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Clegg, John Trafford (1857-1895)

***David's Loom. A Story of Rochdale Life in the
Early Years of the Nineteenth Century***
(1894)

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I.

I, LAURENCE HOLT, violinist and dabbler in prose literature, for want of strength and nimbleness to attempt any more manly work, considering myself tolerably sane in mind, however infirm of body, do now feel myself seriously called upon to relate, so far as my knowledge and ability enable me, a tragic story in what is usually called, with little correctness, humble life.

This duty is undertaken by me for two strong reasons. First, I alone can perform the task; as, although several people have an equal or superior acquaintance with the facts, not one among them has the knack of writing, nor the amount of imagination necessary for connecting many detached occurrences into a coherent and clear narrative. Second,

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the principal actor in the story to be told was my friend, a man set deep in my regard, proved by many years' contemplation of him to be no ordinary character, known by me to have endured, aspired, and suffered; and now that he has paid the last penalty exacted by English law, I am bound, by solemn promise, to state truthfully, and in the barest justice to himself, what causes led to the committal of his great crime, setting on a scaffold the feet of a man previously held by all to be an honest, diligent toiler in his groove of life.

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Moreover, in the relation of this story my own vanity will be fed, since I shall figure as a frequent actor in the sequence of events narrated; incidents of my own life must be set down of which I would fain have a fixed record; presentments of those nearest and dearest to me must appear in distinct outlines upon the written page. This will account for my design in adding to the main substance of this history certain occurrences and characters not directly connected with it.

To begin with some account of myself may be advisable. I am the son of a small tradesman, designed by my father to serve behind his counter until experienced enough to venture into business on my own account, advancing afterwards to respectable rotundity of purse and person, and so sliding comfortably down the vale of years to easy old age and retirement.

This highly satisfactory arrangement is not yet in process. An unlucky fall during childhood damaged my spine, with the result that I have never walked a yard since, and cannot hope ever to do, being at this time over thirty years old. Naturally, Mr. Holt has been considerably annoyed by my failure to carry out the line of conduct he had so carefully marked down. Complaints have been made from time to time that I did nothing by way of maintaining myself, that I was a burden upon my family, and so forth –unfortunate complaints, because they compel me to employ the biting tongue which is my sole defensive weapon, and engender disagreeable scenes from which lingering dislike is bred. However, all things come to an end. The charge of pauperism cannot be

urged against me now, thanks to pen, fiddle, and another still more profitable source of income; and even if it could be, reasons

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will appear why Mr. Holt could not longer urge it with very good countenance.

I had a mother and sister, thank God! But for them this unwieldy cripple's existence would have been truly pitiable; by their kindness and love abiding content—often rising into hours of happiness—has blessed me. In my loneliest days I have turned my thoughts to these beloved ones, and solitude has been no more. In the dark attacks of melancholy to which my nature is subject—which afflict me even yet, with all my endeavours to subdue them by reason and hard fighting—let but one of these dear faces shine upon me, and the gathered clouds are broken as if by heaven's light.

I was born in 1790 in this ancient hamlet of Rochdale, where my days have all been spent, where at last in all probability my bones will be laid in the grass-grown, tree-shaded churchyard on the hilltop to the south yonder; supposing, indeed, that I die while space yet remains there, for our population increases so rapidly that many thousands of people are now enclosed by the parish boundaries, and the town still thrives fast.

We lie midway in the many-arboured valley of the shallow Roch, our town's centre being fixed a little eastward of the point where impetuous Spodden dashes from its steep heights to animate the larger but more sedate stream. Surely few parts of our island territory can be more beautiful than this! I have travelled little, have heard much of the charms of Yorkshire dale and southern landscape, yet fancy cannot picture before me more exquisite scenes than can be shown about us here. Along the clear river a chain of low hills rises in green undulations, from the grim, embattled mountain wall eastward far towards the western Irwell.

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Sycamore, elm, sapling and beech clothe every slope with rich foliage; behind, from both banks, meadow and pasture ascend in steeply irregular waves to the wild belt of elevated moorland that circles round us like a rough bronze setting about a polished emerald. These rugged moors are cleft by innumerable streams into rifts and glens of most enchanting loveliness, and the effect produced upon a lover of natural beauties by passing suddenly from a peaty, scrub-grown hillside into one of these brook-washed hollows, where the murmuring water descends in rocky windings, adorned by wildflower and fern, shaded by hanging boughs of many-tinted green, is delightful and enduring.

We inhabitants, as a body, are a toiling, thrifty race, so hard-headed that any example of weak intellect sticks fiery oft' indeed against the surrounding mass of shrewdness, gifted generally with a peculiar faculty of humour which proves of excellent service in relieving the monotony and hardships of incessant labour. I never cease to wonder how the working people of this town can plod along as they do at endless tasks for the wretched earnings they receive. They have nothing to hope for, no prospect before them but one of unceasing effort to sustain life, no possibility of ever reaching any moderate standard of comfort; yet their indomitable spirit is unquelled, their sturdy independence unshaken. There are times, it is true, when, tried overfar by imperious task-masters, patient endurance flashes into rebellion for a day. Such a time occurred three years ago, when the crops failed hard upon the impoverished year which followed Waterloo, and want of bread drove men to madness; but then, as often before, the destructive, murderous-minded rioters of one week became resigned, assiduous toilers the next,

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My father's house stands on the river bank, near the ford, and is one of some half-dozen places of business standing there. He trades in saddlery and horse-gearing; a magnified stirrup-iron hanging over the door to mark his calling, and draw public attention to the wares within. The, house-front presents a study in black timbers and

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whited plaster, with a low, heavy door, small-paned windows, and two highly-ornamental twisted chimneys to crown the tiled roof. Here I was born, with the murmuring Roch sounding a lullaby in my ears, and here by the same billborn river my whole life bids fair to pass.

Of my childhood I have few recollections beside those of lying for long weeks alone in my chamber with thoughts ever busy, and of visits paid to me by an old Irish schoolmaster, who taught me what scanty store of knowledge I possess; but when I attained the age of ten years new life opened before me. Having become by that time overheavy to be carried in my mother's arms, and exposure in the open air being held necessary for the strengthening of my feeble body, it was agreed among the powers responsible for my welfare that a hand-carriage must be had. So a neighbouring cartwright, whom I had often watched for hours, busy among heaps of shavings and crude segments of wheels in his wooden shed, was commissioned to build by required pattern; and after due masticating of tobacco, removals of his greasy cloth cap to scratch the dusty head beneath, and passage of weeks, the bare-armed craftsman produced a desirable article enough, compact on three smooth-running wheels ("thridles" he preferred to call them), fitted with handle, comfortably cushioned, adorned by requisite coatings of paint.

With locomotion made easy in this simple but effective

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manner, my days began to be spent under the open sky, and the beauties of our surrounding scenery became easily accessible. My mother, or sister, or Phelim, the schoolmaster (who henceforward did most of his teaching outside), or, in default of these, any stray youth willing to earn a few pence, supplied motive power; and in twelve months I had examined every lane and dough within a circuit of two miles. To be propelled into some retired shaded nook and left there to dream for hours, to move slowly through green lane and pasture, dreaming still or talking idly to my dear ones, gave me exquisite and abiding pleasure.

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Phelim's lessons gained interest from their new surroundings, and I got much practical wisdom and solid information from him at that time, although my plastic brains have long since lost nearly all traces of his teachings. Phelim was decidedly an eccentric kind of schoolmaster, caring nothing at all for usages of society, popular opinion, or any other commonplaces of existence serving to keep most men in the narrow paths of respectable conventionality. He simply went his own way, did as he chose, unconcerned as to pleasing or offending any, willing to extend to all men the liberty he enjoyed himself. A capable Greek and Latin scholar, an advanced mathematician, a shrewd man naturally, Phelim might have aspired to a very considerable place in the world; nothing, however, seemed farther from his thoughts, and none could doubt that, living in his small cottage among a little clan of his countrymen, earning barely enough to maintain himself and his wife, he accepted his position with complete content.

"Faith, Larry," he said on our first excursion together, "'tis a mighty fine schoolhouse we've removed into, and bates the owid room aisy. What would a man have betther

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for walls than these same four cardinal points wid that gowld-fretted, curtain-hung sky for tent-cloth? We can floor Monsignor Euclid now, me boy, and study the Georgics like true *terrae filii*"

He spoke the truth, for my education progressed rapidly under the improved conditions. It could not be said that I subdued the mathematical sciences, but in literature and the many forms of natural history my efforts were sufficient to satisfy even Phelim's exacting taste.

We must have cut a curious figure in the eyes of passing strangers when engaged upon our serious studies. Any quiet corner served us for an academy, hut, like Plato, we preferred a grove when one was at hand. Drawing my carriage into a favourable position, Phelim would calmly deposit his battered and napless hat on the grass, perch

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himself upon a convenient rail, stone, or tree-stem, light his short clay pipe, gather up the tails of his shabby black coat, and leisurely announce the subject of his intended lesson. There we should sit for two or three hours in fine weather, my work of reading, figuring, or writing at Phelim's dictation, going on busily all the while; and unorthodox as the system appeared it was well suited to my peculiar needs, and proved successful enough in stuffing me with what my father considered the necessary amount of knowledge.

He never troubled us—good man! If I could have become a saddler, very well; as that was out of the question, my future concerned him little, save that by some means he supposed it would be necessary for me to earn a livelihood, as he had no intention of supporting me much longer in idleness. Several handicrafts were mentioned at different times as likely to become profitable if mastered, but unfortunately I took strong dislike against them all; then,

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to pile up my measure of iniquity to the rim, at the age of fourteen an unquenchable craving for power to play a fiddle smote me, and my lot was decided.

Looking back now to that period I really wonder at my own impudence in asking a practical—and moreover a disappointed—man like my father to buy a violin for me, and engage some professional musician to show me the use of it. His consequent fit of raving passion, amounting 'to mild lunacy, hardly appears unreasonable under the circumstances.

"To think," stormed Mr. Holt, extending his right arm, as he had learnt to do by making public speeches on religious and ethical subjects, "to think that any son of mine should turn out such a worthless rascal as you are is horror and agony. Not content with idling your whole time away from childhood upwards, not satisfied with putting me to the cost of your education, and many other heavy expenses" (he meant my carriage, the price of which he had always grudged), "heedless of all my strenuous efforts to provide you with a means of making an independent living, selfishly forgetful of the fact that I

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am never likely to see a pennypiece returned of all I have spent, you have actually the audacity, the base ingratitude, I would term it, to contemplate passing more idle days playing upon a fiddle."

"I must have the fiddle, father," I said, having, I suppose, some vein of pertinacity about me, and not being lightly turned aside from any definitely projected course. "You must buy it and pay for my lessons, and when I can teach I shall easily earn money to pay back what you spend now."

"You earn money!" my father growled. "You can spend it fast enough, but as for earning any I must see that

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remarkable achievement before believing it. You must turn to at some useful occupation if you would make money-not waste your days in fiddling."

My sister Ellen left her place at the table (we were breakfasting), walked round to the old gentleman and kissed him, making a few pathetic references to my helpless state and dull existence, which music would, invest with new charm. It was all wind wasted, of course, sentiment having always about as much effect on Mr. Holt as it would have on a rhinoceros in the prime of life; so Ellen gave the matter up in despair, walked round to my couch to kiss me, and so back to her place. My mother said nothing at all; yet I knew her mind was already planning some means of getting the coveted instrument, and that from her if at all it must come.

However, the difficulty was simplified that morning; for I mentioned my ambition to Phelim as he pushed my carriage leisurely towards our favourite haunt, hoping that his mathematical power might be of use, and he solved the problem at once in a quite unexpected manner.

"A fiddle is it?" he asked, looking at me in a whimsical cross-eyed way, this talented man being afflicted with a slight squint. "Sure 'tis the diminsions and contents of the spheres, not the music of 'em, should be in your head! What blatherskite whim

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will saize ye next, Larry? *Respice finem*, me boy—look before ye lape. Let the music wait till I've finished your literary education."

I objected to that suggestion for several boyish reasons, chiefly based upon impatience and vanity, when to my exceeding delight Phelim proceeded thus:—

"Ye shall have the fiddle, Larry. I have one in my cottage, with an iligant mother-o' pearl decorated bow, both

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reposing swately in a black box, and ye shall have them all with owid Phaylim's blessing. I mind me of the days when those tinklin' sthrings shook in many a jig and soothin' air undher this hand—those owld days when I was a young man, and dape in love by the same token. Arrah! *Non sum qualis erat*—'tis not wid me as it was then. Ye shall have the instrumment, boy."

I thanked my, kind tutor with youthful fervour.

"Whisht! Whisht!" he said pulling up in a green nook and lighting his pipe in preparation for our morning lesson; "'tis no great matter, and afther all the fine arts must be the chief end of your laming. Ye've the artist's temperament, Larry, simple as ye lie there starin' from your dape wells of eyes wid thruth lurkin' at the bottom of 'em, and sensitiveness enough to make a pote if ever ye get brains to correspond. Either pote or fiddler ye may turn out, but geomethry's little to dhread from ye."

Fiddler, at any rate, I determined to become. Heedless of lessons, my mind devoured the time separating me from actual possession of my new property, .until at last Phelim took the road towards home, convinced that his efforts were being wasted on his "thoughtless haythen" of a pupil.

On reaching the "Silver Stirrup," as my father chose to christen his house, I was taken in charge by old Ben, one of several workmen employed in the saddlery business. The term "old" was applied more as a title of affection than accurate description, for he was still under forty years of age. I never heard of his possessing a surname—if he had started life with one probably he had since forgotten what it was—the phrase "Ben at th'

Stirrup" answering all practical needs of identification among his acquaintances in the parish. For at least thirty years he had slept and

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worked in the shop, his bed as a youth being stuffed under the counter, transferred as his bulk broadened to a curtained recess in a back room. My father and Ben had been apprentices together, Mr. Holt becoming owner of the business by marriage with my dear mother, Ben remaining a journeyman, and aspiring to nothing better. From my earliest years Ben's burly figure and broad expanse of red face had been daily within sight, and when strong arms became necessary for my transportation up and down stairs Ben was formally appointed to the task.

Naturally Mr. Holt's assumptions of dignity were entirely lost on one who had been his fellow-apprentice. Ben invariably addressed him as "Joe," and contracted a habit of introducing youthful reminiscences at inconvenient moments, all which excited his employer's supreme disgust. For my mother he had always sincere regard, to me and my sister he stood in the position of an elder brother of exceptionally candid instincts and oracular wisdom. Obviously any conception of our household which failed to include this trusty adherent would have been impossible.

"Thi fayther's in a rare tanthrum this mornin'," Ben said, leisurely wheeling my carriage into the shop and rolling up the sleeves of his blue cotton blouse preparatory to carrying me upstairs. "Hasta bin axin him for brass or summat?"

"Yes, I wanted a fiddle buying; but I can get one without him as it happens."

"Aw thought there were summat up. What the hangment con tha do wi a fiddle when tha gets it?"

"Play it."

"Tha'll o'erdo thisel," said Ben, lifting me carefully.

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"Aw've tow'd thee afore tha studies too mich. Tha's no gristle in thee. Tha'll addle thi brains wi larnin' an' turn gawmless afore tha'rt full groon; same as Simon o' th' Pump lad, 'at went off his yead bi thryin' to make a square ring wi three marbles."

II.

My coveted fiddle acquired, the question of music lessons arose, and here, but for my mother's help, my ambitious hopes would have been dashed at once. She contrived to pay for the necessary teaching, heedless of my father's growling opposition, and three years of hard work made me a competent violinist.

During these three years, also, considerable powers of imagination began to develop within me, possibly strengthened by daily excursions into the domain of music; and as language had been long at easy command it was natural that I should begin to write. I did begin, and continued with scanty success for many weary years, experiencing what I suppose to be incidents common to all maturing literary artists—doubt of public recognition, distrust of self, disappointment heaped upon disappointment, morbid sadness induced by over-thinking, irritation of incompetent criticism, balanced by the pleasures of composition, and honest pride in work completed.

In my twentieth year an event happened which I must always consider one of the most important occurrences of my life. My mother was slowly wheeling me along the river bank one day when an acquaintance stopped and spoke to

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us. He was a man of fifty years, was stoutly built, dressed in knee-breeches and blue stockings, sleeved waistcoat, napless hat and unpolished clogs. He wore also a faded blue apron, which hung to his knees. His face had a serious, even stern, expression; his brow, of sufficient intellectual area, receded slightly, and the back of his head displayed the fulness belonging to men of capacity and pertinacious endeavour. This was David Grindrod, by trade a handloom weaver.

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"Heaw are yo, Mrs. Howt?" he asked, in the familiar local dialect which even yet produces a greater impression upon me than elaborate passages of classical English. "An' heaw's this lad gettin' on?"

"We are both doing well, thank you," my mother said, answering for both, for I had paused to mentally adjust the terms of an answer until, as often happened with me, opportunity for reply had passed. "How is your wife, David? As for yourself, I can see that you are just as usual."

"Just," David said, with some sort of double meaning in his words which we could not understand. "Aw get no forrader—not a yard! Mi wife's same as usal, too—gooin' on at th' owd bat"

"How is Stephen?" I asked.

"He's weel an' hearty," David said, his face perceptibly brightening. "Stephen's a good lad, thank God, an' a diver lad beside! Th' owd Irishman's a job to festen him wi 'rithmetic neaw."

Stephen was David's only son, two years older than myself, and an evening pupil of Phelim

"He was always stong at figures," I said. With his ability and education Stephen should command a better position than that of a weaver."

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"Betther, eh?" David asked smiling. "It's bin good enough for his fayther tha knows, lad, an' should do for him. But no deaubt we con find a use for his wit bi thryin'. It's to be hoped he'll find life rayther yezzier to get through nor aw've done, for it's hard feightin' to live i' these days."

My mother said: "Perhaps when the war is over times will mend."

"Ah, but when will it be o'er? There's bin nowt nobbut wars sin' these Georges started gafferin. Iv they'd think o' findin' us summat t' eight aw could do betther wi 'em, but for owt they care weighvers met o clem. Every penny they con scrape up gwoes abrode to feed sodiers, an' then they cawn't keep th' poor fellahs wick, for there's bwoth

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bullets an' fayver to wroastle wi, as we seed last Kesmas. There's talk neaw o' th' owd king gooin' off his yead, so aw reckon his wasthrel ov a son'll be howdin' peawer afore long, an' that's noane likely to help us mich. Shuzheaw looken at it there's bad times afore us, Mrs. Howt—bad, clemmin, moidhersome times! We're o willin' to wortch i' this part o' th' counthry; we done wortch, too, an' we han done—hard an' long. Surelee there should be somebitlike a livin' for us! We're satisfied wi porritch an' clogs, iv they'll nobbut give us so mich; but wick folk cawn't abide to goo barfoot an' empty as we're expected to do. There's throuble hangin' o'er, aw warn yo—shockin' throuble!"

"I suppose before long we shall have steam engines running in the town and power looms set up. What will become of you weavers then?"

"There'll be some mak ov a job turnin' up for us. We

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cawn't get wur off nor we are, shuzheaw. Han yo sin ony cotton peawer looms?"

"No. Have you?"

"Ah," David said, smoothing his wrinkled forehead with an open palm. "Aw walked o'er to Stockport a bit sin' o' purpose. They're wondherful things. But they could be mended, too. Ah! there's reawm to mend 'em."

My mother laughed at this, asking the weaver what he supposed the inventor would think if he heard such opinions.

"Aw cawn't tell," David replied. "It's throe, shuzheaw. They're weighvin' one cut in a width an' nobbut usin' one shuttle. That'll be awther't, yo'll se."

"Can you alter it?" I asked.

David started, passed his right hand across his forehead again in his characteristic manner, and answered with a question:—

"What makes yo ax that?"

"I have no particular reason; but you seem interested in the matter, and appear to see how power machinery might be improved. It is quite possible to make a fortune now by one or two new ideas."

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"Aw darsay it is," David said slowly. "Well! Time'll tell, wain't it? Aw'm most takken up wi these styem engines ov owt. We s' have 'em rowlin' abeaut on wheels afore long."

"That seems impossible."

"An' what for?" David asked. "Iv engines con be made to turn fly-wheels an' pulleys, as aw've sin 'em do, what should stop 'em fro turnin' dhrivin' wheels to shift theirsel abeaut on? An' iv they con do that what should

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hindher 'em fro pooin carts at their tails? They'll run up an' deawn like wick things i' somebry's day, whether we liven to see it or not."

