent young fellow, with his out-of-the-way strains of knowledge, with his frank self-conceit and his equally frank ignorance, caught the fancy of those who stayed to talk with him. A certain number of persons had been already taken with him in Purcell’s shop, and were now vastly amused by the lad’s daring and the ambitious range of his first stock.

[372]

As for Lord Drifffield, on the first occasion when he had dropped in he had sat for an hour at least, talking and smoking cigarettes across David's primitive counter.

This remarkable person, of whom Lucy thought so little, was well known, and had been well known, for a good many years, to the booksellers of Manchester and Liverpool. As soon as the autumn shooting season began, Purcell, for instance, remembered Lord Drifffield, and began to put certain books aside for him. He possessed one of the famous libraries of England, and he not only owned but read. Scholars all over Europe took toll both of his books and his brains. He lived to collect and to be consulted. There was almost nothing he did not know, except how to make a book for himself. He was so learned that he had, so to speak, worked through to an extreme modesty. His friends, however, found nothing in life so misleading as Lord Drifffield's diffidence.

At the same time Providence had laid upon him a vast family estate, and an aristocratic wife, married in his extreme youth to please his father. Lady Drifffield had the ideas of her caste, and when they came to their great house near Stalybridge, in the autumn, she insisted on a succession of proper guests, who would shoot the grouse in a proper manner, and amuse her in the evenings. For, as she had no children, life was often monotonous, and when she was bored she had a stately way of making herself disagreeable to

[373]

Lord Drifffield. He therefore did his best to content her. He received her guests, dined with them in the evenings, and despatched them to the moors in the morning. But between those two functions he was his own master; and on the sloppy November afternoons he might as often as not be seen trailing about Manchester or Liverpool, carrying his slouching shoulders and fair spectacled face into every bookseller's shop,

good, bad, and indifferent, or giving lectures, mostly of a geographical kind, at popular institutions — an occupation in which he was not particularly effective.

David had served him, once or twice, in Half Street, and had sent a special notice of his start and his intentions to Benet's Park, the Driffields' 'place.' Lord Driffield's first visit left him quivering with excitement, for the earl had a way of behaving as though everybody else were not only his social, but his intellectual equal — even a lad of twenty, with his business to learn. He would sit pleasantly smoking and asking questions — a benevolent, shabby person, eager to be informed. Then, when David had fallen into the trap, and was holding forth — proud, it might be, of certain bits of knowledge which no one else in Manchester possessed — Lord Driffield would throw in a gentle comment, and then another and another, till the trickle became a stream, and the young man would fall blankly listening, his mouth opening wider and wider. When it was over, and the earl, with his dragged umbrella, had disappeared,

[374]

David sat, crouched on his wooden stool, consumed with hot ambition and wonder. How could a man know so much — and an earl, who didn't want it? For a few hours, at any rate, his self-conceit was dashed. He realised dimly what it might be to know as the scholar knows. And that night, when he had shut the shutters, he vowed to himself, as he gathered his books about him, that five hours was enough sleep for a strong man; that learn he must and should, and that some day or other he would hold his own, even with Lord Driffield.

How he loved his evenings — the paraffin lamp glaring beside him, the crackling of the coal in his own fire, the book on his knee! Ancrum had kept his promise, and was helping him with his Greek; but his teaching hardly kept pace with the boy's enthusiasm and capacity. The *voracity* with which he worked at his Thucydides and Homer left the lame minister staring and sighing. The sound of the lines, the roll of the *oi's* and *ou's* was in David's ear all day, and to learn a dozen irregular verbs in the interval between two customers was like the gulping of a dainty.

Meanwhile, as he collected his English poets he read them. And here was a whole new world. For in his occupation with the Encyclopaedists he had cared little for poetry. The reaction against his Methodist fit had lasted long, had developed a certain contempt for sentiment, a certain love for all sharp, dry, calculable things, and for the tone of *irony* in particular. But in

[375]

such a nature such a phase was sure to pass, and it was passing. Burns, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson — now he was making acquaintance piecemeal with them all, as the precious volumes turned up, which he was soon able to place with a precision which tore them too soon out of his hands. The Voltairean temper in him was melting, was passing into something warmer, subtler, and more restless.

But he was not conscious of it. He was as secular, as cocksure, as irritating as ever, when Ancrum probed him on the subject of the Hall of Science or the various Secularist publications which he supported.

‘Do you call yourself an atheist now, David?’ said Ancrum one day, in that cheerful, half-ironic tone which the young bookseller resented.

‘I don’t call myself anything,’ said David, stoutly. ‘I’m all for this world; we can’t know anything about another. At least, that’s my opinion, sir — no offence to you.’

‘Oh, dear me, no offence! There have been a *few* philosophers, you know, Davy, since Voltaire. There’s a person called Kant; I don’t know anything about him, but they tell me he made out a very pretty case, on the practical side anyway, for a God and immortality. And in England, too, there have been two or three persons of consequence, you remember, like Coleridge and John Henry Newman, who have thought it worth while to believe a little. But you don’t care about that?’

[376]

The lad stood silent a moment, his colour rising, his thin lip curling. Then he burst out:

‘What’s the good of thinking about things by the wrong end? There’s such a lot to read!’

And with a great stretch of all his young frame he fell back on the catalogue he was looking through, while Ancrum went on turning over a copy of ‘The Reasoner,’ a vigorous Secularist paper of the day, which he had found on the counter, and which had suggested his question.

*Knowledge — success:* it was for these that David burned, and he laid rapid hands upon them. He had a splendid physique, and at this moment of his youth he strained it to the utmost. He grudged the time for sleep and meals, and on Saturday afternoons, the early-closing day of Manchester, he would go out to country sales, or lay plans for seeing the few considerable libraries Lord Driffield’s among them — which the neighbouring districts possessed. On Sunday he read from morning till night, and once or twice his assistant John, hammering outside for admittance in the winter dark, wakened the master of the shop from the rickety chair where he had fallen asleep over his books in the small hours of the morning.

His assistant! It may well be asked what a youth of twenty, setting up on thirty pounds capital in a small shop, wanted with an assistant before he had any business to speak of. The story is a curious one.

Some time in the previous summer Daddy had opened a smoking and debating room at the Parlour,

[377]

by way of keeping his *clientèle* together and giving a special character to the place. He had merely boarded off a bit of the original seed warehouse, put in some rough tables and chairs, and a few newspapers. But by a conjunction of circumstances the place had taken a Secularist character, and the weekly debates which Daddy inaugurated were, for a time at least, well attended. Secularism, like all other forms of mental energy, had

lately been active in Manchester; there had been public discussions between Mr. Holyoake and Mr. Bradlaugh as to whether Secularism were necessarily atheistic or no. Some of the old newspapers of the movement, dating from Chartist days, had recently taken a new lease of life; and combined with the protest against theology was a good deal of co-operative and republican enthusiasm. Lomax, who had been a Secularist and an Owenite for twenty years, and who was a republican to boot, threw himself into the *melée*, and the Parlour debates during the whole of the autumn and winter of '69-70 were full of life, and brought out a good many young speakers, David Grieve among them. Indeed, David was for a time the leader of the place, so ready was his gift, so confident and effective his personality.

On one occasion in October he was holding forth on 'Science — the true Providence of Life.' The place was crowded. A well-known Independent had been got hold of to answer the young Voltairean, and David was already excited, for his audience was plying him

[378]

with interruptions, and taxing to the utmost a natural debating power.

In the midst of it a printer's devil from the restaurant outside, a stout, stupid-looking lad, found his way in, and stood at the door listening. The fine classical head of the speaker, the beautiful voice, the gestures so free and flowing, the fire and fervour of the whole performance — these things left him gaping.

'Who's that?' he ventured to inquire of a man near him, a calico salesman, well known in the Salford Conservative Association, who had come to support the Independent speaker.

The man laughed.

'That's young Grieve, assistant to old Purcell, Halt Street. He talks a d — d lot of stuff — blasphemous stuff, too; but if somebody 'd take and teach him and send him into Parliament, some day he'd make em skip, I warrant yo. I never heard onybody frame better for public speaking, and I've heard a lot.'