I laughed at that novel picture, and suggested that if steam could be persuaded to draw my carriage great comfort and convenience would follow for myself; as then I should be able to shoot about independently in any direction, setting free my assistants, who, however willing and affectionate, must often in the nature of things find my incessant wants troublesome and laborious.

Of course my mother promptly contradicted this statement, and we had a short humorous squabble which decided nothing. Meanwhile David, with keen understanding eye, had looked over my carriage from hood to axle, and when peace was restored he spoke—

"Aw could gear these wheels up so as yo could turn 'em yorsel, lyin inside same as yo'r'e doin' neaw, an' thrindle abeaut ony road. That 'd do as wed as a styem. engine, wouldn't it?"

I could only lie staring at this ingenious man, to whose eye things simple but obscure were so plainly revealed; my mind dwelling upon the enormous change and difference which must come over my life if I could be set free to wander alone as he suggested. My mother said—

"I really can't see how it would be possible to do that."

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"Happen not," David said coolly; "but aw con see iv yo connot. It con be done fast enough wi a crank an' eccentric, wi a hondle to come up through th' cart bottom where yor lad con reighch it. Send t' thing o'er tome some fleet, an' aw'll soon conthrive it."

"You shall be well paid if you succeed," my mother said. "You will give new life to Laurence."

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"Aw'll do it for twenty shillin'," says David, "no moore an' no less. Aw'd fain do it for nowt, but aw'm wantin' brass badly for a particlar job so aw'll ax a peound. Yo'll ne'er miss it, an' it'll be woth a dyel to me."

In a fortnight's time David had carried out his idea and realised all my hopes. It was easy for me, with the help of his attachment, to propel and steer my carriage by working a lever to and fro, and even to climb slopes of moderate steepness.

So began a new existence for me. At all hours, in all weathers, I was to be found in the open air, working my steady way along country lane or well-trodden main road. I became a well-known public character in a few months, both in Rochdale and many a village near; everybody having a kindly word or smile to bestow upon the helpless cripple, many giving a friendly grasp of the hand or making cordial offers of hospitality. Children and dogs were also greatly interested in my movements for awhile, until custom brought indifference, and made it possible for me to travel without having a yelling flock of youngsters behind and before.

How inane, almost childish, these trivial details must appear to most readers! What was so great an event for me is to them nothing, nor would I desire their feelings to be otherwise, since an extensive production of paralysed limbs would be necessary to bring general opinions parallel with my own.

Soon after beginning to run about in this enlarged freedom, before I had gained the skill to handle my vehicle which afterwards came by constant practice, a troop of yeomanry passed me one summer afternoon. Watching them curiously, interested in their absurd cocked hats,

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curved sabres and anything but fiery steeds, I forgot my position for a moment, lingering in the road until the horsemen were close upon me. An officer, marked by a full black moustache and the seam of an old wound across his left cheek, rode forward, saying with good-humoured contempt—

"Out of the way, cripple!"

As my carriage had stuck fast on a large stone he bent down and gave me a vigorous push towards the ditch, clearing the path effectually for his men. The push turned me half round, leaving me with my face towards a roadside cottage. From an upper window a young woman leant to watch the retreating yeomen, a woman of so rare and refined a beauty that my heart stood still at the sight of her. She looked long and eagerly after the horsemen; then her eyes rested for a moment on myself and my choice turnout, more in scorn than pity, and she retired behind the screening walls.

Blushes are always plentiful with me, and on this occasion they hastened, as their practice is, to stain my cheeks. I lay awhile sheltered by the hedge under which the muscular officer had hurled me, in a state of quivering delight. Yet what was I to delight in the beauty of woman? No joys of love could ever be mine. I could have wept aloud for my infirmity and the lonely existence it compelled me to pass; but hopeless as my future was I lingered long near the spot where the unknown girl's beauty had brought bliss so exquisite into my soul.

A few days later David Grindrod came into the shop with a more than usually serious look on his face. My father and mother were behind the counter, and I lay in my carriage, having just returned from an outdoor expedition.

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"Aw've com'n a beggin'," David began, with neither ceremony nor greeting. "Aw'm fair fast for tuthri shillin'."

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"Money is very scarce," my father returned, shaking his venerable head. "If you suppose I have any to spare you are badly mistaken."

As he spoke Ben came in from the working-room, with purpose to lift me from my cushions.

"Thi fayther's bin beaut brass ever, sin' aw've known him," he whispered in my ear, and then stood hands on hip to hear the dialogue.

"Come, yo con find me ten shillin', aw know, an' that'll save me a full month's time. Aw should ha charged yo moore for gearin' this cart bi reets, iv we hadn't bin owd friends."

"A bargain's a bargain. I paid what you asked for, so that matter is ended."

"Oh, be hanged!" David said, rubbing his forehead in vexation. "Aw mun ha some brass fro somewheere. A dyel depends on it. Yo known aw con save nowt misel, wi corn at th' price it is an' a wife like mine. Come! Yo'n bin reckon't a wise mon long enough—be a foo for once."

Ben muttered to himself: "That 'd be nowt fresh for eaur Joe."

"What do you want the money for?" my father demanded.

Nay, that's a saycret! Never ax me what aw want it for."

"How do I know what folly you may fritter it away in? Explain the business honestly arid I. will see what can be done."

"Aw'll tell yo nowt," David said, turning doggedly

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away. "Iv yo'n so little thrust in me, afther livin neighbours so mony year, keep yor brass an' welcome, for aw'll ne'er touch a hawpny on it."

As he strode to the door I called after him:—

"You shall have the money to-morrow, David."

"Will it be thi fayther's brass?" the vexed weaver demanded. "Iv it will tha may keep it."

"No. It shall be my own brass, honestly earned,"

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"Why, then, God bless thee," David said, taking my limp hand into his strong grasp. "Tha little thinks what wondherful wark thi brass may do. Aw'll borrow it off thee, as a friend, mi lad; an' iv ever aw con pay thee back aw will."

My father said: "There is very small hope of that, by your own showing."

David turned round upon him, wrathful but subdued. "Yo're reet theree, Howt. There's desperate little chance o' me payin th' lad again, an' iv it 'd bin a theausan peound aw wouldn't have axed. Ten shillin' wain't breighk him."

He marched out of the shop indignant, my father coolly remarking that his advice would be to neither lend nor give the man anything at all.

"I have never taken your advice yet and don't intend to begin now," was my filial answer, from which an observant reader will conclude that Mr. Holt found me no very dutiful son. "I am disgusted by your cold and miserly behaviour to a man who, if he had means, would be eager to help others."

"Laurence!" my mother said in a pleading tone; so I calmed my youthful fire for that time.

"Tha met as weel ha fund him th' brass, Joe," Ben remarked incidentally, as he raised me from the carriage. "He's a very dacent chap is Daff."

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"When I require your advice I will ask for it, Benjamin," loftily replied Mr. Holt, and went away to attend a missionary meeting.

III.

NEXT morning, assisted by my sister's accompaniment on her spinet, I fiddled a devious way through several suites of Handel and sonatas of Mozart. In an interval I innocently asked:—

"Who lives in that solitary cottage by the roadside, just below Oakenrod Hall?"

"I don't know," Ellen said, turning round from her instrument with a wondering stare. "How very extraordinary it sounds to hear you ask a question like that!"

"And why so, aged moralist?" (She was three years older than myself.)

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"Because you are generally so indifferent about other people's affairs, and never seem to notice anybody but relations and old friends. We haven't many neighbours to overcrowd us here, but few as there are you are not acquainted with half of them."

"Don't be too sure of that, my dear. If actual words and intercourse have been limited my perceptive organs have not slept entirely."

"How am I to account for this curiosity about the cottage?"

"Ellen, in that cottage dwells the loveliest maiden these eyes ever beheld!"

My sister laughed gaily. "Another!" she said. "The very loveliest? Poor Laurence! Poor, susceptible heart! If loveliest, she is not the first to have impressed you, as I can attest."

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Then, as if fearing her mirth would pierce my thin skin, she put an arm round me and laid her cheek to mine.

"I will inquire into the matter, and if nobody else can enlighten me will call at the cottage itself."

"Ellen," I said seriously, "no woman ever impressed my mind as this one has done, and hopeless as all thoughts of love must be for a wretch so useless in the world, I long to hear more of this fair creature, to see her again, to speak with her if that were possible. She must be good. Oh, yes! no tainted mind could live in such a frame. She has excellence, beauty and virtue –I know it!"

"Poor boy!" Ellen sighed, kissing my forehead and arranging my cushions for greater comfort. "I could almost wish her to be crammed with faults if that would restore your peace of mind; but, of course, in that case you would soon be seized with a poetic affection for somebody else."

"Poetic affection!"

"Yes, certainly. What else can we consider your periodical fits to be? I have heard you many a time surround girls with every grace and good quality; but when the first glamour of imagination wears off you calmly dismiss these angels from your heart, one

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after another in melancholy line, just because they can't reach some impossible standard of worth known to you alone."

"Very well," I said; "poetic affection let it be. Perhaps it is my fate to break the monotony of existence by many superficial passions, as it is the lot of other men to hold fast by one woman, to them the dearest of all this world. But inquire, for all that."

We returned to our musical exercises, and later I wheeled myself away to meet Phelim in a tuneful riverside

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grove, there to commit violence against the natural beauty of our surroundings by reading mathematics, a task to me always irksome and profitless. Studying at an end, I asked my friendly master to propel my machine uphill to David Grindrod's honse, as he lived at an altitude unreachable by my own efforts, and it was necessary for me to take ten shillings to him.

"Niver lind money, boy," Phelim remarked by way of answer.

"I am giving this to David," I said, "but he is to be trusted with much larger amounts, in spite of your cynicism."

"Don't call me a cynic, me boy—sure, I'm as much a cynic as a turtledove, and more Irish than either! And where does this human rarity live?"

"Half way up the Lordburn."

"That's on the way to my own camp, Larry. Beware of thravellin' so far, for my countrymen are quarrelsome divvles."

"You always seem on good terms with them all. How do you manage it?"

"I'm the laygal adviser o' both sides in all disputes," Phelim said with grim, but perfectly truthful, irony; and he set the carnage in motion.

The Lordburn is a clear and, beautiful rivulet, flowing from a spring on a hill top north of the church and marking an almost straight line down to the river. David lived on its west bank, his house fronting the valley.

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As it was now after eleven o'clock in the morning, we expected to find the weaver and his son hard at work, but we discovered instead all the family sitting by their kitchen fire.

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Stephen, a well-made, handsome young fellow, came forward to take my hand. I saw that his face was bruised and blackened; and looking at David who remained seated in his chair, found to my complete amazement that whereas on the previous day he had presented a sound and unscarred surface to the world, he now wore one arm in a sling, and showed a countenance battered almost out of recognition.

"Why, what is this?" I asked, in a bewildered way, hardly believing what I saw. "What's the matter, that you are both mauled about in such a fashion?"

"This is nowt to what mun come," David said sternly. "There's wur doins at t' back o' this. Hannot yo yerd what happen't at Middleton last neet?"

Now I was about the last man in the parish to hear what happened anywhere, being far from inquisitive, and generally roaming afar in some land of fancy's building; and all this David probably knew.

"No," I said. "What happened?"

"I had word of a scrimmage betimes this morning," Phelim drawled. "Were you mixed up among that same?"

Mrs. Grindrod, a tall woman with pinched, yellow face and restless black eye, who lounged idly in an old rocking-chair by the fireside, here remarked in abrupt manner and acid voice:—

"They should ha tarried awom, an' then nowt could have hurt 'em!"

"What is it, Stephen?" I asked, seeing that David was in no talking humour. "There can be no secret about the business, surely?"

"Aw'm noane sure o' that," Stephen said.

"Dhrop that murdherin' brogue, ye haythen," Phelim

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cried. "Faith, this is a fine end to all my endivours to dhrive nate and swate English into that square block of a head ye carry! Don't insult me wid any more such barbarous jabber."

"Shall I tell them, father?" Stephen asked.

David nodded. "Tha may as weel, lad. It's bund to come eaut afore long."

"I'll tell you all about it, then, in as good English as I can talk," Stephen went on.

"Let me lay you on the couch first, Laurence; you will be more comfortable there."

He lifted my light frame in his strong arms, laying me on an old-fashioned couch-chair with a woman's gentleness. The thought passed through my head that most women in Mrs. Grindrod's position would have made some motion or offer towards helping in this task; however, Mrs. Grindrod calmly continued to rock, staring straight before her with no very amiable expression on her sharp features.

"There," Stephen said kindly, "you're as snug as I can make you, Laurence." He brought a chair for the schoolmaster, sat down himself on a wooden stool, and proceeded.

"The weavers round the town here have known for several days that a load of power-looms was coming to Middleton. We have been lucky so far in keeping clear of these new-fangled machines, and it was supposed that if any accident happened to this first lot a long time might pass before any speculator ventured to bring more. To ensure that this desired accident should take place, a select party of weavers gathered in Middleton last night with the declared intention of taking liberties with the new machinery."

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David broke in there. "Stephen, lad, don't talk i' that jokin' road. Aw cawn't abide it!"

"I'm sorry, father. I should have remembered how serious the matter is to you."

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"And why to him more than another man?" Phelim demanded looking curiously from father to son.

"Aw could soon tell yo that iv aw would," Mrs. Grindrod said, smiling at her husband in an ill-tempered fashion. He scowled in return, but said nothing.

"Never mind that for the present," Stephen went on. "You must understand that my father, myself, and half a dozen others have made a stand against the silly prejudices of our fellow-workmen; always declaring and believing that opposition is perfectly useless, and hopeful that steampower may bring us more good than evil after all. Well, as we had tried talk and persuasion long enough without checking the frenzy for destruction, we walked over to Middleton last night to try if we could enforce our opinions by strength of arm."

"The bigger fools ye!" said Phelim.

"You maybe right very likely. Our strength was wasted, at any rate, and the looms were broken up before our eyes."

"Twas a faction fight ye had, was it?"

"There was a fight. Yes. We found the mill, a new building put up on purpose for the work, somebody broke the door open, and the room was full in a minute. The looms stood in geometrical order, all ready for gearing. There were sixteen of them—Horrocks's latest—patent and beauties they looked, shining all over polished metal and clean paint. Big George broke to the front, swinging a big sledge he had borrowed from a blacksmith and carried from Rochdale.

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"'Ston back, lads!' he shouted. The long-handled hammer swung up, and bash! my father's fist dropped on George's face, flooring him flat. I had some vague ideas about making a speech that should quieten things down a bit, but business was too brisk for anything of that kind. There was a scramble, several heavy fists were banged against me, and I was soon down under the looms, where it's a wonder I wasn't crushed and trodden to death. I crawled out when a chance offered, picked my father up, for he was

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lying stunned in a mess of blood, and we sneaked away very quietly. Our other mates had bolted in good time, not having pluck enough in them for a fight, and the machinery was getting smashed to bits as fast as it could be; so we haven't done much good by interfering after all."

"We'n shown folk 'at there's summat in us beside talk," David exclaimed, struggling with some strong emotion that strove to break out of him. "What we'n done may happen tell it tale yet."

"Iv yo'd tarry awom an' mind yor wark yo'd show some wit," Mrs. Grindrod observed in a tone of considerable acerbity. "Aw fair wondher at thee, David, wastin' o th' time an' brass tha keeps doin'. There's bin endless ov expense cobbled away i' keepin' this lad at schoo so long, an' neaw his larnin's no use at o to him 'at onybody con see. He could ha wovven beaut."

David said nothing, but I, who knew the deliberate privations he had suffered to pay for Stephen's schooling, and knew also that Mrs. Grindrod was unduly fond of strong liquor and cursed generally with shiftless habits, could passably well divine his thoughts.

"A weaver, is it?" Phelim asked with some scorn for the woman's hopeless want of perception. "Faith, Stephen,

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it's little ye'll need be chained to the loom wid your mathematical knowledge, and ye may tell the good mother there I said so. I'd think my time of instruction wasted intoirely if 'twas but a weaver ye were to be."

"David," I said, interposing to divert the current of talk, "I have brought the money we spoke about last night."

"Aw'm very thankful for it," David returned, taking the silver into his scarred right hand. "Aw wain't forget thi kindness, lad, an' iv aw say nowt mich abeaut it mi feelins are deep enough. Aw shamed terrible last fleet when thi fayther would make me into a

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beggar whether or not, an' aw'm fain to know th' son's a better opinion on me. Yo'll know afore so long what th' brass is wanted for—at lest aw'm hopin' yo will."

"Never mention the matter again," I said. "The sum is too small to bother about."

"Ah, it's smo enough for folk comfortably off, like yo," David replied sadly. His eye travelled slowly round the walls of his room, as if he were making a mental inventory of his scanty goods. "Ten shillin'! It seaunds little enough to buy a mon's life wi; but that's what it's done, Maisther Laurence. Eaut o' that first brass thi mother paid me aw gav one hawve to snatch a deein' friend fro th' grave edge."

"What might be the matter wid him?" Pheim asked.

"Clemmin," said David, with the dreadful calmness of one to whom such experiences were common. "That were o he ailed. Wi th' price they'n gotten corn to ten shillin' wain't go so far toard film fleaur-pokes; but it's better nor nowt, an' this time it's bin plenty."

"So that's where the carriage money went, father?" Stephen said. "You never told me before."

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"Tha never axed me, lad."

"No. I knew too well you had not spent it without good reason."

"It fair rove mi heart i' teaw to part wi that brass," David said, smouldering excitement showing in his eyes. "Tha knows what aw wanted it for, Stephen—thee an' me an' nobry else i' th' world con tell what vally that brass were to me, what long-fowten saycret hopes it could bring into shape, what weary years o' sthrivin' it met end."

"It's a dale of agony for nothing ye seem to have had," Phelim interrupted the weaver to say. "Sure, I'd have 'bated the school-pince so much, or lint ye the money for the asking, poor as I am."

"Beggin's nowt i' my road," David resumed. "Aw shamed at axin' Howt even, for o we'n bin acquainted so mony year. It seaunds a dyel o' fuss abeaut a little, aw know, an'

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iv aw'd gotten a wife woth her saut we could ha saved th' brass time an' time again; but when every hawpny 'at comes into her fingers gwoes i' dhrink what con a chap do?"

Mrs. Grindrod, applying her apron to her eyes, proceeded to draw upon her frequently-disturbed reservoir of tears. This good lady's time was largely occupied by weeping and utterance of jaundiced complaints.

"Well, well," David went on wearily, smoothing his forehead without rubbing any wrinkles out of it. "Let it rest—let it rest! Aw con feight this job eaut to th' end neaw. So, as aw were tellin' yo, when Mrs. Howt paid me a whol sovereign aw started off leet-hearted an' bowd. 'Neaw!' aw thought, 'at last aw have thee!' an' just then it coome into mi yead to sper afther an owd mate o' mine, as aw'd happen't to yer he were noane so weel. Aw

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knocked at his dur, but nowt stirred, so aw oppen't it an' went forrad into his kitchen. His cubbort-bedstead were turn't deawn an' he were lyin' on his back in it, a rough seek undher him, a bit o' flannel hardly coverin' him above, an' he looked like dyeath. 'Eh, Martin!' aw co'd eaut, 'whatever's gotten thee into this state?' He turn't his e'en on me in a famished stare, an' oppen't his dhry meauth to speighk, but no seaund coome. Aw looked into his cubbort, but could find nowt there. Every bit ov a stick were gwone fro' floor an' shelf. His wife coome tottherin back fro some journey afther meight, but hoo coome emptyhanded an' so helpless 'at hoo'd ha sunk on th' bare floor but for me heighvin her to th' bedside. 'Oh, David!' hoo whisper't, lookin' at me wi e'en like lanthrns, an' ne'er a word hoo said but just that. What could aw do, Stephen, wi twenty shillin' brunnin' mi pocket eaut?"

"Buy food and drink," Stephen said promptly.

"Well, that's just what aw did. Milk, an' loave, an' meighl for porritch, wi a bit o' flesh-meight to stew for Martin; an' th' change eaut o' ten shillin' aw gav to his wife to carry 'em on tuthri days longer."

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"More power to you, good man," says Phelim. "Ye've a ferocious look at times, but 'twould appear there's a tindher corner in ye, somewhere. And how is this same Martin now, if ye plaze? Maybe the owld schoolmaster might find a shilling for him."

"He's wortchin' again, an' wants nobry's charity," David returned. "Thank yo, o th' same. Iv yo'n ony weight o' brass to spare there's hundherds i' this teawn on th' very edge o' farnishin'. We're o grund an' grund whol nobbut sthrong folk con live. Wakely chaps mun suffer an' dhrop, women an' cbildher mun pine to nowt Ne'er

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let yorsel be bother't wi too mich gowd i' these nippin days."

"Arrah, man, would ye balance all the town on my back? I must tache geomethry and the languages an iligant while to fill every mouth that gapes in this parish."

"There's a rook o' clemmin folk wi nobbut theirsel to blame for it," Mrs. Grindrod calmly remarked, rocking gently, her face drawn into an expression of acidulated conviction, her hands resting idly before her. "Most on 'em are noane careful wi their brass—it's no sooner addl't nor spent. Their heauses are dirty, too, a shame to be sin. They putten hawve their wage onto their backs, an' then han to spend their time walkin' abeaut to show their fine clooas!"

"Be quiet, woman! " David said in stern reproof, but his wife had not yet finished her discourse

"Iv it's noane cobbed away on clooas it's spent i' dhrinkin; an' there's folk again 'at'll ware every penny they getten for eddication, or give i' charity what's badly wanted awom. There's me wi a husban an' a groon-up lad 'at should sthrive to keep me i' some mak o' comfort: but here aw've to scrat soon an' late, mornin' to neet, beaut ever ahawpny to co mi own!"

"Be quiet, aw tell thee!" David interrupted, with a restrained anger in his deep tones that silenced Mrs. Grindrod for the time. The weaver went on:—

"Thru it is, schoomaisther, there's moore empty meauths nor ony one mon could fill. But there's happen betther times i' seet."

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"Faith, that's glad tidings ye prophesy! But if ye get yourselves clane murdered, you and Stephen, it's little

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good ye'll have from the better days. There'll be ill blood stirred against ye among your fellow-weavers afther this shindy. Then what'll ye do?"

"We'll fight it out, master," Stephen said with determination. "Nothing else is open to us, in fact. We are already marked men, and can't retreat from our position. Our mates must be educated into full comprehension of the laws of progress and we must count among the prophets and teachers they need. In their blindness they struggle against themselves; for what is the potent remedy to cure this prevailing misery—to make food cheap and money plentiful? Why, the very power-loom they shatter and despise!"

David's strong bass broke in: "An iv th' peawer-loom as it stons neaw con play sich marlocks, what'll happen when it turns eaut double what it's ever done yet?"

"Doubled prosperity, granting Stephen's argument to be true," I said. "In the meantime, whether you are true prophets or not, you stand in imminent danger of being stoned out of this city."

"We're likely to get puned, aw believe," says David, a grim smile furrowing his cheeks for a moment. "But we con bide that, Stephen an' me."

"By Pharaoh's chariot, 'tis war to the bitter death ye're risking!" Phelim said earnestly. "Take an owld pidagogue's advice, ye gosthoons, and keep frinds wid your neighbours. *Suaviter in modo*—soft soap's the stuff to bewilder an enemy. Fair fighting won't land you through this divarsion."

"It's too late, master," Stephen replied. "Neither logic nor logarithms, nor yet Solomon's wisdom can hinder

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us from making fools of ourselves now. We have more at stake than you think of. What do you say, father—shall we renounce ambition and abandon our task to other men?"

David's tenacity of disposition showed itself strongly in his battered face as he answered: "We con wroastle through, lad."

"Fortune awaits us!" Stephen cried, clenching his list.

"She'll wait an extensive while before ye catch her too," Phelim said. "*Benedicite* / I bless ye and lave ye. It's a pair of pulverised omadhauns ye'll be before another moon completes her orbit."

IV

As it fell out I had no very long while to remain in suspense before making acquaintance with the object of my "poetic affection," to use Ellen's phrase. A wealthy man who lived near us, Mr. Gabriel Butterworth, a justice of the peace and prosperous merchant, had an excellent habit of frequently inviting his neighbours to assemble in his parlours—to eat, drink and make merriment, to dance, sing and generally expand themselves—increasing the sum both of their enjoyment and his own.

To these assemblies I had occasionally gone—not often, for active sharing in the amusements there was impossible for me. Sometimes we had music, when my fiddle became useful for beguiling half an hour; but oftenest I lay in some quiet corner interested in watching the animated play and motion of figures passing before me, all manner of dreamy speculations languidly sliding through my brains, a host of trifling incidents, peculiarities of gesture, tones of voice, stamping themselves upon my half-unconscious memory,

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to arise and overwhelm me with astonishment on some far future day.

Butterworth was a large-sized dogmatic man, broad and florid of face, assertive and decided in manner, with magnificent bushy hair and whiskers that gave him the look of a white-maned lion.

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I met him one day outside the town, and smiled to myself at his bold, swinging, slightly-pompous stride, which might have befitted a powerful emperor strolling through his lands.

"Dal it, Laurence," he broke out, stopping as my carriage came near him; "tha knocks about quite as well as a man wi legs! How's thy father and mother?"

"They are both very well, sir."

"Eh, thy father's an old fox, lad! Dang his buttons! An old fox he is! There's another up in Wardle yon, too, dal him! He's just done me out o' ten pounds as clean as a whistle."

"How did he contrive that, sir?"

"It was a small matter of business between us. Tha could hardly understand the details, as tha's no business knowledge."

Butterworth admired himself as the possessor of much commercial acuteness, and was a very unlikely man to give me or anybody else the particulars of any matter in which he had found himself worsted.

"Crash him!" he exploded again. "He's a fox, lad; a cunning fox! But I'll twinge his tail for him yet. He'll find me a bit sharper nor he reckons for. Look here! I've a party coming off to-night---come to it, and bring thy sister if hoo'll come. We can do with yon music-box o' thine, too; for there's some new neighbours visiting us, and they may happen want some fiddling."

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I thanked him, and we were about to part, when a miserably-clothed, starved-looking man stopped to beg from us. Butterworth had him by the collar in a moment, and went off with another explosion.

"Blange thee! I'm a justice, and it's my bounden duty to have thee locked up. Where arta from?"

"Ashton," the poor fellow said, trembling. "Dunna put me i' th' lockups, maister, dunna! I've friends not far fro here, if I'd nobbut strength to reeach 'em."

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"That's a likely tale! Tha's run away from thy work, I expect."

"Nay, bur it's runnin' away fro me. I'm a hondloom wayver, knocked out bi these new-fangled steeam frames, an' that's Gospel! "

"This begging must be stopped, man," Butterworth stormed, giving the stranger a shake that sent him grovelling upon the ground, sobbing for mercy. I watched the two men, meditating upon the arrogance of strength induced in my fellow-creatures by a full stomach and heavy cash-bag. Well acquainted with my friend the justice, I knew that when his noisy authority had expended itself his large heart would rise in pity.

So it proved, for after threatening several times to carry his prisoner off to the nearest watchman Butterworth suddenly plucked the man up, set him upon his feet, and shouted:—

"Be off, now, and come begging no more inside my bounds. Here's a shilling for thee, so pester no more decent folks for brass."

The weaver turned away, looking at the coin in his hand; then he stopped and took off his cap.

"Met I make so bowd as ax yor name?"

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"Be off, dal thee! Butterworth's my name—Gabriel Butterworth, Esquire."

"Thank yo, sir. I'll keep it i' mind, for yo're a gentleman. Yo may depend, sir, every word I've towd yo's God's thruth!"

As the weak man plodded slowly on his road the strong one stood looking after him with a slightly contemptuous smile, probably reflecting that no state of destitution could have so far subdued his own strong self-reliant character. Yet greater miracles have been wrought.

"He's a rickety object to call himself a man, Laurence," the justice said, turning to me. "Dang these weavers! Why can't they learn to be thrifty in youth and make some provision for cases like this? My fortune was built up before I was thirty. I must get on, lad. Don't thee forget the party, now!"

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We went our separate ways. His fortune, forsooth! He had inherited the bulk of it, but would have deafened with vituperation anybody who dared to tell him so.

To the party, accordingly, Ellen and I proceeded that evening. My usual comfortable couch, planted in a remote angle of the large parlour, was secured for me; and in that undisturbed retreat I had full opportunity and leisure to survey the numerous guests. Many of the local gentry and well-to-do tradesmen were present, most of them bringing wives or daughters to grace the gathering. Several yeomanry officers gave colour to the throng by their showy uniforms, and among them I smiled to see the man who had so unceremoniously hurled me from his path a few days before. At the same moment, as if fate had decreed that I must see the pair associated, my glance fell upon the unknown beauty who had caused me such a fluttering of the heart.

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She and the officer were acquainted, evidently. They met, talked, later in the evening danced together. I watched them in most inquisitive and unjustifiable fashion, seeing nobody else in the room in my abstraction; and yet what was it all to me?

After a while Butterworth, carrying on a noisy discussion with a knot of local chiefs, was suddenly stricken with a desire to exhibit me in my capacity as fiddler. His wife was despatched to realise his wish, by arranging music-stands and engaging strong arms to lift my couch forward into public view, where I lay nervous and blushing while Ellen took her seat at the harpsichord.

A sense of my pitiable physical condition was always strong upon me when so thrust before a crowd's staring eyes. Without turning my head to examine those about me I could feel, with painful consciousness, too, the presence of that gay group of ladies and gentlemen, representative of the greatest wealth and highest intellect our town could boast.

But as the elastic strings sang responsive to my sliding bow all this passed, leaving me conscious only of the music's inspiration. We played some pieces from Beethoven,

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and other things of more show but less meaning; after which, reconveyed to my nook of refuge, I was again lost in welcome obscurity.

Soon after this episode Ellen came to sit beside me, bringing a budget of news. She had been dancing with Butterworth's second son, Edmund, a strapping, intelligent fellow of live and twenty, and had squeezed some information out of him.

"I know all about your divinity now, Laurence. Lend an attent ear while, swift as meditation or the thoughts of love, I speak—"

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"Oh bosh!" I interrupted. "Pitch a plain yarn, like a good girl. What is she?"

"Her name is Margaret Seaford. Her father was an army contractor and was drowned in the German Ocean. Her mother sits yonder—the plump lady in a black gown with scarlet knots. They are well off. I believe Edmund is smitten by her, so beware his rivalry."

"She is not smitten by him," I said. "That military fool with the moustache attracts the dame. His gold lace is the candle she would singe her wings at."

"What a tone of bitterness!" my sister said, her amiable nature displaying itself in her smiling face. "Green and yellow jealousy has caught you, poor boy! But how can you know?"

"How do you guess that Edmund admires her?"

"By his manner, of course. Perhaps my keen womanly instinct assisted me, too."

"And shall I have eyes to see, yet see not? Yonder bedizened brainless fop is master of her soul."

Ellen rippled over with limpid laughter. "Oh Laurence! The man will never find favour in your jaundiced vision, that is assured. 'Brainless fop!' Alas, brilliant yeoman and charming orphan!—

Gnawing jealousy, out of your sight
Sitting alone, his bitter lips doth bite.

For your worship's enlightenment and pacification let me remark that the bedizened young man is a lord's son."

"Pooh!"

"The Honourable Godfrey Masham!"

"A title is no salvation for a man."

"He has won glory in foreign lands—mark the wound on his heroic cheek—and comes now a-drilling our county

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yeomen into fighting trim. Majesty is in his port—courage in his unbending eye!"

"There is precious little speculation in it. I warrant him a turnip."

The fact was I had no such warranty in possession, but was fain to hold the lordling an ass simply because I could adduce no other shortcomings against him. Here was likely matter toward! I loved Margaret with all the exceptional depth of my soul, Edmund had some shallower affection for her, she smiled upon the Honourable Godfrey!

Now, I could peer from secret corners and bestow praise or blame upon unconscious men or women with satisfaction to myself: but if the least or most despised of my fellowcreatures brought me from abstraction to reality by actual converse my equanimity would at once vanish, my morbid sensibility rise in arms against me, hanging weights upon my tongue, emblazoning my cheeks with effeminate blushes. Consequently something closely approaching terror attacked me when presently I beheld Butterworth, Miss Seaford, and Masham making towards me in one annihilating group. Our host burst into a flow of noisy talk in his manner.

"This is Laurence, my dear—this is the young man, captain—Laurence, my lad, here's Miss Seaford wishes to make thy acquaintance, and that's an honour some folks would give a considerable deal for, dal 'em! This lady wants fiddling lessons off thee, for I told her tha made a living in that way, being fit for nought else. It's a bad job about that back o' thine, as I've just been saying, for tha'rt not wanting i' wit, if muscle did but correspond. But keep thy heart up, lad! Dal it! bodily strength's not everything, though

it's a grand gift—and few men can match me in that line, nor in many others happen. Eli, captain? Now,

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here's a pupil to make thee proud, Laurence—think on I recommended thee to her."

This bumptious, thick-skinned harangue did me good by rubbing several sore spots in my mental constitution. I cooled down and grasped the situation before Butterworth had finished. Miss Seaford had seated herself on the couch beside me, and spoke:—

"Mr. Holt's talent must be his strongest recommendation."

"Yes, quite so!" remarked the captain, who stood inspecting me through an eyeglass, perhaps to satisfy himself as to whether my equipment accorded with service regulations or not. "He is a very good fiddler."

"When Beauty and Valour kneel at the shrine of Art," I said, with sarcastic intent, "what should a poor artist do but express gratitude?"

"Yes," said the captain. "Certainly. You can fiddle—there's no doubt of it."

You play with real feeling," Miss Seaford resumed, "and I should be happy to continue my musical studies under your guidance, if you can tolerate so hopeless a pupil. I had some lessons in London from a fashionable master, and have acquired some elementary knowledge already."

"My methods are extremely unfashionable," I said, talking large to conceal extreme nervousness. "I can't teach you to put on an elaborate art as you would don a gown."

"Why wasn't I taught to play the fiddle in my youth?" demanded the Honourable Godfrey, appealing to the combined mass of his auditors. "Would you have taken lessons from me, Miss Margaret?"

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"No, you are too ferocious. In your hands the bow would resemble a sword or a ramrod."

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"To be sure it would," cried Butterworth, thinking he had been silent long enough. "That's a fair hit, Masham! Every man to his trade, dal it! Every man to his trade I Fiddling's a poor job, but such as it is Laurence has mastered it; so give the poor lad credit, dang him. You soon found out that he plays with feeling, Miss Seaford. I noticed it long since—first time I heard him. I'm very quick to perceive such things. What can be finer than right deep, tender feeling, dal it? Nothing in the world! I should know, for my own feelings are deeper nor most, and I am very sensitive by nature."

Ellen had been sitting quietly on a stool at my feet all this while, but here she looked Butterworth in the face, and treated him to a merry laugh.

"What, are you there, little mischief?" said the goodnatured justice, laughing himself. "What have I said now to tickle you? Blange me! a man trips on hot ploughshares talking to you and Laurence, confound ye for a pair of critics! Have I said aught but the truth?"

"You have clearly spoken most solid, incomprehensible, irrefragable truth according to Butterworth."

"Ah, the cutting tongues of you Holts!" cried the justice, shaking a warning finger at her. "Your weapons are blunt in comparison, captain—dal 'em! Yes—fair blunt! I am a master of irony myself, but that little lass smiling so innocently there has bested me in a hundred matches. Smash it! there's very few can claim that advantage over Gabriel Butterworth."

"Miss Holt plays remarkably well also," Miss Sealord said. I was surprised by her finished execution."

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"You are kind to say that," Ellen returned.

"Very pretty girl, Miss Holt," the captain whispered to his host. "She seems clever, too. Introduce me, my dear sir."

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That honour accordingly was bestowed upon Ellen, with its consequent infliction of dialogue between her and the military man: what time I arranged with Miss Seaford necessary details of the proposed lessons, saying nothing about my throbbing heart.

Presently Edmund joined us, and there was much general talk of little interest to me, until Butterworth caught my attention by exploding noisily against our resident working population, who, with every reason for happiness, persisted in maintaining a simmering condition of discontent, to the annoyance of all persons perched on seats of authority.

"We shall find means to quiet them," said Masham, smoothing his exuberant moustache. "The laws must be respected by them, as by their betters."

I said: "You will find them to be law-abiding, diligent, inoffensive people."

The captain laughed coldly. "I find them conspiring in secret, damaging property at Middleton and elsewhere, gathering on the moors to attempt absurd imitations of military tactics, muttering sedition in the streets. To my mind there is a powerful smack of rebellion in these districts."

"Why don't you feed them instead of threatening with the sword?" I asked him. "Give them bread and the disturbances will cease in a week."

"That's not my business, Master Laurence. I am here to compel submission, not to bribe."

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"You will never do it, sir! Not all the swords and guns in your army can subdue the stubborn wills of these men while they believe their demands to be just. But surely you would not draw the sword against them?"

"That rests entirely with themselves. I have no craving for the blood of these miserable wretches, but it's all in a soldier's trade. Rebellion must be crushed, whoever suffers."

"You may kill them, certainly," I said, but subdue their independent spirits you cannot—no, not with arsenals and battalions! You may dismember, kill, exterminate—but while a man is left alive among them he will exert his whole strength to defy you!"

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"Indeed!" said the Honourable Godfrey. "I had not given them credit for being so heroic. Their appearance hardly bears out your enthusiastic statements."

"What dreadful clothes they wear!" Miss Seaford exclaimed, laughing a little. "Really, coming from the south, where nothing of the kind exists, I am bewildered by the poor women's dresses and the hideous things worn on the feet—clogs, don't you call them? It is impossible to have much sympathy for such odd people."

"They are human," I said. "They toil and spin if their attire does not equal that of the lilies. Mean, prosaic, even degraded, as they doubtless are in your eyes, they are of value in the world, and their cause is at least as worthy of a poet's song as the more picturesque woe of Italy or France."

Edmund had a word to say there. "Laurence is apt to exaggerate matters a little, being something of a poet himself, but in the main what he says is true enough. We must have peaceable measures tried, Masham, before your slaughtering begins. If you seek acquaintance with our

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operatives, Miss Seaford, you will easily discover occasions for sympathy, and practical charity besides. I should be happy to act as guide."

"No, no!" the lady cried, shuddering in her silks. "They are too disagreeable to meddle with. I declare some of the men look as if they were unacquainted with the sterling virtue of soap!"

"That's right, Miss Margaret!" Butterworth burst out. "Don't thee be tempting her among these restless folk, Ned. She's too much of a lady to concern herself about such truck. As for thee, Laurence, tha'rt a rebel thyself—dal thee!"

The night passed, the guests separated, the festivities were over. I had seen my beloved one, touched her hand, heard sounds of wisdom from her tongue.

As Ellen walked beside my carriage on the way home she said:—

"Your suit runs smoothly, Laurence. You can educate your goddess in music and love at the same time."

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"My teaching won't please her," I replied. "You heard her foolish talk about Rochdale people to-night? She lacks knowledge of more serious matters than music."

"Are you disenchanted so quickly? I vow you are the most wavering lover ever heard of! Has the first meeting with your fair one actually wrought a cure?"

"I don't know. Her conversation has a cooling effect, at any rate. What is she to sneer at a brave, enduring race of fellow-beings! Dress them in tawdry rags, locate them anywhere on the continent, write out their history in sounding claptrap, and she would be stirred by pathetic thrills. Oh for fire and strength to speak in vivid lines the wrongs of my own people!"

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"Some day you shall sing their song and the world will listen," Ellen said, always ready to flatter my very considerable vanity, and really having great faith in my latent powers, as was natural in an amiable and affectionate sister.

In the late autumn of that year the heaviest affliction of my life fell upon me. My dear mother died. A part of myself seemed gone, for from earliest remembrances of my maimed existence her arms had supported me, her loving face been ever in my sight. From the small circle of my kind to which bodily infirmity confined me the dearest figure was lost, and the blow fell with crushing weight upon my sensitive frame. It was then; indeed, that my extreme—even effeminate—susceptibility first revealed itself to me in complete fulness, giving me just cause to dread possession of attributes so dangerous and rare. During the rapid term of her fever-rooted illness I hardly ate or slept, lying in despairing quietude with restless brains whirling in unreasoning activity. There was little time for words of farewell: a glance at the white face, a last kiss, a murmur of anguish, a cry from my sister, and the unheeding robber Death had stolen our priceless treasure. The memory of that beloved face, the fond recollection of unceasing love and care unselfishly bestowed, must of a surety remain with me while life itself remains; and I am still unable to conceive a period, in the grave or beyond it, when all sentience of my dear mother's influence will cease.

V.