The printer's devil stayed and stared through the debate. Then, afterwards, he began to haunt the paths of this young Satan, crept up to him in the news-room, skulked about him in the restaurant. At last David took notice of him, and they made friends.

‘Have you got anybody belonging to you?’ he asked him, shortly.

‘No,’ said the boy. ‘Father died last spring; mother was took with pleurisy in November ——’

[379]

But the words stuck in his throat, and he coughed over them.

‘All right,’ said David; ‘come for a walk Sunday afternoon?’

So a pretty constant companionship sprang up between them. John Dalby came of a decent stock, and was still, as it were, under the painful and stupefying surprise of those bereavements which had left him an orphan. His blue eyes looked bewilderment at the world; he was bullied by the compositors he worked under. Sometimes he had violent fits of animal spirits, but in general he was dull and silent, and no one could have guessed that he often read poetry and cried himself to sleep in the garret where he lodged. Physically he was a great, overgrown creature, not, in truth, much younger than David. But while David was already the man, John was altogether in the tadpole-stage — a being of large, ungainly frame, at war with his own hands and feet, his small eyes lost in his pink, spreading cheeks, his speech shy and scanty. Yet, such as he was, David found a use for him. Temperaments of the fermenting, expansive sort want a listener at the moment of early maturity, and almost any two-legged thing with the listener's gift will do. David worked off much steam on the Saturday or Sunday afternoons, when the two would push out into the country, walking some twenty miles or so for the sheer joy of movement. While the one talked and declaimed, ploughing his violent way through the soil of his

[380]

young thought, the other, fat and silent, puffed along-side, and each in his own way was happy.

Just about the time David was dismissed by Purcell, John's apprenticeship came to an end. When he heard of the renting of the shop in Potter Street, he promptly demanded to come as assistant.

'Don't be a fool!' said David, turning upon him; 'what should I want with an assistant in that bit of a place? And I couldn't pay you, besides, man.'

'Don't mind that,' said John, stoutly. 'I'd like to learn the trade. Perhaps you'll set up a printing business by-and-by. Lots of booksellers do. Then I'll be handy.'

'And how the deuce are you going to live?' cried David, somewhat exasperated by these unpractical proposals. 'You're not exactly a grasshopper; and his eye, half angry, half laughing, ran over John's plump person.'

To which John replied, undisturbed, that he had got four pounds still of the little hoard his mother had left him, and, judging by what David had told him of his first months in Manchester, he could make that last for living a good while. When he had learnt some- thing of the business with David, he would move on — trust him.

Whereupon David told him flatly that *he* wasn't going to help him waste his money, and sent him about his business.

On the very day, however, that David opened, he was

[381]

busy in the shop, when he saw John outside at the stall, groaning under a bundle.

'It's Mr. Lomax ha sent you this,' said the lad, calmly, 'and I'm to put it up, and tell him how your stock looks.'

The bundle contained Daddy's contributions to young Grieve's window, which at the moment were very welcome; and David in his gratitude instructed the messenger to take back a cordial message. The only notice John took was to lift up two deal shelves that were leaning against the wall of the shop, and to ask where they were to go.

And, say what David would, he stuck, and would not be got rid of. With the Lancashire accent he had also the Lancashire persistence, and David after a while gave in, consented that he should stay for some weeks, at any rate, and then set to work to teach him, in a very impatient and intermittent way. For watching and bargaining at the stall, at any rate, for fetching and carrying, and for all that appertains to the carrying and packing of parcels, John presently developed a surprising energy. David's wits were thereby freed for the higher matters of his trade, while John was beast of burden. The young master could work up his catalogues, study his famous collections, make his own bibliographical notes, or run off here and there by 'bus or train in quest of books for a customer; he could swallow down his Greek verbs or puzzle out his French

[382]

for Barbier in the intervals of business; the humbler matters of the shop prospered none the less.

Meanwhile both lads were vegetarians and teetotalers; both lived as near as might be on sixpence a day; and an increasing portion of the Manchester world — of that world, at any rate, which buys books — began, as the weeks rolled on, to take interest in the pair and their venture.