THE course of my story has now reached the winter of 1810. George III had been smitten with blindness and gone mad. Wellington was in Spain, dragging on the endless Peninsular War. English credit was severely shaken

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by the terrible and long-continued strain upon national finance. Banks broke, commercial houses of established reputation fell, large private fortunes melted like smoke, no man could trust his neighbour for a day.

In this crash of tremendous events, Fate, having still a spare malevolent fist, dealt David Grindrod a blow that would assuredly have crushed an ordinary man beyond hope of redemption.

Stephen came one night and bore me off to his father's cottage. Cold, cheerless weather prevailed, snowy slush covering the ground, but my friends seemed undisturbed by weather or ill-fortune. Both had brighter faces than I had seen them wear for many a day. Mrs. Grindrod sat in her eternal rocking-chair, and paid me no attention beyond that of an acidulated furtive side-glance, but David gave me a cordial welcome—strongly earnest, like all his acts and words.

"Aw'm fain to see thee, lad! Here, Stephen, carry this candle upstairs an' aw'll bring Laurence."

I was lifted in the weaver's strong arms, borne upstairs as if my weight were nothing, and planted comfortably in a sort of nest made of woven pieces. We were in the weaving room, which extended across the full dimensions of the cottage. On the south side a long range of windows afforded all possible light for the working of two hand-looms standing near them. In a corner was a cupboard bedstead in which Stephen slept, David and his wife sleeping in a small room on the ground floor. Cotton dust lay thickly upon the few rough articles of furniture, and underfoot formed a carpet decorated by innumerable interlacing impressions of clog-irons. Near me, as I reclined serene, stood a mysterious object carefully wrapped round with many

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folds of cloth and sacking. These wrappings David at once removed, and by the flickering light of Stephen's candle I saw a square frame of dull iron and polished steel, surmounted by reed and healds. The mystery was made clear.

"This is the model of a power-loom," I said. "I understand all your eccentricities now, David. This is the problem you have puzzled over so long!"

"Ten year," David said in deep, subdued tones. "So long aw've teamed wi it. Th' job's fairly wrostl't at last. Aw could ne'er ha done it but for Stephen."

I looked at him inquiringly. He laid his strong right hand upon the loom beam and proceeded:—

"Not but what it's o my inventin, tha mun undherstond. But these machines want exact calkilations dhrawn' up for every part o' th' action, an' that cawn't be done beaut some knowledge o' mathematics. Aw'd th' general plan safe i' mi yead, but fro th' very start aw knew weel my scholarship could ne'er wortch it eaut. So when Stephen here were nobbut thirteen year owd aw tow'd him partly what aw had agate, an' charged him to study at day-schoo an' neet-schoo whol he'd maisther't his 'rithmetic, tellin' him iv he'd nobbut mind his lessons there'd be a fortin for him an' me. He needed no twice tellin'. We'n bin feightin' at it ever sin'. Bi day we wove to addle a livin' an' tuthri spare shillin' beside to pay for tackle an' kestins. Bi neet aw dhrew eaut mi sections, buildin' th' machine up, bit bi bit, on papper, puttin' nowt into metal whol aw felt sure o' mi greaund; an' Stephen sit up figurin' o'er his books whol long afther midneet, time an' time again. Every month seed summat done

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—every year brought usnar. Here stons mi loom—finished, throe-built, plumb, adjusted to a fraction. It'll run—it'll weighve—naught con hindher it? There's no loom patented yet 'at con turn eaut as mich wark as this."

David paused, giving me leisure to reflect. The candle blaze threw our shadows in shapeless masses against the white-washed walls. Yonder in dim light were the old

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

wooden hand-looms, a spectral web of suspended healds showing above their clumsy, bulky frames; here in brighter illumination was David's half-size model, compact, shining, scientifically gauged and balanced. Here stood David himself, the tenacious, plodding, capable, inventive man: by his shoulder was Stephen, whose trained intellect had polished into practical possibility the rough conception of his father. I fully realised the difficulties overcome by this persevering couple, and marvelled secretly.

Hampered by the necessary labour of earning bread, they could but have given some two hours nightly to their ambitious task. How on earth money had been found to buy metal, pay for castings, mechanics' work, costly fittings, I could not comprehend. David's shrewd foresight in planning Stephen's education, his dogged self-denial in carrying that scheme into effect, in face of his wife's complaints and flouting of friends who saw the process without guessing its object, filled me with admiration and bewilderment. With ample leisure and means what could not this man achieve, who against such odds had striven to success?

David now put a hand on my shoulder. "Aw charge thee, Laurence, say not a word to livin' mon nor woman abeaut what tha's just sin an' yerd. Tha knows what

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terrible risk we're runnin', for tha's good insect an' wit for a lad o' thy years. Not a whisper to a livin' sowl! Happen th' very lives o' me an' Stephen may be hangin' on thi tongue."

"My tongue doesn't wag very often. Your secret is safe enough with me."

"Left to misel aw should ha towd noather thee nor nobry else, though it's nobbut reet tha should know happen, as thy brass helped us through. This bad thrade an' scant wark's bin a sore hindhrance to us, an' but for that ten shillin' we met ha bin forced to cob another year away. Stephen would have thee towd—he's very fond on thee is Stephen."

I smiled at the young weaver, who still held his light aloft, his fine figure setting at defiance the homely clothing which covered him. He smiled in return, saying:—

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"Danger is nearly over, father. One day more and our treasure will be carted off into safe hands."

Tramping feet and murmuring voices sounded from without. We heard the cottage door violently shaken and thrown open.

"What's that?" David exclaimed suddenly, throwing his head back like a disturbed lion. He drew open a hinged window-pane, looked out, listened for a second. "Lap that thing up, Stephen! Sharp, lad, sharp! Cob every cleaut an' seck we ban o'er it!"

He was helping in the task before his words died away. The model was heaped with wrappings, and a square table planted over all. So treated the loom had simply the appearance of a rough bundle thrust carelessly out of the way.

The hurrying feet passed through the cottage kitchen

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and came labouring up the stone clog-worn stairs without a pause.

"They known!" David muttered, gripping his son's arm.

Stephen nodded, perched himself on the table edge, trimmed his candle wick, and awaited events in silence.

A knot of men pushed in through the chamber door, all carrying some sort of weapon, their faces full of threatening purpose. Handloom weavers all, dressed to a man in high-crowned napless hats, shabby swallowtail coats, kneebreeches, blue stockings and the inevitable clogs. Neighbours all, who had lived for long years in amity with David's family, had been accustomed to consider his interests identical with theirs, had exchanged with him the grasp of friendship. No friendly looks appeared among them now, for in their eyes Grindrod was a traitor to his degree and calling, a man to be summarily disposed of before his treacherous designs made more mischief than had been brought to pass already.

Foremost of the intruders stood Big George, handling the long-poled sledge hammer which had wrought havoc among the Middleton machinery. Lurking behind him was a spare, small man, locally styled Ferret. I counted six men besides, making

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eight in all, and began to calculate the chances of a fight. Odds were heavily against the Grindrods, who were strong men certainly, but could hardly be expected to settle four opponents each. No; the invading forces were adequate to the occasion. With what object had they come? That speculation was rapidly answered.

"Shift that table!" George growled, cleaving straight to the heart of his business without rambling prefaces.

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"Yer thee!" David whispered in his son's ear. "Heaw mony folk knew that beside thee an' me?"

"What are you going to do?" Stephen asked, passing over his father's question. "Is fighting any good?"

"Not a bit! We could happen pounce this gang eaut, but they'd nobbut Cot moore. We're done!"

So saying David strode forward to face his undesired visitors, quietly asking:—

"What are yo for?"

Ferret peeped round George's large bulk, chirping in shrill treble:—

"We're for takkin law into eaur own bonds, Grindhrod—that's what we're for! Tha'd gotten us o tee'd comfortable in a bant for owt tha knew, but we'll soon show thee different."

"Shift!" George cried to Stephen, who obeyed without remark. A swing of the long hammer sent the table flying, and in a moment every fold of covering was torn away from the model loom.

"Let's have a look at it," Ferret said, throwing aside the last cloth. "What's saddler Howt son want here? Is he in at this conspiracy? Findin th' brass to back David up, aw'll bet a sovereign!"

A snarling mutter went round the group at this conjecture, stern faces darkened upon me, Stephen crossed over to my side in case protection became necessary, but no hand was lifted. My well-known fragility and helplessness were safeguards sufficient.

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"Is that throe, Grindhrod?" demanded an elderly man called Moss.

David shook his head in reply.

"Are yo sure, neaw?" piped Ferret, thrusting forward a

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long thin nose to scent matters out. "Con yo two tak sollum haffirmation this lad's fund no brass? It looks sthrange an' suspicious, shuzheaw!"

"Th' saddler's just a chap 'at would be meddlin' i' sich undherhond wark as this," Moss said. "He's one o' thoose religious cantin' humbugs, olez ready to grab o he con, whether he damages other folk or not. Heaw the hangment could Grindhrod ever afford o' this metal-wark eaut ov his own addlins? Howt's in at it, sure as gospel!"

"Yo're wrong—yo're clen wrong!" David exclaimed, his deep voice quivering with restrained emotion. "Howt never yerd a word abeaut it!"

A contemptuous chorus of laughter greeted the statement.

"Friends an' neighbours," David continued, unable to contain himself longer, "think weel o'er what yo're beaun' to do! This machine, simple as it stons here between us, has takken ten dhree scrattin year o' my life to 'make. Neet an' day aw've pondher't o'er it, an' wrostl't forrad little bi little again sich hindhrance an' throuble as yo cawn't undherstond. Yo known me weel—aw'm no sthranger comin' among yo to conthrive yor ruin—iv aw thought this invention could harm a mon here aw'd tak George's hommer an' breighk up mi wark misel afore yor e'en. Aw'm sthrivin' for yor good as weel as mi own, iv yo'd nobbut wit to gawm it."

Here a ferocious crash of oaths and objecting shouts gave him pause.

"Yeawl yor throttles raw iv yo'n a mind—th' world wain't stop for ony gruntin' or hommerin' yo con do! It's

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idle for yo to feight again peawer-looms. They're bund to come—nay, they han com'n. They're in th' teawn to-day, an' getherin' o reaud th' counthry side. What then? A

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loom's a loom, whether it runs bi foot or engine peawer. Machines wain't wortch beaut folk to mind 'em, an' aw'll tell yo, honest an' throe, where there's one weighver wanted to-day there'll very soon be ten. Who's beaun to tent o these new looms? Why, who but us hondloom weighvers? What does it matther to us whether a frame's built o' timber or metal, whether it's gear't wi threddles or pulleys? Nowt, iv we con addle a wage—an' surelee to God we con ne'er be wur paid nor we ban bin! Yo're otogether on a wrong thrack. Iv it were mi last deem' word aw'd 'liver it again yor blint foolishness—iv aw hadn't a bodle staked mi opinions could ne'er awther—aw say again, an' believe sowl an' body, this loom con find wark for every weighver i' Lancashire, for o th' sons they con rear, an' for mony a generation o' faythers an' sons to follow afther us."

"Ston fur!" cried George, on whom this unstudied oratory was completely wasted. "We cawn't ston jawin' here o fleet."

"Howd just a minute," said Moss, who had been listening intently, thoughtfully pulling at a small grey tuft of beard the while. "Grindhrod, bad as tha'rt gotten aw ne'er knew thee tell lies yet. We thinken this job's bein' wortched bi thee an' Howt to put some brass i' yor pockets, an' we cawn't believe o this gammon abeaut doin' us good. Put thi hond i' mine, give me thi honest word 'at th' saddler an' his lad here ne'er helped thee wi brass, an' by gum aw'll believe thee!"

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"Aw cawn't do it. Aw've dhrawn ten shillin' apiece fro 'em, but as aw'm a livin' mon noather on 'em knew what their brass were wanted for."

Moss drew back, shaking his head incredulous.

"Would th' saddler give brass beaut knowin'?" Ferret shrieked. "Has young Howt gotten here to-fleet beaut knowin'? It's a undherhond conspiracy among yo to tak th' brade eaut o' poor folks' meauths! Goo on, George!"

The big weaver swung round his long hammer and brought it down upon the loom with a clatter that shook the whole cottage. Before he could strike again David caught him by the middle, casting him, hammer and all, half across the chamber, and dashed himself against the astonished seven, raging like a west gale.

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Stephen sprang across the room to his father's side, and in a moment had pulled him out of the press.

"It's no use—you will only make matters worse," Stephen said. "They will leave us head and hands if we keep quiet."

David's face was bleeding, his fists clenched and opened convulsively; his opponents, several of whom showed marks of hard knocks, sorted themselves out to an accompaniment of growling curses; Ferret crept from behind the loom, having sought safe retirement there from shocks of war.

Stephen led his father to the table, where the tallow candle still burnt dimly. Both seated themselves on the board, chairs being scarce.

Big George had gathered himself up, and stood again hammer in fist beside the doomed machine, grimly silent, being a man of action but no talker.

"Let 'em get it o'er wi," David said, a sob shaking his manly breast; and without further interference father and

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son, their right hands fast locked together, sat watching the rapid undoing of their patient, long-hidden toil.

George proved to be an effective idol-breaker, not contenting himself until every part of the frame was irremediably shattered, heedless of the tremendous din and weight of concussion caused by his fervent labour. Satisfied eventually, he rested his ponderous weapon on the floor, and turned to David asking:—

"Heaw will that shuit thee, Daff?"

"It'll do," David replied, quite composed now the worst had befallen. "Tha's made a fairish job on it."

"Yo'll happen be quiet wi yor inventin' marlocks neaw," Ferret squeaked, peeping about the heap of broken metal to assure himself that no serviceable fragments remained. "Iv it taks ten year to build a loom there'll be no moore bother wi yo for a good while."

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"We'll make another i' less nor five," Stephen said calmly.

Ferret delivered himself of a chuckle, shrill as a piccolo flourish.

"Yo'll be weel watched," Moss said, with stern decision. "Start again i' this teawn iv yo dar! We shannot be as yezzy to dyel wi another time, think on! For th' present yo'll be left to yorsel—yor owdest friends an' mates'll know yo no longer—yo'll find noather bond to shake nor tongue to onswer yor talk fro this time forrad, world beaut end, everlastin', amen!"

"Are we babbies to be freeten't wi scraps o' prayerbook?" Stephen demanded in strong scorn. "Yo're nobbut cuttin' yor own throats, yo shortseeded foos, an' harmin' yorsel moore nor us! World without end, saysta?" Here the young man jumped from his table and marched

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up close to the departing group. "I tell thee, Moss, an' George, an' this creepin' little object"—giving Ferret a contemptuous twirl with his powerful arm—"an' every mon here, 'at long afore five year's passed yo'll rue this fleet's wasteful wark wi shame an' wi sorrow. *Yo'll* hindher th' world's progress, yo miserable hawve-clemmed things—honest men once ov a day, rackless rogues neaw—yo'll brast engine cylindhers wi a stockin-needle, an' smash theausans o' tons o' machinery wi one hommer! Goo an' set abeaut it! Hurry neaw—crash, brun, lame, an' kill—yo're gam for owt 'at's far enough fro law or sense."

"Keep a civil tongue i' thi yead, or aw'll leather thee weel!" declared a rough-looking customer in the background, speaking for the first time.

"Come an' do it," Stephen said, throwing off his coat, for his blood was fired by his own eloquence, and he cared no more for the destroying eight than if they had been a handful of toy soldiers. "There's reawm an' good seem, an' umpires i' plenty. Aw'll tackle th' best mon among yor rascally gang—or ony two!"

"Steady, my lad!" David said, striding forward to his son's side. "There's bin enough done for one neet."

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"Am aw to ston here an' be sauced hi a common blaggard like Bulger?" growled wrathful Stephen, not so easily pacified. "He's in his gradely' shop among this crew—a pottherin', good-for-nowt, lynin', skulkin', thievish wasthrel! Is it bi sich chetlaws as him we mun be co'd to ordher? Is it his ill tongue 'at wain't condescend to howd parley wi us?"

Bulger appeared to be slightly bewildered by the sudden tempest he had brought upon himself; but he showed no

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inclination to accept the forcible challenge hurled at him, rather betraying concern by a furtive glance as to a way of retreat being open.

"Tak thi gang off, Moss," David said. "Surelee yo're satisfied with' mischief yo'n done. Let's have no feightin'."

Moss was undoubtedly the most reasonable man of his party, and represented the high-water mark of intellect among them. He gave an order for retreat, pausing a moment himself at the stairhead to ask:—

"Is Howt a pardner or not?"

"He knows nowt abeaut it," David told him.

"Aw cawn't believe thee," Moss said, and went clattering down the stone steps out into the sludgy road.

"We'n finished up here, aw think," David quietly remarked, taking up the light, now guttering down into its socket. "It's o happened i' less nor a candle-length, lads—trouble enough to breighk a mon's heart. Put thi jacket on, Steve, an' let's go deawn."

"Have you found the drama interesting, Laurence?" Stephen asked me, recovering his good-humour. "You have been all eyes and ears, and gotten the full benefit of the play without any trouble of sharing in it."

"Vastly interesting, if the consequences were not so serious for you."

"Th' play's noane quite o'er yet," David said. "There's one act moore. Carry thi mate deawn, Steve."

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"Of course you can punish these men by law for damage to your property," I suggested.

"Aw cawn't set law flyin' again mi owd mates. They known that weel enough."

We descended into the kitchen, where another candle was burning on a small round table. A glimmer of fire shone

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in the grate: beside it sat Mrs. Grindrod, rocking in acid silence, quite undisturbed by the clamour and bustle above. Stephen laid me carefully upon the ancient but comfortable couch-chair, and sat down beside me.

"This is thy doin', woman," David began, snuffing out his light and setting his candlestick upon the cornice as coolly as if nothing but trifling business were on hand. "Heaw could ta find i' thi heart to shap this ruin?"

"Aw thought tha'd be makin' a bother," Mrs. Grindrod whined, lifting her ever-ready apron to wipe invisible tears. "Aw've bin expectin' o fleet tha'd be crammed wi me."

"Tha'd good rezon for that expectation—rezon o' thi own makin'. Iv aw'd sthricken thee dyead tha could hardly ha fund reawm to grumble. Tha knows heaw aw've toil't an' hoped an' waited to carry this job through, an' neaw, like a saycret enemy, tha 'livers a dyeadly stab just when mi wark's maisther't an' fortin' hutches' at mi feet! Tha'rt bwon o' my bwon, bed-mate an' table-mate, a thirty-year wife, an' yet less to be thrusted nor a stingin' sarpent! Iv tha's owt to say bi way ov excuse get it said an' let's have an end."

Hereupon Mrs. Grindrod, with much snivelling, and in a manner which caused me to suspect some influence derived from gin, disencumbered her mind to the following effect:—

"Tha knows weel enough aw've never howden wi this loom-makin' an' yet aw've kept puttin'-up an' puttin'-up wi th' torment on it year afther year, whol aw began to think it'd never end. Afore tha gated o' this job there were some comfort i' th' heause an'

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tuthri shillin' to spare neaw an' again, but there's bin nowt at o nobbut throuble an' throuble an' throuble sin. Aw ne'er geet wed to be nipped

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an' humbugged same as aw have bin this dozen year back, so aw'm determin't aw'll end it. Once this loom's off thi mind tha'll happen saddle deawn to thi weighvin again, an' tha wain't be forced to spend every hawpny we han for springs, or pullies, or kestins, or ony mak o' rubbidge. Aw never howded wi sichlike, never! It's full three year sin' aw'd a new geawn to mi back. Mi bonnet's a shame to be sin—aw darn't walk abeaut th' teawn in it fieyed' o' folk talkin'. Aw wish tha could lam to tak some thought for thi wife's comfort, but it's o thisel—o thisel!"

"Good God, what mak ov a bundle o' humanity have aw festen't misel to!" David said, his face full of weariness, a hand raised to his wrinkled forehead with the old gesture. "For sich childish bits o' vanity an' selfishness mi life's wark mun be wasted! Woman, aw'll lev thee, for aw care not iv aw never set e'en on thee again i' this world. Aw've bin a kind husband to thee, seldom loisin' temper o'er thi wildest pranks, an' tha's played me mony; but this last marlock's moore nor mortal flesh con bide, an' aw'll ne'er risk havin' saycrets i' thy keepin' no moore. Never no moore, as aw'm a livin' mon! Aw'll walk eaut o' this heause to-neet, happen ne'er to set foot on this harstone again; so iv tha's moore mischief agate tha con get forrad wi it beaut hindhrance."

Mrs. Grindrod at this point showed symptoms of genuine concern. "Heaw am aw to live when tha'rt gwone?"

"Oh, tha'll be looked to!" David said, with some impatience. "Stephen mun tarry awom an' see tha'rt comfortable, an' keep yon gin-bottle o' thine filled."

"He's ne'er bin like th' same lad to me sin' tha spoilt him wi schoo-lamnin', aw know that!"

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"I will provide for you, mother," Stephen said kindly. "You will want for nothing in reason."

David's mind was planning future events with his usual sagacious foresight.

"Stephen, lad, we mun addle moore brass i' th' time to come nor we han bin doin.' Aw'll seech wark on pewerlooms somewheere—there's tidy pay at that job. Tha'd best keep thi e'en oppen for summat betther paid nor weighvin', but stick to that iv nowt else offers. For a twelvemonth we mun buckle to, savin' o we con, an' then we should be ready for a fresh start. Aw'll send thee word when aw'm sattl't."

The weaver put on his cap, lifted a stout walking-stick from a corner, and was ready to depart.

"Have you any money for travelling expenses, David?" I asked. "Don't start on the road with empty pockets."

"Aw'm in thi debt oready, lad," he returned. "Aw'll borrow no moore. Aw've a shillin' here—that'll be plenty."

"What about your lodgings to-night?"

"Th' finest fither-bed i' Rachda wouldn't bring me sleep to-neet, lad. Th' bee-roads are stonnin' oppen—aw mun walk whol mornin'."

He went out without a single word of farewell to any of us, deeper matters filling his earnest mind. Quiet, undaunted, strong of purpose, he went his lonely way, with ten unavailing years torn out of his life, resolute to begin anew the dogged, zealous striving which had achieved so much, and must surely at last receive befitting reward.

VI.

ALAS for my "poetic affection!" In our relations as master and pupil Miss Seaford and I were not long in dis-

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covering each other's peculiarities, and on my side at least growing acquaintance brought rapid disenchantment. For all her beauty the girl's society became wearisome to me, and I shuddered to think of my early infatuation. Fortunately for myself I was not a marrying man, and for once I could almost feel satisfaction because of my helpless

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condition; even that supreme affliction figuring small in comparison with the intolerable prospect of a life passed in company with Margaret's shallow, insincere mind. Her taste for music speedily wore itself out when she discovered that I should insist upon real work being done; lessons became a mere pretence in a few weeks, so, ever jealous for the honour of true art as opposed to showy ineptitude, I soon flatly refused to waste more of my deep musical erudition upon her.

The young lady professed much gushing affection for my sister, getting small return from Ellen for expended warmth. My imaginative bent frequently deceived me in estimating new acquaintances. I rated most people too highly, and could only reduce them to their true standards by subsequent experience. Ellen, misled by no such mental glamour, looked clear into the souls of unknown men and women, frequently pricking my vanity by contradicting conclusions of my own, but inevitably proving herself right in the end. It was a mutually accepted current joke between us that I, on paper a close observer of manners and keen reader of character, in actual practice was a mere elementary bungler beside this unobtrusive, intelligent, sweet-humoured girl, totally unknown to fame. Of course, like all budding geniuses, once that fact was established I made unscrupulous use of Ellen's faculty for my literary purposes, getting myself all the credit.

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However, in the case of Miss Seaford my usual illusion was remarkably short-lasting. She persevered in keeping a sort of acquaintance with us, frequently calling to pass an hour in my little study over the shop, where I habitually wrote and fiddled in an atmosphere richly impregnated with the scent of dressed leather. What attracted her can hardly be said, unless it were that she had more leisure on hand than could well be disposed of, and found a certain high-bred satisfaction in patronising people so far beneath her as a small saddler's family. She held the conventional opinions regarding differences of caste, often irritating me until I made remarks more pointed than civil; in fact whatever subject came up we were certain to disagree about it, twaddling at one another until my temper went.

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One day, I remember, she had the good taste to annoy me and Ellen by some contemptuous reference to trade and tradesmen, exhibiting the absolute ignorance as to the origin of wealth common to people reared as she had been. This brought my sarcastic stop out.

"You are a tradesman's daughter—I am a tradesman's son. My father sells cart sheets and horse gearing—yours presumably dealt in horse-beef and biscuit, possibly not disdainng to vend pipeclay and other humble adjuncts of battle. I am glad that, like myself, you have no pride of birth."

She was much offended. "My dear father was a merchant on a scale you do not conceive. There are differences in commercial standing."

"Some men have more money than others—there is no other radical distinction. Old Sally Fielding, who dispenses the modest scouring-stone at her cottage in Church lane, is an undeniable merchant—your father, whatever bulk of

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polishing stuff or vegetable matter passed through his hands, was nothing more. Let us be proud that our sires found each an honourable trade to follow."

Ellen sat laughing at us both, but I had never before seen Margaret display so much depth of emotion as now appeared. "The girl has a hot temper under her veneer," I thought to myself.

"Can you doubt, you disagreeable fellow, that I have instincts and tastes which no amount of wealth could have procured for me

"Certainly I can! You have nothing of the kind."

"Whence comes my consciousness of superiority over the degraded wretches who infest this town?"

"Obviously from education and the false ideas among which you have had the misfortune to be bred. Your superior symptoms are simple undiluted snobbery."

"You class me then among tramps and weavers-yourself also, of course! Your argument is flattering."

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"We are all made of the same stuff and fashioned by one unerring hand. How shall you claim superiority over any of human kind? You confuse accidental ephemeral advantages with primal laws of creation. The subject is large—let me induce you to study it earnestly. You will profit more in that philosophic pursuit than by desultory attempts to play a fiddle."

"Thank you; but if the study would lead me to your ridiculous conclusions, I prefer not to undertake it."

"You will admit the pipeclay, at least?"

"No, I won't," she declared, laughing her anger away. "I will admit a certain mercantile connection with the army."

"Words! Words! How glorious is the power of lan-

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guage! State the commonest fact in polysyllables and we derive a consciousness of superiority at once! We will hang out a new sign, describing Mr. Holt as a producer of equine pachydermatous accoutrements and storm-proof vehicular wrappages. His trade will increase then."

"I hope you don't share your brother's mad theories, Ellen?"

"Yes, I am quite as insane as Laurence."

"To be consistent you should make friends of the poor, ignorant people here, and associate with them."

"So we do, fair lady," I said. "Our faces are well known in many of the poorest cottages this town holds, and welcome in most of them, thank God! My sister frequently appears among the tramps and weavers who have excited your superior contempt in the guise of a ministering angel---"

"What stuff, Laurence!" Ellen interrupted.

"Well, I apologise for disclosing your secret benefactions, my dear; but really this young lady's intense darkness must be illuminated. For myself, Miss Seaford, I am a

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man of few friends; yet among the few I possess are some of the unfortunate men you so justly despise."

"You are too keen for me, but assuredly you are talking nonsense for all that. If you believe the doctrine you preach so glibly, why are you not yourself a tradesman, instead of devoting your days to the nobler occupations of art?"

This was a cruel thrust, one that no woman of true delicacy could have possibly dealt me. My dear sister winced and flushed, as if the wound had struck deep into her own gentle heart. My sarcasm was crushed.

"That was a bitter blow, Miss Margaret," I said after a pause. "You did not consider that my infirmity compels me to earn bread by callings hardly to be counted masculine.

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If you suppose I would not this moment relinquish my reputation as writer and musician for bodily power sufficient to give me a man's place in the world, you are vastly mistaken."

She was profuse of apologies—not too sincere, I thought; but having got over the shock I smiled, said the matter was not worth further mention, and that I was a tradesman after all, only carrying the chief stock in my head, instead of displaying my wares in a shop. So there was an end.

Before Miss Seaford left us Stephen called to see me, so I made him and the young lady acquainted, curious to discover what impression my friend would make upon her aristocratic mind. She rose, delivering herself of a condescending bow; but Stephen, unversed in any niceties of etiquette, took her hand, bestowed a cordial grip upon it, and seated himself without the least embarrassment. Her lip curled almost imperceptibly when she had realised the full beauty of the young man's homely far-worn dress. Apart from his poor clothes Stephen could well answer fastidious criticism. His brow was broad and full, curls of dark hair clustering round the temples. He had grey eyes, large, well separated, full of steady light capable of fiery illumination at need. No dreaminess nor doubting marred that clear gaze; decision, knowledge, firmness, sincerity, strength,

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could be read there. Massive crown, square chin, chest deep and broad, largeboned muscular frame—here was a man well fitted for active sharing in the world's work.

"Miss Seaford is anxious to investigate the peculiarities of weavers," I said, "so you have come at a good time, Stephen. She thinks highly of you in the bulk."

"Pardon me," frigidly remarked the lady, "you slightly misrepresent my wishes."

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"Were they tramps, then, you desired to examine? Or pipeclay vendors?"

"You are intolerable!" Miss Seaford cried petulantly; and without doubt my treatment of her passed the reasonable limits of good manners. She turned towards Stephen, asking:—

"Are you a weaver, sir?"

"I climbed a loom-bench when my legs were long enough to work the treadles, and I have mounted no higher yet."

"Your occupation must be insufferably laborious."

"For ladies it would be," Stephen replied, smiling. "We men don't object to it."

"Yet I hear of much dissatisfaction among your class."

"Not on account of the labour—rather because of its scarcity and the paltry rate of payment."

"It is a pitiable existence, indeed!"

"We are not accustomed to taking that point of view ourselves. Most of us consider that the amount of necessary work we do should lift us above the indignity of pity. We follow an honourable and ancient calling, and we claim that our earnings should be sufficient to provide bread to sustain and clothing to cover us. Assure us of that reasonable reward and you will hear few complaints."

Miss Seaford was something more than astonished to find an ignorant, degraded weaver discoursing rhetorically and exhibiting a glimmer of understanding. She was perilously near being carried out of her mental depth besides, but played one more conventional trump card.

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"In the circles where I generally move (Ellen's eyebrows went up, Stephen and I remaining expressionless as embalmed Egyptians) it is said by men of authority that operatives receive the full market price for their work."

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"Yes, it is a threadbare argument and could easily be confuted. But supposing it were true, are your authorities justified in fixing a market price insufficient to feed and clothe the workers who produce their goods?"

Miss Seaford's ladylike and lofty serenity was disturbed. Her trump card had not only failed to secure a trick, but evolved for her destruction a tremendous and far-reaching question of economics. Moreover the degraded weaver seemed impressively capable of producing still more terrific problems for solution. She positively stammered in replying:—

"Really, sir, I fear my poor knowledge is inadequate to give you an answer."

"I fear it is," Stephen returned gravely, "and if my clumsy talk gives offence I must beg you to pardon it, for I know nothing of the courtesies due to ladies of your degree. This very lack of information which you acknowledge is the chief hindrance between us and you. Would to God you rich people could be induced to examine these questions for yourselves! Our homes are open to you. Within a hundred yards of this room I could show you sights to horrify your unsuspecting heart. Believe me, lady, if you and your kind throughout this island were but fully acquainted with the truths of this matter there would be no further cackle of market prices."

"It is impossible that you can be an ordinary weaver," Miss Seaford exclaimed, fairly carried out of herself by Stephen's earnest declamation. "You are but masquerading in this working dress—you are a man of intellect and education!"

"There are weavers of greater intellect and education than I can boast of. Such learning as I have was pieced

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together in odd hours borrowed from the night. Why should not a weaver have brains and knowledge as well as another man?"

"Your terrible questions will upset my reason if I remain longer," Miss Seaford said, rising to depart. "You should have cleverer women to converse with."

"I prefer men," says downright Stephen, opening the door for her retiring ladyship. She gave him a hand, without condescension this time, appearing to have forgotten his shabby clothes, and so was gone.

"You've a fine outflow of gab, Stephen," I said, as he returned to his chair. "Have you converted the lady, do you suppose?"

"Not I!" the young man laughed, throwing the matter from his mind as of no further importance. "Parrots would be easier converted than such as she!"

"You should have pitched the yarn in dialect, man! That would have opened her refined optics."

"Let me show off a little when a chance offers. You know I seldom get a mover in authoritative circles to hear my oratory. Laurence, I have come to ask a favour from you."

"Speak! I am bound to hear, and make in thy behalf each petty artery of this body strong as a lion's nerve! What can I do for you?"

"Introduce me to Hawkins, the manager of Pratt's machine-shop. I want work as a mechanical draughtsman, and they can always make room for a man in a big concern like that. They are turning out a lot of engines and power machinery now—just the stuff to suit me. I have a dash of my father's inventiveness, you know, and I feel competent to undertake such work now—a weary while the learning has cost me, too!"

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"You have been studying for something more than your father's purposes, then?"

"Why, it all went on together. When the loom designs were off my hands I began to perfect myself in geometrical drawing and measurement, but it's only within a year or so I have been working with the definite object of becoming a draughtsman. It's time I

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found something to do, for my old trade is doomed, and I must be earning money to help on my father's plans."

"Where is your father? I have heard nothing of him since he went away—that must be nearly three months."

"He is living in Ashton, weaving at a new factory somewhere near-plodding along, saving and scheming in his old style."

"There's a pair of you for that, Stephen. Wouldn't your best plan be to admit Hawkins into partnership and get your machine on the market? He is trustworthy—I'll warrant he would not swindle you out of any rights."

"It's not to be thought of, Laurence. I have long since proposed that very thing to my father, but he won't listen to any talk of partners. He will have no fingers about the model but his own, if he spends twenty years over the job."

"Suppose in the meantime some other inventor hits upon your father's ideas?"

"That's not likely—of course there is a risk of it, now that so many mechanics are busy loom-making. It would kill my father if that happened! So you will tell Hawkins all about me, and arrange when I can meet him?"

I assured him heartily that no effort of mine should be wanting to gain his object, and he rose to take leave of us.

"I hope your mother is well," my sister said, almost the

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first words she had spoken to Stephen since his entrance. Is she resigned to the loss of her husband?"

"She is much as she always was, very fretful at times. She never mentions my father at all."

"I fear your life cannot be very comfortable with her."

"She is my mother," Stephen said quietly, and went his way along the hard path of duty.

When my sister and I had the room to ourselves we indulged in a few remarks.

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"Ellen Holt," I said, "if ever thou wouldst marry there are two cavaliers whom I would commend unto thee."

"Which twain be they?"

"Edmundus de Butterworth, an honourable man of ancient lineage, of sound sense withal, and possessing much gold: Stephen Grindrod, a degraded operative, without an ancestor to recommend him, of sharp wit truly, but owning neither hide of land nor bag of marks."

"Has he nothing but sharp wit in his favour?" asked Ellen, speaking with unusual rapidity and warmth. "Is there not chivalry in this young man, who sacrifices himself for the benefit of his parents? Has he not true kindness and affection, self-restraint and unselfish devotion, to bear uncomplaining the slow torture his mother inflicts upon him? Is he not brave, sincere, courteous, noble in frame? Truly a maiden might choose a worse lover than he!"

I looked at my dear sister's flushed animated features, and reflected inwardly: "Here we go again! Busy with cool dissections of character I have been blind to the havoc Stephen has been making in her heart. She loves him—and no wonder. Why not? His days of poverty are nearly over. He will make a place for himself. He shall marry her, and I will bless them."

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Having brought myself to this secret conclusion I said to Ellen:—

"Edmund is the man nevertheless. Stephen has good points and I appreciate his friendship, but you cannot disgrace this noble family by wedding a man of lower rank. If there is anything worth dying for surely it must be the preservation of social distinctions, and I conceive you would not hasten my departure to the eternal bourne by contracting an alliance with a miserable weaver."

Ellen glanced at me with some timidity.

"Don't think me too much in earnest, dear. I know the meaning of all this mockery very well."

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"My dearest girl," I said, in a tone the sincerity of which she could not question, "my well-beloved sister, my chief consolation in a world where the affection of a wife is denied me, whatever thoughts of you are in my heart be assured that for all created wealth I would not have you other than you are."

After that pretty speech Ellen gave me a kiss, and probably I deserved it.

VII.

CURIOSLY enough, by one of the trifling coincidences so often occurring in our daily lives, Edmund called upon my father in less than a week after the last-recorded conversation, and make a serious proposal for Ellen's hand. Mr. Holt nearly jumped down the young gentleman's throat with joy, and would have fetched Ellen to settle the business at once if Butterworth had allowed him.

My first tidings of the matter came from my sister herself, who, later in the day, came into my room, showing

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pale cheeks and inflamed eyes produced by industrious weeping, to claim my intervention as a tower or rock of defence between her and our respected father.

"Whence these tears?" I demanded as she entered, disturbing me in the concoction of a thrilling narrative.

"Upon thy cheek the horrid signal burns,
And earth perturbed on groaning axis turns.

Declare thy grief; and on this loving bosom will I soothe thee into content."

She was in no mood for light chatter. "Laurence," she began, "Mr. Butterworth comes to-morrow with an offer of marriage."

"I told you Edmund was a sensible man! You see he has perception enough to discern the best woman in this town. It must be joy that induces you to weep, surely!"

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"My father insists that I shall consent. It is quite impossible! Laurence, you must help me!"

"Through fire and water—yea! even throughout the tediousness of inevitable argument and controversy with my sire. If you don't wish to marry Butterworth, why, you shall not, though a thousand Holts should gape!"

"I can't take him for a husband. He is an estimable gentleman, but it is impossible for me to become his wife. Pray don't ask me for reasons, but tell father decidedly that I must oppose his wishes. Oh, if our dear mother had lived she would have understood, and respected her daughter's desires!"

"Do not fear—you shall be compelled into no course distasteful to you. We are both of full legal age, independent of all parental restraint; and, indeed, a word to Edmund himself would be effectual at once, so that Mr. Holt is no important factor in the sum. Light up your

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eyes with cheerfulness, send the old gentleman up to me, and I will provide him opportunity for delivering a few speeches."

I did well to brag of my age, having barely passed one and twenty; but 'twas enough, and I already felt matured pride of manhood ruffling within my restricted chest.

Mr. Holt appeared after due interval, and we had a lengthy dialogue not worth reproducing. All he could think of was Butterworth's money, and from certain hints in his remarks I gathered that the saddlery finances were in no flourishing state. He talked much of the heavy expenses connected with his religious work, for he was a chapel trustee, a zealous promoter of missionary expeditions, and incessant prattler of cheap Gospel; but I knew well that religion had by no means absorbed the proceeds of his profitable business. If there was scarcity of money in his pouch some other wide channel of expenditure had been open. He could perceive no shame in the crime of selling his daughter for her weight in gold; with him it was a simple question of discovering the highest bidder; and I suppose if Edmund had been accepted, and a

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subsequent wealthier suitor had appeared, Ellen would have been asked without compunction to transfer herself from one lover to the other.

I made it quite clear to Mr. Holt that the marriage would not come to pass, however greatly he craved for it, and asserted plainly that during my tenure of existence Ellen should be coerced by nobody into measures which must affect the happiness of her whole life. When he had thoroughly grasped these statements the good man subsided, leaving me with a parting lecture.

“I grieve deeply, Laurence, to mark the continuance

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of your unfilial speech and conduct towards me. Your complete indifference with regard to the calls of religion is very apparent also. It is a pain and sorrow to me that a child of mine should be so openly wrapped in the bonds of Satan. I have never known you to give a farthing out of your very considerable earnings for the furtherance of holy work—the spreading of Gospel light." Here his right arm mechanically extended itself. " My worst enemies cannot charge me with neglect of these important functions! Often and freely has my purse been opened in the sacred cause of salvation—too often, I fear, if considerations of selfish prudence be only taken into account. Our ideas are invariably divergent, and you scruple not to interfere with my affairs whenever a chance offers, thwarting my wiselyconceived projects, and opposing your unruly will to mine." Here the right arm fell, the left arm was stuck out at an acute angle, and the orator breathed deeply. "Consider the enormous advantages I should gain—that is to say, of course, we should gain—by contracting the proposed union, which could be securely effected by a word from you to your sister, whose entire will appears to be subject to your control. It is not an edifying spectacle for the world to see a son and daughter continually opposed to a parent who should be venerated and obeyed, but I have too long been accustomed to your wicked humours to hope for any satisfactory change. Your conduct has been a perpetual trial to me since your boyhood, the only satisfactory feature of our relations being that you have supplied me frequent occasions for exercising the graces of patience

and selfdenial, which for want of use are sometimes lost. In fact, I can only regard you as an instrument devised by Providence for the chastening and purification of my character."