Christmas came, and David made up his accounts. He had turned over the whole of his capital in six weeks, had lived and paid his rent, and was very nearly ten pounds to the good. On the evening when he made this out he sat jubilantly over the fire, thinking of Louie. Certainly it would be soon time for him to send for Louie at this rate. Yet there were pros and cons. He would have to look after her when she did come, and there would be an end of his first freedom. And what would she find to do? Silk-weaving had been decaying year by year in Manchester, and for hand-loom weaving, at any rate, there was no opening at all.

No matter! With his prosperity there came a quickening of the sense of kinship, which would not let him rest. For the first time for many years he thought often of his father. Who and what had his mother been? Why had Uncle Reuben never spoken

of his parents, save that one tormented word in the dark? Why, his father could not have been thirty when he died! Some day he would make Uncle

[383]

Reuben tell all the story — he would know, too, where his father was buried.

And meanwhile, in a few more weeks, he would write to Kinder. He would be good to Louie — he decidedly meant that she should have a good time. Perhaps she had grown out of her tricks by now. Tom said she was thought to be uncommon handsome. David made a little face as he remembered that. She would be all the more difficult to manage.

Yet all the time David Grieve's prosperity was the most insecure growth imaginable.

One evening Lucy rushed in late to see Dora.

'Oh, Dora! Dora! Put down your work at once and listen to me.'

Dora looked up in amazement, to see Lucy's little face all crimson with excitement and resolution.

'Dora, I've found it all out: he's going to buy the house over Mr. Grieve's head, and turn him into the street, just as he's got nicely settled. Oh! he's done it before, I can tell you. There was a man higher up Half Street he served just the same. He's got the money, and he's got the spite. Well now, Dora, it's no good staring. Has Mr. Grieve been up here lately?'

'No; not lately,' said Dora, with an involuntary sigh. 'Father's been to see him. He says he's that busy he can't come out. But, Lucy, how do you know all this?'

Whereupon, at first, Lucy wouldn't tell; but being at bottom intensely proud of her own cleverness at last

[384]

confessed. She had been for long convinced that her father meant mischief to young Grieve, and had been on the watch. A little listening at doors here, and a little prying into papers there, had presently given her the clue. In a private drawer, unlocked by chance, she had found a solicitor's letter containing the full description of No. 15 Potter Street, and of some other old houses in the same street, soon to be sold and rebuilt. The description contained notes of price and date in her father's hand. That very evening the solicitor in question had come to see her father. She had been sent upstairs, but had managed to listen all the same. The purchase — whatever it was — was to be concluded 'shortly.' There had been much legal talk, and her father had seemed in a particularly good temper when Mr. Vance went away.

'Well now, look here,' said Lucy, frowning and biting her lips; 'I shall just go right on and see him. I thought I might have found him here. But there's no time to lose.'

Dora had bent over her frame again, and her face was hidden.

'Why, it's quite late,' she said, slowly; 'the shop will be shut up long ago.'

'I don't care — I don't care a bit,' cried Lucy. 'One can't think about what's proper. I'm just going straight away.'

And she got up feverishly, and put on her hat

[385]

'Why can't yon tell father and send him? He's downstairs in the reading-room,' said Dora.

'I'll go myself, Dora, thank you,' said Lucy, with an obstinate toss of her head, as she stood before the old mirror over the mantelpiece. 'I dare say you think I'm a very bold girl. It don't matter.'

Then for a minute she became absorbed in putting one side of her hair straight. Dora, from behind, sat looking at her, needle in hand. The gaslight fell on her pale, disturbed face, showed for an instant a sort of convulsion pass across it which Lucy did

not see. Then she drew her hand along her eyes, with a low, quivering breath, and went back to her work.

As Lucy opened the door, however, a movement of anxiety, of conscience, rose in Dora.

‘Lucy, shall I go with you?’

‘Oh, no,’ said Lucy, impatiently. ‘I know what’s what, thank you, Dora. I’ll take care of myself. Perhaps I’ll come back and tell you what he says.’