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This was slightly too ridiculous, and forced me into laughter, much to Mr. Holts disgust.

"Words and counsel are alike wasted," he exclaimed, waving his right arm impressively. "Laughter and mockery are all I need expect from my only son."

"Father," I said, "chaste and pure soul whose ways are those of righteousness and peace, excuse me for pointing out that under your current of language lies a dangerous reef of sin, upon which you affectionately propose to wreck me. I put an honestly-weighted anchor down, and advise you to do the same, before your own barque drives splintered into the gulf of perdition. It is little beseeming that a son should preach to a father, but the blame cannot equitably be allotted to me. I have closely considered your character ever since power of correct observation developed within me, with the painful result that I have long found myself thoroughly unable to regard you with any feelings of respect; and now you exhibit a degree of baseness surpassing previous experience, by calmly proposing to convert me into a liar and a rogue in order that between us we may ruin Ellen's comfort for life. Is this the teaching a son should receive from a religious father? Believe me, there are straighter paths of godliness than yours."

Mr. Holt had nothing more to say worth repeating. Fortunately I had power to enforce my views of the case, so his fuming went for little. Next day came proposing Edmund, and was decently rejected by unfascinated Ellen in due form, after which there was calmness in the Holt household for a space.

I had brought Stephen and Hawkins together, and when the young weaver had displayed his accomplishments, and

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I had inserted a plain account of his character into the manager's left ear, an opening for the rising genius was speedily found. All mention of the loom model was carefully suppressed, of course.

Some weeks later I met Hawkins, and found that our new draughtsman satisfied his employers. The manager was a stout, clumsily-shaped man, of staunch integrity and abrupt speech. I had become acquainted with him at Butterworth's house, and heard there the history of honourable ascent from a workman's place to his present important position. Some flighty converse of mine caught his ear, he sat awhile beside me (pleased to find somebody a man could talk with, as he said, the other company being too fine for him), carried me to my carriage, inspected David's attachment with technical approving eye, gave me cordial good-night. I had gained a friend.

"Yon's a rare diver lad yo sent me, Howt," says Hawkins, overshadowing me with his weighty mass so that I shrank small indeed. "I like him well."

"I told you he had talent. You can't set him a task that he won't master, I expect."

"I believe not. He's some gumption, has yon! I reckon him chep at two pound a week."

"That's good news," I said, delighted. "Stephen will feel as if he had made his fortune."

"He soon will do," Hawkins said, nodding decisively. "He's brass enough in his yead, an' his pockets won't tarry empty long. Mark my words, lad!"

Before many days had passed Stephen came himself to inform me with confirmation of this welcome news. He had discarded the traditional singlet and blue stockings of his ancient craft, stalking now erect in clothing of more fashionable

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architecture, which gave full effect to his manly figure. He was cheerful, confident, sanguine of future prospects—his true groove was found, everything must now be well with him.

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"I can give my father effectual help now, Laurence," said the young man when I had finished congratulating and expatiating. "I shall support him out of my wages, setting him free to work at his model all day long. He will be happier than ever he was before in all his life. Everything he wants in the way of tackle can be got now, without the old terrible scraping and waste of time, and he won't be long in finishing off the job I hope."

"Hail, victorious knight!" I said. "You have fought long and hard in battle, and well deserved successful fortune. All your ambitions are within short reach of fulfilment; a degraded, miserable weaver once, you will shortly appear as a gentleman of wealth and high standing. You will have leisure then for meditation and the indulgence of fancy, pursuits that furnish for me the choicest pleasures of existence."

"They would bring little joy to me," Stephen remarked decidedly. "There is nothing of the dreamer in my construction. I must be doing, not frittering away precious hours in wondering what it is possible to do, at the risk of never achieving anything at all. There must be a strong element of the practical in my mentality, Laurence—I am one of your thick-skinned mortals, I suppose. Another thing, my labours are not over yet, for you are mistaken in supposing that all my ambitious hopes are realised."

"What project is in your noddle now?"

"When victorious knights carried off tournament prizes, were they content to stuff the baubles into their wallets and canter home?"

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"Aha! Is it a modern Queen of Beauty you seek?"

"Perhaps it is," Stephen returned. "I have certain ideas respecting that subject, and you are likely to become acquainted with them as soon as most people. For the present my tongue is tied."

I acknowledge experiencing symptoms of envy when Stephen had left me. The difference in temperament between us had never been so forcibly stamped upon my brains before. He was no dreamer, as he had truly said, but a man of strength and intellect, fashioned to be of high service to his generation. Philosophers may pride

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themselves on possession of exceptional brains, yet they cut a sorry figure whenever practical labour becomes necessary, and must perforce stand back to give room for the capable mixture of mind and matter which can execute as well as devise.

Such idle reflections occupied me as I lay helpless on my lonely couch; while Stephen, in the glory of capacity and vigour, went his reliant way to the honour and reward of successful achievement. Nor would a fitting queen be wanting to share his triumph—nay! if he would but consult me in the affair I could myself undertake to supply one in every way worthy.

VIII.

SEVEN months later we had a notable riot in the town. In the spring of that year the Prince of Wales had assumed power as regent, finding a tangled web of troublesome business ready to his hand. England was absolutely impoverished by the slow-dragging continental campaigns, commerce appeared to be paralysed, necessaries of life commanded fabulous prices, signs of a terrible winter loomed darkly ahead.

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The labours of Arkwright and Watt, practical saviours of their country, had already laid enduring foundations for a miraculous increase of industry and wealth, not yet clearly perceptible. Factories were building in many places—notably in the Preston district—employment of steam-power was swiftly extending, already shrewd observers had begun to prophesy a glorious future for trader and operative, but no general stream of prosperity could yet be said to flow. In our own neighbourhood hand-weaving and spinning lingered, discredited but not supplanted, although powermachinery was to some extent in use, and early introduction of more was contemplated by a few manufacturers.

The bulk of our handloom weavers, trapped midway between old methods and new, prowled over the parish in clannish, discontented bands, workless, desperate, starving, disturbing public peace, seeing no remedy near or distant for their undoubted condition

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of misery. Deprivation had touched its lowest bearable point with them—they could endure no more and live.

Small wonder if the law was little regarded in those dreadful days. Let those who have never suffered from want of bread, never undergone through long years the ordeal of tedious unremunerative labour, utter words of blame. They who have lived among our operatives, and learnt to know them as they really are instead of accepting second-tongue descriptions, can never with honesty condemn too severely the actions of patient, deserving, longsuffering people, driven to frenzy by the protracted anguish of struggles for bare existence.

Rights of property were not much respected at that period of tumult. Shops were rifled, houses broken into, carriages and waggons plundered on the high roads.

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Special bodies of constables were organised to enforce public order, the military forces were strengthened, dwellings were barricaded, places of business watched night and day.

A climax came in the month of November. A bull-bait had gathered together the inevitable multitude of noisy rabble at the river ford; the usual commotion of shouting men, screaming women, howling dogs, had raged, much money had been lost and won, vast quantities of inferior ale consumed, evening closed in upon a crowded scene of widespread excitement. These periodical barbarities commonly ended with the fall of night, except for subsequent carousals in adjoining ale-houses, which often lasted until morning; but on this occasion dense crowds filled the central streets long after darkness came. Torches and lanterns were lit, shedding scattered blotches of light over a surging ocean of humanity; here and there among the mob noisy disputes and fights arose; a growing disposition towards ferocity made itself strongly evident, the more terrifying because obvious signs of organised disorder soon appeared.

From my window I had been taking a close view of the disturbances, so propped in a cushioned chair that I commanded a considerable range on both banks of the river. At

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dusk Phelim had joined me. I had seen my old master in the street below, sent a message out to him asking for his company, and he had come up without delay.

Times were going hard with Phelim. When money hardly suffices to purchase bread there is little thought for schooling. But for my help during this distressed season the man and his wife would probably have starved together. I had always objected to aiding Mr. Holt's missionary projects, but it was not in my nature to idly contemplate

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old friends suffering privation while I possessed means to help them. Phelim had much pride of independence, and would perhaps have refused to accept charity even from me; therefore I professed revived interest in our longdropped classical studies, enlisted Ellen also as a student under his guidance, and so contrived to put money into his purse without grossly offending his susceptibility.

The old man came in looking perturbed and anxious. "It's a messenger of evil I must be, Larry. What men have you on the premises?"

The journeymen are gone before now, I expect. There will be nobody beside my father and old Ben."

"Is your sister here?"

"No; she went to Butterworth's, by good luck."

"Faith, good luck it is, boy! It's no women's business we're threatened with! Your father's a power of enemies in that crowd—it's no less than stripping his shop they'd be at. Turn your eye on Big George there and that wiry little spalpeen wid him."

"I see them. The little man is Ferret—I have met that gentleman before. Ha! there's another man talking with them now—that round-shouldered fellow with a grey tuft on his chin. Do you mark him?"

"Entirely."

"That's Ephraim Moss, a man of brains, and consequently dangerous. Those three are all in a gang, and nurse an old grudge against us."

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"Then it's some prayers ye'd better be preparing. I tould your father to board up his doors and windows, for there was talk among the crowd of attacking his house. That George, now, manes mischief, and bedad he makes no secret of it!"

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For an hour after dark we remained undisturbed at the window, watching the vast ebbing and flowing sea of humanity, thrown into picturesque masses by the glaring red torchlight. No hurry was shown to commence an attack; perhaps more distant points for plunder engaged the first attention of those who directed affairs, for we saw two considerable bodies of men move off along diverging ways, trailing about in irregular, purposeless-seeming groups, yet clearly having defined objects in view.

After a while Ben came upstairs, looking about as unconcerned as mortal man well could. His arms and capacious chest were covered by a blue blouse, swelling calves bulged under his knee-breeches, his hands were lost in his breeches pockets, he whistled softly the melody of a local song.

"Where is my father, Ben?"

"Bowted."

"Faith, it's watching all the doors the spalpeens are, as I understood from George!"

"That's reet," Ben said, quite matter-of-fact.

"Then how could my father bolt?" On his legs mostly."

"Come, come! Tell us all about it, and don't be so terribly laconic."

"Bless thi ribs, lad, there's no tale woth tellin'! Thi fayther crept away through th' back yard. It were a foolish marlock, but he wouldn't be towed. He'd best ha tarried here to lend a hond. He'd a bagful o' guineas he were freeten't o' loisin'. He hasn't gotten 'em new aw'll bet some tharcake! There were a whol gang waitin' at th' back, an' Joe worted slap among 'em, huddin his brass

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bag, like a brid-neestin' lad caughted bi th' farmer's men. He did skrike! He ne'er had mich pluck, hadn't Joe."

"Why, they will murder him!"

"Nay, not they! Their blood's noane up yet. They leather't him weel an' turn't him loase—aw yerd him yeawlin' as he ran. Nowe, he's reet enough, nobbut for loisin' his gowd."

"*Auri sacra fames*—gowld's a demoralising metal," said Phelim. "Sure, the man's sowl would be in his bag."

"He should ha tarried," Ben remarked, calmly argumentative. "He's left me to watch his property—aw mun do th' feightin an' he pockets o th' profits. Aw says, 'Lev thi bag wi me, Joe—aw'll howd it again ony six o' these slamp wasthrels'; but he wouldn't. Aw cheted him at marbles once, so he's ne'er thrusted me sin'."

Our turn had come to receive complimentary notice from Moss and his unmerry followers. A determined assault was made upon the shop below, tremendous blows that shook the building were delivered against stoutly-defended door and window, an appalling chorus of shouts and cursing swelled in fiendish crescendo on the still air.

"We're in for it neaw," Ben observed, beginning to whistle again.

"Bedad, 'tis throe! Here's good occasion for the parish protective forces to shine. *Anna virumque*—where's the watchmen and blundherbuses? Call out the military *hippocentauri* or it's murthered we'll be in the turning of an hour-glass."

"There'll be tuthri noses brasted first," Ben said, leisurely baring his stout arms and putting his head through the open casement to examine the seething crowd,

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"George's sweatin' o'er his wark bi neaw—it's a hardher job nor weighvin' he's gotten. Jehoram, what a thunge! Ston up, good dur! What's yon mon doin' wi two bulldogs in a bant—are th' blaggards for havin' us worried afther we're kil't? Aw see thee, Ferret, pychin' reound th' back there, eggin' on betther fellahs nor thisel! Tha'd look prattier stuffed nor wick."

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Here George, resting from his labour for a moment, looked up and shook a huge fist at our burly saddler, who continued his soliloquy undisturbed.

"Swagger away wi thi neighve-shakin'—iv aw come deawn to thee tha'll swagger no moore! There's some rough scholars knockin' reand to-neet, schoomaisther—spellin'-books wouldn't be mich use among this gang, aw'm thinkin'. See yo, they're leetin' a brunfire i' th' Butts neaw. That'll save candles. A lurryful o' Blackwayther moufins wouldn't stond mich chance wi these hungry customers. If th' river could nobbut run wi ale for hawve an hour there'd soon be moore quietness."

"The door howlds well!" cried Phelim, who was getting excited by the siege. "Faith, we'll maybe best them yet! Fwhere's the red coats, wid their chargers of war? Fwhere's the constables? Fwhere's the court leet? Here's heaps of cheap glory awaiting them and flyer a mortal sowl of them widin sight! Sure's it's on the Giant's Causeway we might be, or in some wildherness out of the way! There goes George powdherin' at the door again, howld as Achilles and as much out-at-heel bedad! Hurroosh, ye loom-swinging caterans! It's fine occupation for their worships the justices ye're making by these divarsions."

"What carriage is that coming, Ben?" I asked, hearing a sound of wheels.

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"Carriage, lad?" Ben returned indifferently, thrusting his head farther out. "Is there one?" Then with a sudden change of manner he cried: "It's Buttheroth carriage, by gum, an yon blundherin' foo ov a coachman's dhrivin' reight among th' creawd! What's he thinkin' on?"

"Sure, Larry, this can niver be your sister returning home?"

"Heaven forfend! Who's inside, Ben? Can you make out?"

"It's eaur Ellen!" Ben said, his heavy figure all alive in a moment. "Aw con see her freeten't face! There'll be wark for me neaw."

He climbed through the window opening, clambered down by projections of the house front, caught the stirrup swinging from its iron rod, hung from it a second at full

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reach of his arm and dropped to the ground, scattering a group of rioters by the shock of his fall.

As the coachman who had so foolishly run his horses into danger trembled undecided upon his box, Ben's sudden arm plucked him down, caught his long whip, and slashed fiercely with it at a curious crowd pressing too near the carriage windows. Then our doughty saddler sprang upon the box himself, lashed at the horses, and made gallant endeavour to gallop clear of the rabble. At that moment the shop door was dashed into splinters, a roar of voices sounded in the rooms below, heavy feet were heard upon the stairs.

This sudden irruption into our premises counted a little in Ben's favour, by supplying the struggling mob with double objects of pursuit. Still, no hope appeared of successfully clearing the press, hundreds of ready hands grasping at harness or wheels, their possessors making

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nothing of a shower of whip-slashes plentifully rained upon them. The carriage was stopped before it had travelled twenty yards, my sister was roughly pulled out of it, and now indeed she lay helpless at the mercy of a thousand desperate and frenzied men.

Yet not wholly helpless nor forsaken; for lusty Ben, hindered from running away, fought a path to Ellen's side, hustled her into the carriage again, and interposed the solid screen of his broad frame between her and excited enemies. Nor was the farther side of the carriage unprotected. Glimpses reached us of an active figure there, whirling a heavy staff with destructive results, but identification was impossible.

Neither I nor Phelim bestowed much thought upon our own dangerous situation. For myself there was little to apprehend, Phelim had small occasion for dread; we were both feeble, inoffensive, and not unpopular with our townfolk. Brutality must have passed human bounds before my infirm body could be injured; Phelim's rey hairs and well-known character would defend him from harm. Therefore we gave scant consideration to ourselves amid the clatter of breaking fiddles and clamour of

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plundering insurgents, weightier matters without engaging all our faculties of observation. Ben used his fists with scientific precision and great effect for a time, arming himself shortly with a strong pole snatched from one of his many assailants. With that useful weapon he warded several vigorous rushes, contriving to hold his ground against the whole opposing multitude for some minutes. Time was golden. Help could not long be delayed.

"And bedad here they are!" yelled Phelim in a fever of nervousness. "Here's the centaurs, by the holy rock of

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Clontarf! Begone now to your kennels, ye fustitudinous divvles, or it's some of ye will ornament the gaols to-night! Oh, begorrah, 'tis beautiful to see the blaggards run! Bad cess to ye all, oppressors of women, cowards at the look of a man! Begone, now, each to his *subligaculum*!"

"Great is old Ben and manfully has he prevailed," I said, deep satisfaction swelling within me as a troop of yeomanry trotted up, clearing the ground before them, striking at dispersing unbelligerents with flat sabres. Phelim and I had the house to ourselves again, every intruder taking to his heels through the back door. About the carriage a brawl still went on, our unknown ally finding himself hotly pressed by a gang of skirmishers strongly minded to do him serious evil before retreating. Once he was almost down under the wheels, but recovered his footing, making tremendous sweeps of his heavy staff. He was forced away from the carriage door, surrounded by a ring of enemies, heavily struck on head and shoulders more than once. The soldiers were now close at hand, or it would have gone hard with our devoted friend. His assailants fled in a body, leaving him panting but unsubdued on the hotly-contested field, and the first horseman of the troop struck him smartly with his sabre, gruffly commanding him to clear the road.

At the blow he swung aloft his victorious staff, sweeping the yeoman from his saddle, and seizing the next man by waist and arm hurled him down also. A moment later he was helpless in the grip of many hands, his arms were bound, he was lifted upon

a horse to be borne away. His face and figure were now plainly revealed by lantern-light. It was Stephen.

"Howd on!" Ben shouted, running up and laying a

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strong hand on the horse's bridle. "What are yo for wi this lad?"

"Stand back, fellow!" commanded an officer, riding forward.

Ellen had followed Ben closely, and recognising this man she called to him:—

"Mr. Masham, what would you do? This friend has fought bravely to defend me from the rioters. Surely you will release him!"

"I have no such authority, Miss Holt," Masham said coldly. "This rebel has assaulted the king's servants in the discharge of their high duties, and must suffer by the law."

"He knew naught what he were doin', mon," Ben cried. "They'n hommer't his yead whol he's mazy. Let him goo—yor sodiers are not a pin wur!"

"Take your prisoner to the rear," said Masham. "Forward, men!"

"For God's sake do not carry an innocent man to prison!" Ellen implored, beside herself. "You will ruin him for life, and break his heart besides."

"In these troubled times, Miss Holt, officers of the king are more than ever bound to restrain all rebellious subjects, and dare not if they would listen to any pleadings of sentiment. When this man is brought up for trial his friends will have an opportunity to intercede for him."

Delivering himself of this sternly official statement the captain spurred his horse and rode away after his troop. Ben supported my sister into the dismantled house, Phelim and I stared yet from our open window, while Butterworth's coachman drove off with his damaged vehicle, and across the river smouldering embers of the dying bonfire glimmered through the blackness of night.

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IX.

GAUNT Trouble stalked grimly through echoing corridors of the Holt mansion now, and for many long days yet to come. Mr. Holt re-appeared on the morning following the riot, and never had I seen the worthy man so dispirited, so lacking in pomp and assurance of manner. His stock was virtually destroyed, his furniture wilfully racked and riven, his money stolen, his credit hard smitten. Religion appeared to afford him no consolations in this dire distress. Ruin shook its grisly bones at him, and he shuddered back from that unwonted spectacle despairing, prayerless, lost to claims of chapel or lecture-room.

For a wonder he condescended to confide in me, entering my room, where I sat in majestic silence among heaped-up relics of shattered musical instruments, and holding forth as follows:—

"You will quite understand, Laurence, that last night's work has gravely affected my health, and deeply undermined my resources, and you will accept my assurances that our downfall is complete when I tell you that even the journeymen will be unable to recommence their daily labours. Absolute beggary stares us in the face, unless you are in a position to afford me some assistance from your own resources."

"Where were you last night, father?"

"I retired to some distance, fearing that my life was imperilled, and have not ventured to return until recently."

"You might at least have despatched some rescuers to us from your distant retirement. Have you been made acquainted with any details of last night's occurrences?"

"Ben gave me a brief summary of what had transpired. Fortunately you and Ellen escaped injury from the ravages

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of that terrible mob. One may indeed thank All-seeing Providence for so pronounced a blessing!"

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"Perhaps you will take the trouble of thanking Ben also," I said, "as but for his determined prowess both your daughter and your property might have fared ill. Have you seen Ellen this morning?"

"I have not. She has recovered from the shock to her nerves, I hope?"

"She is far from recovery, father. Well, now that my suppositions as to your modes and ideas are verified, suppose we consider this important subject of irretrievable ruin. What should hinder your journeymen from starting work?"

"They have no materials to work with. Even the tools are broken up. Apart from that, I can no longer make myself responsible for the men's wages."

"Surely there is no formidable obstacle in trifles such as these! Is it possible that your credit is absolutely exhausted?"

"I fear so. By the inscrutable ruling of Providence certain speculative ventures, in which my whole capital was embarked, have resulted in utter loss, and involved me in heavy debts."

"This casting of all your responsibilities on Providence may be convenient," I said, "but the justice of it fails to strike me. In plain English I suppose you to mean that all profits from your excellent business, together with the fortune my mother brought you, have been gambled away. None the less you remain my father, and although you can assert no legal claim to my earnings, my conception of a son's duty compels me to make you master of them. Every penny I possess shall be at your service, and probably there

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will be sufficient to cleanse your tarnished name and set your affairs once more upon solid foundations."

"My dear boy," Mr. bit cried effusively, "this is indeed cheering evidence of filial affection and lofty principle! It warms my afflicted heart to recognise these qualities in one so dear to me, and I hasten to seize this favourable opportunity of declaring that glimpses of your moral worth have long been visible through the veil of irony under which your true character is frequently concealed. I have indeed felt much pride on

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account of your brilliant artistic faculties and acquirements. We may now hope in all likelihood for more cordial relations subsisting between us."

"I share in that very desirable hope, sir, yet a fear appals me that our wayward dispositions will often run counter as of old. Still, however far we disagree in ideas of equity, I have never denied that you are an excellent saddler, and I doubt nothing that my modest savings will fructify in your hands, yielding an ample return. Let me out of my youthful sagacity warn you to practise your honest calling with a single mind, and to speculate no more."

My worthy parent assured me that of all living men I was the one whose advice he would most gladly take, and solemnly confided to my keeping the secret that many hundred pounds of his money had been frittered away on "sport." This comprehensive, innocent-sounding term signified in Mr. Hoit's case employment of an agent to stake heavy sums on bull-baits and gamecock-fights, with occasional smaller investments on knurr-and-spell matches, trailhunts, or any other matters of chance by which fools could be fleeced and rogues fattened. This interesting confession concluded with a desire that I would refrain from uttering sarcastic witticisms on so touching an occasion as reconcile-

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ment of long-nursed bitterness between father and son, particularly as Mr. Holt's transgressions, however blamable, had been brought about by ardent wishes for the welfare of his children.

"I was never less inclined to sneer in my life, father," I replied. "Your straightforward, truthful story, free from canting attempts to deceive, raises you vastly in my esteem. I willingly believe that you have received a sufficient lesson, that you will endeavour now to follow paths of honour and sincerity. My unruly tongue shall wag against you no more in terms unbecoming or diagonal, nothing on my side shall interfere with rapid development of the warm feelings for which you long."

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"God bless you, Laurence!" said the old man. "In days of tribulation I am truly blest in possessing so gifted, so right-minded a son to strengthen my faltering steps!"

He shook my hand and departed, leaving me to wonder by what sudden power of sight he had discovered in me qualities never seen before, to marvel at the remarkable difference between his estimate of my character as now expressed, and the opinion so freely hurled into my ears in times past.

As may he supposed, money troubles gave me small anxiety, graver causes for disquietude filling my thoughts. I had quite enough acquaintance with administration of the law to be convinced that Stephen had slight chances of escaping imprisonment, if, indeed, a noosed rope were not his portion. With no wish whatever to impugn the honesty of our English judges, who, indeed, beyond question are impartial as any rulers in the world, I had more than once been compelled to recognise their liability to human prejudices in dealing with operative classes of men and women.

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In the mercy of God a time may come when the poorest among us shall be reckoned by standards in which money has no part, shall enjoy equally with the wealthiest of his fellows privileges justly belonging to us all by birth and right. That time has not yet appeared in opening brightness of the dawning, nor been revealed by the sombre glories that linger about the fading sun, nor can our Unprophetic gaze discern at what period the ordered motion of a thousand worlds shall bring to earth that wondrous hour.

Why, then, suppose that Stephen should fare more luckily than others of his kind at the hands of pompous justice, sagacious Constable, sedition-crushing judge? Any such hope was idle.

It was late that morning before Ellen left her chamber. Well I knew what anguish tormented her loving heart, well could I account for pale cheeks, swollen eyes, languid tread, looks of sad resignation; and happy indeed should I have been if removal of pain had been easy as knowledge of its cause.

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"Come, my dear," I said, "morning has far advanced, and we have important work to do before noon. Stephen shall not remain in bondage if our efforts can loose him."

"What can we do, Laurence?" Ellen cried, bracing her nerves for immediate action, throwing off her languor as a mantle is cast aside. "Is it possible that any help or intercession of mine would be of value to Stephen?"

"We must discover that by experiment. First of all let us seek Mr. Butterworth, and enlist him under our banner. Quick, my dear! No vanities of toilet must delay us."

Ellen sprang at the word, very few minutes sufficing to start us on our expedition. I took Ben, expecting he would be useful to carry my lumbering weight about, so he pushed

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my carriage and Ellen walked beside us. The justice had gone over to the Flying Horse, to assist his fellow-magistrates in passing sentence upon the over-night catch of drunken or brawling interrupters of the public peace. There we followed him, to learn that Stephen had already been examined and condemned to lie in custody until the Lancaster Spring Assize, when he would be called upon to answer a charge of treason against the Crown. That meant nearly four months in prison awaiting trial, with almost absolute certainty of longer imprisonment to follow, even if the death sentence were escaped.

"Serve him well right, too!" Butterworth declared. "The fellow showed no remorse whatever, blange him! Talked boldly in the open court about his rights and privileges! Said he was justified in resenting a blow, whoever dealt it—soldier or civilian! Dal it, he's impudence enough for a lawyer, yon has! Vet he's only a weaver, I'm told—one of the disorderly, idle scoundrels who make half our troubles in this town. Be dal'd to him, and all suchlike!"

"You are mistaken," I said. "Stephen was a weaver once, but now he is a machinists' draughtsman."

"Why then, that partly accounts for his swagger, crash him! He's a fellow of some few brains, it appears, lifted a bit above his natural level and claiming the prerogatives of a gentleman! Oh, be dal'd! We'll put him in his place, Laurence; middling soon, too!

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I'm a man with ancient blood in my veins, dal it, and no wearer of blue stockings shall dictate to me! I'll teach 'em!"

Here Ellen tried a pleading word: "Oh, sir, poor Stephen is quite innocent of harm. He fought nobly in my defence, and yet you are all treating him as if he were a

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rioter himself. I cannot believe such injustice will be countenanced by the law."

"Can't you, my dear? Are you aware that this inoffensive friend of yours has unfitted two yeomen for service? One's gotten a broken arm, and t'other a shoulder knocked clean out. Smash it! These folks are all of a piece—they want continual watching and keeping down!"

"They wanten some porritch, moore like," commented Ben, who had been an interested listener. "Aw'll gallantee to sattle every mon among th' rook wi a meighl-seck an' a long spoon."

"Hold thy noise, Ben, dash thee! A man of thy girth should be the last to complain of ill feeding."

"It's reet what aw tell yo," said Ben, and subsided.

I begged hard for permission to see Stephen before he was removed to Lancaster, not succeeding in that reasonable application. Butterworth promised to use his influence, and doubtless did so, some unseen authority interposing to frustrate my object.

So Ellen and I returned home sad at heart, knowing too well that nothing for the present could be done.

Before the day was over I received a letter from Stephen, the only sign we had of him for many dragging months. It was dated from the town lockup.

DEAR LAURENCE,

I write under difficulties, hoping to succeed in getting these lines conveyed to your hands before my captors carry me off to the county town, where hanging or other

ignominious doom may perchance befall me. Eight of us malefactors are crammed into this cell of about eight yards square, seven of the crew regarding me as a renegade and

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villain, only restrained from actual violence against me by a sense of our common state of misery and apprehension. The magistrates take a still loftier view of my wrongdoing, preferring to style it high treason, a sounding crime secure of severe punishment. I look to you, my dearest friend, for help in the discharge of certain necessary matters, knowing well that your gentle, sincere heart will hold it a favour to be so entrusted, your unselfish regard for others prompt you to labour even beyond your strength in a friend's behalf. You know my father's lodging in Ashton, and will be able to send a message to him giving an account of this disaster. His life's work will again be hindered—I know not how many more checks his sterling mind can bear—it seems fated that his powers of endurance shall be pushed to the last limit. Send him the message, so that he may arrange for my poor mother's wants to be supplied. I wish he would return home, for my mother's case is pitiable indeed—deserted by her husband, her only son stolen by the law, all neighbours in arms against her as one of a banned family. Do not suffer her to want, Laurence; once out of this felon's hole and all shall be repaid. I know not what can be attempted in my defence; grossly absurd as the charge is, our wise authorities will carry it through. If I am so easily condemned as a rebel in my native parish, by many who know thoroughly well my past life, scant mercy will be granted among strangers at Lancaster. What causes Masham to be so bitter against me? There is something behind his conduct which cannot yet be discerned clearly—it is beyond conception that I can have given him offence, yet he displays severity and pettishness difficult to explain, treating me worse than any other unfortunates here. See that Hawkins learns the truth about my behaviour. He is

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a good man, shrewdness and kindness blend in his composition, I would not willingly forfeit his esteem. Press my father again to take him into partnership—valuable time is being wasted to no purpose—with Pratt's tackle the model would be completed in a month, looms pushed into the market in three months more. My own share in the work must be foregone. God knows when my faculties will again be mine to use in freedom! Let the period of confinement be long or short, I shall not be found wanting. No truckling to the wiseacres who sent me here will ever be done by me, no word of repentance shall my tongue utter for any deeds of violence or insubordination attributed to me, neither taut rope nor brief shrift can stir my will. Living or dead the world is over for me—gaol-birds are debarred from sharing the pleasures, ambitions, even the society, of their fellows. I had other hopes of a tender sort, never now to be realised. You will shudder to hear that I dared to regard your sister with eyes of love, and perhaps thank my imprisonment for effectually extinguishing ideas so presumptuous. She is secured from my advances now—the most ardent affection could not seek to couple her name with that of one who has inhabited a dungeon, having committed himself in all men's eyes by the gross crime of knocking two amateur warriors off their horses. I can write no more. Farewell!

STEPHEN.

There was no possibility of answering this letter. Already its writer, one among a gang of insurgents, was on his way to the county town escorted by a troop of Scots Greys. Stephen's declaration of love for my sister caused me no surprise—his secret affection was no secret from me. Many

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unconscious hints had escaped him at intervals, none of them wasted on my mind, which incessantly observed, compared, blended, brooded, produced continuity from broken fragments.

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Was it not, indeed, partly by my own bringing about that my sister and this degraded weaver loved one another? Since they represented to me the highest types of manhood and womanhood so far discovered existing, in actual flesh, within my limited ring of acquaintances, what wonder if I habitually spoke of them in terms of praise and esteem? Had I not a thousand times made eloquent descant of Ellen's virtues to Stephen, and a thousand times more admiringly discoursed of Stephen's high qualities to Ellen? Was not each as well acquainted with the other's minutest characteristics, by aid of my subtle analyses and comprehensive portraiture, as if from earliest years their lives had been passed together? Actual intercourse had not been frequent between them, my unconscious tongue sufficing to convey from one to the other tidings understood by the keen ears of love. Stephen's pride compelled him to silence. He would first advance himself, then would come occasion for speaking; to declare himself earlier would be to hang restraints upon Ellen. If lengthy silence led to her marriage with some other man, well, this was no puling, guitar-tinkling lover willing to sacrifice a woman's happiness for gratification of his own selfish desires; rather for him life was perpetual battle, wherein it behoved a warrior to keep muscles strung and armour shining, bearing with fortitude such bosom-rending wounds as the fray might bring.

Here, then, had been a new version of the Pyramus and Thisbe tragedy working itself out; and I had been

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acting—innocently at first, later with knowledge—as the crannied wall,—

Through which the lovers
Did whisper often very secretly.

Well for us all if the play ended not in tears and blood!

X.

I SENT Ben, whom I could implicitly trust in all emergencies, to comfort Mrs. Grindrod, and inquire if she needed present help, endeavouring myself to cheer Ellen

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from her despondency. I gave her Stephen's letter, not without misgivings as to the wisdom of that experiment, and strength inspired her as she read.

"No craven hand inscribed those lines, dear sister," I said. "Stephen verifies our opinions concerning him, and like the ambushed knight whom Britomart rescued lie yields no foot of ground, however sorely beset. Look to it that your soul is well armoured and your courage not washed away in tears. The hour for weeping is past."

"I will be worthy," she returned, and I had no further fears that her firmness would fail.

Ben came back in a couple of hours, reported that he had found Mrs. Grindrod rocking as usual, whining as usual, uninterested about everybody's affairs but her own as usual. I quote a portion of his lengthy narrative, delivered in his invariable matter-of-fact style, as if he were reciting dry lists from catalogues or other uninteresting matter.

"When aw knocked at th' dur Mrs. Grindhrod sheauts, 'Come forrad!' in a voice like reasty sithers, so in aw went an' fund th' owd woman sittin' at her bob end wi a

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face longer nor ony o' thy fiddles, lad. 'They're for lockin' yor Steve up,' aw said. 'Han yo yerd abeaut it?' 'Ah!' hoo says. 'Aw'm to be left bi misel, seeminly. It mun be th' rulin' o' Providence 'at aw'm to suffer o maks ov afflictions this road. But aw'm resigned to th' warst.' Then hoo wipes some dhry weet eaut ov her e'en wi her brat, rockin' away as comfortable as could be. 'Yor lad's some sufferin' afore him, too, it's likely,' aw said. 'Well,' hoo says, 'he's young an' sthronglike, noane full o' pains an' warches same as his mother. He'll poo through. Heaw aw'm beaun to shap beaut his wage there's no tellin.' 'Han yo ne'er thried a dhrop o' summat short, missis?' aw axed her; so hoo wagged her yead at that, reckonin' hoo ne'er tasted sich things. 'Bring me a bottle,' aw said; 'let's see iv aw cannot cheer yor mind a bit.' So th' owd woman fatches a bottle off her shelf—it smelt o' gin middlin' sthrong—an' aw went to th' aleheause a-fillin' it again, levin' her betther plez't nor aw'd fund her. Hoo's tuthri shillin' to be gooin' on wi, an' aw towd her

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to send here when hoo wanted moore; so that's o reet. Aw ne'er had no mother misel, an' iv yon's a sample on 'em aw'm betther beaut."

"Very good, Ben," I said. "Now that Mrs. Grindrod has been attended to, our next business must be to seek her husband. Bring a carriage here early to-morrow morning, and we will drive over to Ashton."

"Owt to plez thee," Ben remarked, and went his leisurely way.

A frosty rime, slowly dissolving in the morning sun, lay on grass and road as we left the town behind us. It was

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the first congealed breath of winter. Fallen leaves were scattered over brown fields and rough paths, all brightness seemed fading out of nature. Our road led through pleasant pastoral country, watered by many winding rivulets, enriched by spreading groves of trees, now bared of summer's luxuriant growths. We crossed the low hills locally known as Oldham Edge, descending into a charming valley, where the quiet little country town nestled in picturesque seclusion, probably never to be seriously disturbed. No river flows through the valley, lofty ranges of barren moor stand with forbidding looks around—surely not here shall Commerce choose to dwell.

We found David, after much expense of time and labour, working away at his model in the chamber of a cottage, where he lived alone tolerably secure from inquisitive eyes. How would he receive our overwhelming news?

We had an earnest welcome from the persevering man. Finding that he knew nothing of our late stirring Rochdale doings, I entered into a detailed account of the riots, preparing him in some degree for tidings of his son's imprisonment and dangerous situation. My tale was told out to the last letter without interruption, David apparently lending all his faculties to the task of listening.

"Lord be good to us!" he exclaimed solemnly, when all the disaster was made clear to him. "Con my lad ston i' danger o' bein' hanged? Why, what foos they mun be to talk o'er Stephen riotin'! Where is there a quiether lad nor him? Aw con hardly deaubt but

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they'll set him base when a gradely tale's tow'd. Mun he lie i' th' lockups o winther, then, afore they'll judge him? That looks like bad shappin'."

"It is the ordinary course," I said. "We are just too

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late for the November assizes, and must wait until March—over three months."

"Surelee it con ne'er be a hangin' job?"

"We have everything to fear, David. You know well enough what trifling offences may bring a man's neck within risk. Burglary, coining, forgery, however small the amount involved may be, are all punishable by death; and rioting, as a form of treason, will be held fully as grave a crime as any of these."

"Tha'rt reet, lad," Ben interposed. "Aw should know summat abeaut these hangin' jobs, for aw've bin at Lankisther aboon once watchin' owd Ned Barlow at his wark on a Monday mornin'. Aw've sin a chap hanged for fuddlin' a sodier, an' another for takkin' two shirts eaut ov a cottage kitchen. Iv Steve's to be gotten off yo mun have a lawyer wi a tale tuthri yard long."

"Aw mun see my lad," David said, considering within himself. "He'll be fair brokken deawn o'er this job. It's a theausan pities he should be takken neaw, just when he's profitin' bi th' schoolarnin aw've sthriven to get him; everything nicely mapped eaut afore him an' a fortin' comin' i' tuthri year. Aw fully myent him havin' a happier life nor his fayther, poor lad! Aw mun walk o'er to th' castle, an' then start wortchin' again to keep misel an mi wife. Poor lad!"

"Much if the officials will allow you to see him."

"They cawn't deny me," David said in simple strength of purpose. "Is a fayther to be hindher't fro seein' his son at sich times as this? Aw'll demand it as a reet—it's a free counthry!"

I shook a doubting head but refrained from contradiction.

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"What about your loom?"

"It mun wait."

"Stephen wants you to admit Hawkins to partnership, and get the work finished. I give you the same advice myself—you can't do better."

"Give o'er botherin'!" David cried, displaying a little irritation, smoothing his wrinkles in the old manner. "Aw've yerd enough abeaut that afore! Laurence, tha knows me—aw'm noane hawve a chap, blowin' warm one day an' coud th' next, startin' jobs for other folk to finish! This invention's mine, an' no honds beside these shall meddle wi th' makin'. David's loom it mun be; nobry else mun join i' th' credit on't; so mich vanity aw've gotten—just so mich an' no moore."

"Your decision lacks wisdom and exhibits nothing of the foresight belonging to your character. Suppose your work is broken up again? Suppose your ideas are patented by some one else? Suppose any serious illness clutches you? Many things may happen to rob your labour of its deserved reward."

"Aw mun be alleawed mi own road i' this," David said with stern decision. "Single-honded aw'm determined to carry this job through, shuz who says nay! It's nobbut a matther ov a twelvemonth—there's little to risk neaw fro breighkers-up—aw'm willin' to ston mi chance, but aw'm noane willin' to lev wark part-finished 'at's cost me so mich thought an' weary labbour. Say no moore!"

"Ston fast, owd oak-stump," says Ben. "Aw like to yer thee."

"Don't you be foolish, David," I adjured the stubborn weaver. "Pocket your pride or you will surely live to rue it."

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Never was sensible advice more completely wasted. Yet if David could then have foreseen the consequences to arise from this inflexible pursuit of his one idea, even his tough resolution would have given way.

Not having prophetic vision, he would consent to no plans which my ingenuity was capable of suggesting. I offered in turn to pay his coaching expenses to Lancaster, take

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upon myself for awhile the trifling charge of his wife's maintenance, supply him with money enough to set all his hours free for labouring at his model.

"Aw thank thee, lad," was all his answer. "So far as tuthri shillin' went aw've bin fain to use thi brass, but charity mun ne'er be coupl't wi David Grindhrod name."

As we drove away I said to Ben: "David yonder has pride enough for an aristocrat."

"Not he!" says Ben. "There's no stinkin' pride abeaut Daff, mon! Aw should just ha towd thee th' same misel."

"I believe you there, but it's pronounced pride nevertheless. If David's invention were mine I should not follow his method of working."