And she closed the door behind her. Dora did not move from her work; but her hand trembled so that she made several false stitches and had to undo them.

Meanwhile Lucy sped along across Market Street and through St. Ann’s Square. Her blood was up, and she could have done anything, braved anybody, to defeat her father and win a smile from David Grieve. Yet, as she entered Potter Street, she began to quake a little. The street was narrow and dark. On one side the older houses had been long ago pulled down and replaced

[386]

by tall warehouses, which at night were a black and towering mass, without a light anywhere. The few shops opposite closed early, for in the office quarter of Manchester there is very little doing after office hours, when the tide of life ebbs outwards.

Lucy looked for No. 15, her heart beating fast. There was a light in the first floor, but the shop-front was altogether dark. She crossed the street, and, lifting a shaking hand, rang the bell of the very narrow side door.

Instantly there were sounds inside — a step — and David stood on the threshold.

He stared in amazement at his unwonted visitor.

‘Oh, Mr. Grieve — please — I’ve got something to tell you. Oh, no, I won’t come in — we can stand here, please, out of the wind. But father’s going to buy this place over your head, and I thought I’d better come and tell you. He’ll be pretty mad if he thinks I’ve let out; but I don’t care.’

She was leaning against the wall-of the passage, and David could just see the defiance and agitation on her face by the light of the gas-lamp outside.

He himself gave a low whistle.

‘Well, that’s rather strong, isn’t it, Miss Purcell?’

‘It’s mean — it’s abominable,’ she cried. ‘I vowed I’d stop it. But I don’t know what he’ll do to me — kill me, most likely.’

‘Nobody shall do anything to you,’ said David, decidedly. ‘You’re a brick. But look here — can you tell me anything more?’

[387]

She commanded herself with great difficulty, and told all she knew. David leant against the wall beside her, twisting a meditative lip. The situation was ominous, certainly. He had always known that his tenure was precarious, but from various indications he had supposed that it would be some years yet before his side of the street was much meddled with. That old fox! He must go and see Mr. Ancrum.

A passion of hate and energy rose within him. Somehow or other he would pull through.

When Lucy had finished the tale of her eavesdrop-pings, the young fellow shook himself and stood erect.

‘Well, I am obliged to you, Miss Purcell, And now I’ll just go straight off and talk to somebody that I think ’ll help me. But I’ll see you to Market Street first.’

‘Oh! — somebody will see us!’ she cried in a fever, ‘ and tell father.’

‘Not they; I’ll keep a look out.’

Then suddenly, as they walked along together, a great shyness fell upon them both. Why had she done this thing, and run the risk of her father’s wrath? As David walked beside her, he felt for an instant, through all his gratitude, as though some one had thrown a lasso round him, and the cord were tightening. He could not have explained the feeling, but it made him curt and restive, absorbed, apparently, in his own

thoughts. Meanwhile Lucy's heart swelled and swelled. She *did* think he would have taken her news differently — have made more of it and her. She wished she had never

[388]

come — she wished she had brought Dora, The familiar consciousness of failure, of insignificance, returned, and the hot tears rose in her eyes.

At Market Street she stopped him hurriedly.

'Don't come any farther. I can get home.'

David, meanwhile, was saying to himself that he was a churlish brute; but for the life of him he could not get out any pretty speeches worthy of the occasion.

'I'm sure I take it most kind of you. Miss Purcell. There's nothing could have saved me if you hadn't told. And I don't know whether I can get out of it now. But if ever I can do anything for you, you know ——'

'Oh, never mind! — never mind!' she said, incoherently, stabbed by his constraint. 'Good night.'

And she ran away into the darkness, choked by the sorest tears she had ever shed.

David, meanwhile, went on his way to Ancrum, scourging himself. If ever there was an ungrateful cur, it was he! Why could he find nothing nice to say to that girl in return for all her pluck? Of course she would get into trouble. Coming to see him at that time of night, too! Why, it was splendid!

Yet, all the same, he knew perfectly well that if she had been there beside him again, he would have been just as tongue-tied as before.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME

Spottiswoode & Co. Printers, New-street Square, London.