"Lord help thee, lad, there's no 'casion to tell me that! (Gee up, good galloway!) Daff's some gristle in him, an' tha'rt like a picklin' cabbitch, o yead an' heart-noane beaut a slat ov aliker in thee noather. Sichlike as thee could ne'er invent nowt—yo're too busy watchin' other folk to do owt yorsel. (Noane o' thi marlocks, tha four-legged marigowd!) Heaw con a wakely object like thee undherston th' feelins ov a sthrong mon?"

"Without thy wise candour, beloved Benjamin, how should my ignorance be enlightened?"

Sarcasm never had any effect on Ben. He patted my

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shoulder encouragingly and remarked: "Tha's middlin' forrad wit for thi years an' nobbut wants moore experience. Wait whol tha carries my age on thi back."

A fortnight later David called at the Stirrup to see me. He had journeyed afoot to Lancaster and back, failing in his object after all, for admission to the castle was denied him. I had before suspected the existence of secret influences adverse to Stephen; my suspicion was not lessened by this report, for I knew well no trifling rebuff would have hindered this determined man from gaining his object.

David refused to see his wife, saying he would arrange for an Oldham carrier to bring her sufficient money once a month, and that nothing more was needed.

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I could hardly persuade the independent fellow to eat and drink under my father's roof, until he saw that refusal give me pain and consented out of compliment to our friendship. His stay was very short. He announced his intention of reaching his cottage before dark, shook my hand, gave me simple "Good afternoon," and so departed. Neither on that day nor during our Ashton interview had the old weaver exhibited any tokens of grief. His disposition was stern and self-contained, outbursts of emotion appearing childish in his manly view; yet anguish and anxiety lay deep within his breast, as jagged rock and bulking timber disturb the undercurrents of many a broad full stream, flowing with unruffled surface among flowery meadows, reflecting partial glories of the midday sun.

XI.

THE turbulence of our local rioters subsided a little after their attack upon our premises, the arrival of two detach-

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ments of cavalry having a decidedly salutary effect upon the whole parish. My personal loss was not small, for two valuable fiddles had been shivered, and a new harpsichord bought for Ellen's use lay grievously disembowelled. Months afterwards I frequently saw children playing in the streets with ivory keys plucked by the handful from this instrument, and there is every reason to suppose that thrifty intruders were gratified to discover many useful lengths of small wire in the same convenient depository. Ben surveyed the pile of melancholy timber fragments, pronounced the entire collection "fit for nought nobbut fire beetin'," and carried them off for that purpose without more ado.

Some other houses had suffered worse than ours, Butterworth's for one. While the worthy justice rode abroad, directing his civil forces towards suppression of general tumult, a mob unkindly invested his grounds, and rapidly emptied his house by the very simple device of hurling every article inside it through windows, breaking up large pieces of furniture into lumps suitable for that process. Gabriel's language was even

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more emphatic than common when he returned unsuspecting to his rifled home. He had entertained a large party of friends that evening, my sister being among the guests. Early news of the riots had scattered this brilliant gathering, and Butterworth had mounted his chestnut cob, swearing he would "exterminate the whole gang of rascals, dal 'em!" As a detail he further mentioned that few men could equal himself at jobs of that sort, thanks to special endowments of kindly Nature.

Whether this bit of characteristic dogmatism were true or false, it is certain that many surpassed Gabriel in the qualities of patience and self-restraint. His grey whiskers

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pretty nearly forced themselves out by the roots as he wandered about his garden, spluttering with passion at the sight of his dishonoured chattels. Death was a trifle beside the ornate punishments threatened against the unknown wreckers of his household. His wife and her servants had fled from the approaching crowd, Edmund was absent in the South; consequently there had been nobody to check or identify a single rioter, and this galling fact inflamed Butterworth's wrath, if, indeed, further inflammation could be considered possible.

The good man stormed himself into reasonable humour again in his customary fashion, laughing lustily at the mishap next day, and expending much oceanic declamation in asserting that if any mortal man could turn the tables on these secret knaves Gabriel Butterworth was the one to succeed in doing it. He never did succeed, though. For several weeks he smashed and crashed, dal'd and danged vigorously about the streets, often within hearing of many who must have been acquainted with the information he professed so much anxiety to obtain, gradually ceasing after awhile to bother his brains with further attempts at detection. Explosive in manner, charitable of heart, his anger commonly went off in harmless noise. Before a month was over he was contributing large sums of money to help the distressed people now vehemently condemned to absolute annihilation. "Not that the scoundrels deserve it, dal 'em!" the justice declared. "It's my unusual softness of heart they trade upon in appealing to me,

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and the sterling old blood which distinguishes my family, dang it! But we can't have 'em dying for want of bread after all."

During that winter I first noticed gathering murmurs of

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agitation as to the possibility of national reform. Discussions originating from that time have not yet ceased, the struggle then begun has gained a compact strength which promises fair to shake the most arrogant of our rulers upon their lofty seats. The late shameful business of Peterloo strongly attracted sympathy to the people's cause all over the country, our rapidly increasing population seems inclined to make its combined voice heard, imaginative thinkers may almost dream of a time, doubtless far distant, when it shall not be held inevitable that three-fourths of our English race shall sweat in bondage to secure idle comfort for the rest.

Christmastide that year was by no means merry in our corner of Lancashire, and little happiness marked the new year's approach. It was not my fortune to suffer from want of food or clothing, as happened to scores of my townsmen, yet sorrow enough lay heavily upon my heart. With the fate of my closest friend undecided there could be no cheerfulness for me.

After a consultation with David I had decided to entrust Stephen's defence to a Mr. Scholefield, one of our best known local lawyers. By his advice Sir John Cresslet, the famous London barrister, was retained, at a price which made David's grey hair bristle.

"There isn't a mon livin' con addle o that," the practical workman objected, mentally comparing the heavy fee with the scanty earning of his own diligent hands. "His speechifyin' con ne'er be woth it—nay, it's a question iv Stephen hissel's woth so mich brass! We cawn't undhertak this job, Laurence; tha'il be den ruinated afore it's finished wi."

David, I hoped, was mistaken there. I had no fear of ruin, no apprehension that legal expenses would absorb my

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present stock of money even, no doubt of my ability to earn considerable sums in the near future.

It was not that my earnings were at any time exceptionally great, but rather because of the smallness of my wants, that money was seldom scarce with me after my twentieth year was passed. That paltry consolation was granted to me, in the absence of well-nigh every other worldly good for which men strive.

Scholefield was a stale-eyed, stoutish man, with a bald crown, a straggling sprinkle of hay-coloured whisker down his cheeks, and legs of unequal length. One of his boots had a sole of treble thickness, by which device he was propped vertical and enabled to walk comfortably, wherein he had unspeakable advantage over me. The lawyer's partialities travelled in ways of port wine and fox hunting, a mounted hurry-scurry among Ashworth dingles or Wardle moors affording him probably the highest gratification his life comprised.

I had many hours to pass in this gentleman's office before my business with him progressed much. He would talk about hounds and horses by the half-day, entirely heedless of law and all its belongings, of any value my time might have, of the serious importance attached by me to the matters in which I sought his assistance. If the trial had been years instead of months distant Scholefield could hardly have been more unconcerned about the drafting of his brief, and but for knowing well that he could be thoroughly trusted to see the work properly done in the end, I should have been tempted to transfer the case to other brains.

Ben and I began to feel quite at home in the lawyer's room, among piles of docketed papers and rows of tin boxes. Here Scholefield sat in state behind a littered table, popularly

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supposed to be continually cogitating abstruse problems affecting vast estates of land or hoards of bequeathed money, but, as a matter of fact, asleep three-fourths of his time if nobody disturbed him. On the ground floor several clerks wrote, copied, chattered,

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snubbed callers with legal severity, dragged painfully through their stipulated hours of confinement. One of them, little, attenuated, parchment-faced, with a nose brilliant as red wax from incessant rubbing to relieve chronic cold in the head, answered to the name of Jim, and during his master's waking moments was usually kept at work trotting up and down stairs.

I may describe one interview out of many with the old attorney, to lighten a little the prevailing gloom of this narrative before still deeper shadows gather around it, although smiles ill assort with the feelings of my heart when memory returns to those sorrowful days.

"Come, Ben," I said one morning; "if you have time enough to spare we'll go to Scholefield's again."

"Let him sleep," Ben remarked coolly. "Tha'rt like olez ruggin' him up, an' it's never any use. He taks moore dhrivin' nor a unbrokken cowt."

Asleep the attorney verily was when Ben carried me up to the fusty chamber and propped me upon a couch.

"Don't let us disturb you," I said. "It appears you are deeply engaged."

"Very busy this morning," Scholefield returned, spreading his arms and yawning aloud. "Heavy pressure of work—tremendous! All wanted in a hurry, too, as usual." Here he struck a gong standing near his elbow, the signal for Jim, who appeared at the door in a moment.

"I'm engaged with Mr. Holt, Jim. Nobody must interrupt us."

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"Yesslir."

"If Blatherwood calls about his mortgage tell him Thursday. Stop! the hounds meet above Wardle on Thursday—I was forgetting—tell him Saturday, Jim. The engrossing takes time—pressure of office work—you understand?"

"Yesslir."

"That's all just now."

Jim departed, pattering rapidly down the flight of stairs.

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"We had a glorious run over Ashworth Moor yesterday," Scholefield said, commencing our consultation. "Not often we are favoured with a rattling burst now—brushes are getting scarce."

"Were it a fox?" Ben inquired, always keenly alive to sporting intelligence.

"One fox, two bares. Butterworth got his shoulder knocked out—he will always slap at everything head first—serves him right! He'll look twice at a dry stone wall another time."

"Yo con noane on yo ride mich," says candid Ben. "Yo're like a seek on horseback yorsel', Scwofilt, an' looken as iv yo'd like to lap yor arms reound it neck."

"You lie!" the attorney cried. "We're not having you presuming to set up as judge, just because you happen to stitch saddles for a living. I cut as good a figure mounted as any man of the hunt, and always manage to stick on besides."

"Oh, yo done middlin' considherin' everything! It's awkart for a chap wi two lengths o' leg to make his galloway thrauel bwoth sides alike. But yo're fawse enough to keep sluttherin' abeaut at th' back afther t' dogs ban thrown

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off—yo're weel eaut o' danger there, an' con olez join th' huntsmen again at th' aleheause. Catch brush or loise brush, they ne'er forgotten to wind up there."

"You are a miserable scoundrel, sir!" Scholefield spluttered. "You appear to delight in irritating me whenever you come! Any member of the hunt will tell you that I invariably ride first at the death."

Ben shook his head, regarding the fuming attorney with secret joy, but perfectly expressionless countenance. "It wain't do! Aw've run afther yon dogs too oft to swallow that tale."

"No doubt you have, like a hundred more lazy rascals who pester us with their presence instead of sticking to work! What with yelling crowds of infernal blue-stockings and handicraftsmen there is hardly a four-legged thing to be found in the countryside now."

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"We're like to yeawl, watchin' yor babby wark. Aw ne'er seed sich a gang ov huntsmen nowhere else. Yo'd be best fitted gallopin' afther a dog lurryin a pon at his tail, or happen a thrail hunt met shuit some on yo."

"Suppose we get to business," I interposed, thinking this twaddle had gone far enough, perfectly well aware that my henchman would desire no better amusement for an hour to come than that of goading the lawyer.

"Order your villain out of my office, Mr. Holt! Bring him no more to plague me with his confounded impertinence."

"Take no heed of him, sir," I said. "We will complete our arrangement of the witnesses, if you please."

"A phlegmatic jackass!" Scholefield growled, to Ben's

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ineffable delight. "Do you suppose, ruffian, that I shall submit to your ignorant and clumsy humour?"

"Plez yorsel'," Ben observed, a picture of the most absolute unconcern.

Scholefield subsided after more growling, gave me a lengthy account of a recent carousal where the wine had proved exceptionally good, and having worked me up to the requisite degree of nervous impatience, condescended to speak of more important matters.

"Where are those documents now?" he asked, with a vacant stare about him. "That lad never leaves things in their places."

He struck the gong. Enter Jim.

"Why don't you arrange my documents in readiness? You know what Mr. Holt requires—why are you not prepared for him?"

Jim opened a drawer immediately under his master's nose, as he had done a dozen times on my previous visits, and exhibited all the papers relating to Stephen's case in perfect order.

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"You should be ready, Jim—always be ready! Nothing like it for economising time, and I could never abide to waste a minute. Don't forget another day."

"Yesslir."

"You're certain everything is here?"

"Yesslir."

"That's all then, just now."

"Yesslir."

Jim pattered downstairs, his master leisurely taking the tapes off a bundle of neatly folded foolscap sheets.

"Now we can proceed, Mr. Holt. Where on earth are my spectacles, now?"

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Stroke on gong. Enter Jim.

"Find my spectacles, boy."

"Yesslir."

Jim searched among papers on table and desk, without success, Scholefield waiting impatiently.

"Where are your eyes, blockhead? The glasses are somewhere about. Why don't you—oh! they are here in my pocket. That'll do just now, Jim."

"Yesslir," says Jim departing.

Now let us see how the evidence stands," Scholefield leisurely proceeded, donning his glasses and taking up a pen. "This infernal quill won't write!"

Angry blow on gong and rapid appearance of trembling satellite.

"Why the devil don't you keep my pens in order? Do you suppose a man can get through any work with a tool like this? Here! Take it, endeavour to write with it, remove it out of my sight! Why don't you keep a bundle of quills here to be convenient when I want one?"

"Yesslir," Jim said, and opening a writing case on the table he displayed the bundle demanded.

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"Don't let this occur again," Scholefield growled. "You will never learn to keep my things handy, I believe. That's all."

"Yesslir," and exit Jim.

"That's a willing lad," commented the lawyer, making a note on the margin of a formidable-looking document. "A very willing lad, but lacks system. No sense of order, unfortunately, and wastes a good deal of time in consequence. Why, where the dev—?"

Heavy blow on gong. Jim appears.

"What's gotten my sandbox again? How often have

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you been ordered never to remove it from my table? The whole day will be wasted through your carelessness before Mr. Holt and I can get to business."

"Yesslir," said uncomplaining Jim, showing the sandbox close by his master's inkbottle.

"Don't take it away any more, now, or we shall have words. That's all."

"Yesslir," says Jim, monosyllabic and patient still, descending to his lower deeps.

"I've just bought the choicest bay roadster you ever saw, Holt," says the attorney, suddenly struck with a new idea. "Nothing in this parish can touch him. Where's his pedigree, now? I had it in my pocket yesterday."

He pulls out several papers and turns them over.

"Betther ax Jim for it," Ben draws, with extreme gravity.

None of your impudence, scoundrel! Here's the paper," and he comes stumping across the floor on his thick boot. "Look it over, Laurence—splendid pedigree."

I look through the paper wearily, while Scholefield produces a bottle and glasses, inviting me to refresh myself before we set to work.

"He con olez find that beaut Jim." Ben whispers to me. "Good health, Scwofilt!"

"No no!" the attorney laughs, not accepting this suggestive remark. "Wine of this quality is not for rascals like you. Here are some coppers—get a jug of ale at the Angel and let's be rid of you."

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"It's again mi principles," Ben returns, as he rises and gathers up his cap;"but as it's a matther ov obligin' yo say no moore. Mun aw tak Jim across, or yo'll be wantin' him?"

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"Get out!" Scholefield mutters, an order Ben executes without delay; and at last it becomes possible to fasten my adviser's attention upon the concerns which occupy my own mind.

Our case is undeniably strong on paper, if men can only be persuaded to consider it free from prejudices and complications. Of this Scholefield is not sanguine. Rioting has become common, prisoners in any way connected with public disturbances are regarded with suspicion, it has even been difficult to secure separate trial for Stephen, the authorities desiring to include him in a group of other rebellious subjects from the same district. Hope as we may, there is no certain forecasting of the issue. All is lost in doubt.

XII

IN February Miss Seaford honoured us with a visit. These ceremonies had been rare of late, the young lady having apparently tired of patronising my sister and condoling with my lamentable condition. She was all smiles and charms, rallied me and Ellen upon our depressed looks, expressed satisfaction at finding the saddlery business progressing again, chattered lightly of woes and punishments affecting the common herd of toilers, showed conclusively that she had slight concern for sufferings of others while she personally walked unscathed.

"You surely cannot be well, Miss Holt," she said, when the first froth of conversation had evaporated. "I am sure you are much thinner, and your complexion is dreadful. Dear me, I should be ashamed to show myself with so pale a face!"

"There is small danger of that calamity," I interposed, to spare Ellen the pain of replying. "You are more beautiful

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than ever, divine goddess deigning to irradiate our terrestrial gloom. What are these rumours I hear of orange blooms and wedding favours, of rank conferred and beauty embellished by wealth? Even to this close chamber happy murmurings have penetrated."

"You have heard the dreadful fact then? Is my choice satisfactory to you?"

"The captain has a fine moustache," I said, "and doubtless martial courage in combination with it. In looks and manner you are excellently fitted to grace his lofty station. Surely nothing more is needed to ensure a desirable union."

"What is Miss Holt's opinion?"

"I have no love for Captain Masham," Ellen answered with quivering lips. "You have my good wishes for happiness, but will be wise in not expecting too much from your future husband."

"Poor fellow! I must inform him that in some mysterious fashion he has forfeited your regard, and uncontrollable grief will immediately consume him."

"No tender emotion can ever deeply affect him," Ellen said, almost in tears. "He has a cruel heart. Do you love the man?"

"Oh, certainly! Quite as much as he deserves, at any rate. I feel quite aged and sedate in the early prospect of matrimony; probably grey hairs will assert themselves before long. I hope you don't envy me, my dear? A while ago I certainly supposed that my captain had a tenderness for you."

"Your supposition was perfectly correct, so far, at least, as the word 'tenderness' may be applied to Masham. He proposed to me before we had been a month acquainted."

My ears opened to their full width. Here was informa-

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tion indeed! My quiet little sister had thoroughly astounded me for once in her life. Miss Seaford flushed scarlet, exclaiming in imperious tones:—

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"Your statement cannot possibly be truthful!"

"Pardon me," I said. "Lying is not included within the range of Ellen's accomplishments. And could you from your obdurate heart refuse him, sister? Could you scornfully reject moustache and epaulet, glory and high breeding? Astonishing indeed!"

"Not scornfully, Laurence. The attentions of so great a man were flattering, of course, and possibly my refusal gave him some little pain. It was enough to say that my affection was already bestowed, and beg him to pursue me no further."

"Aha! And did you by any hapless accident mention to whom your faithful pledge was given?"

"I am pledged to nothing, and the man I love may not even be aware of my devotion to him."

"But did any hints escape you by which Masham could be guided? You have an open tongue, Ellen—it is seldom you attempt concealment. Probably you blurted out the truth."

"Certainly I did! Masham was indignant at being rejected, and I told him plainly where my heart was bestowed, never dreaming what consequences would follow the confession. But for him Stephen would be a free man to-day. You have yourself complained, Laurence, that prison rules have been exceeded to prevent communication between Stephen and his friends. Depend upon it the captain is responsible for that."

Miss Seaford's scorn was a sight to see. "Do I understand you to assert, Miss Holt, that you have refused

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Captain Masham in favour of this workman, this Stephen—what is the name?"

"The name is Grindrod, as you perfectly well know," I said sharply.

Ellen proceeded: "What you are to understand is that I refused the captain because I had no affection or even liking for him, and that my heart is Stephen's if ever he chooses to ask for it."

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"This is quite a dramatic episode," Margaret sneered. "Perhaps you mouth your affection a trifle too loudly for a modest woman, but for stage purposes your method is effective enough."

"Why should I conceal my feelings?" Ellen' asked warmly. "Here are none but you, presumably a trustworthy friend, and my brother, to whom every thought of mine is open. While Stephen remained free it was seemly that my tongue should keep silence; now that he is bound and in prison, helpless and unvisited, I would proclaim my love before all the world if that could serve or comfort him. To natures like yours all display of emotion—even the very existence of deep emotion—seems unmannerly, out of taste, a proof of low breeding. No mind possessing depth or strength is to be controlled by such flimsy bonds of fashion or etiquette, thank God! I laugh at your worldly wisdom, and survey with pity the shallowness of an intellect which allows itself to be misled by mere appearances, failing even to conceive the sterling qualities which alone can make life worth holding by reasoning creatures. Sneer as you will, in all the nobler attributes of man Stephen towers immeasurably above your captain."

This was pretty fair for Ellen and reminded me strongly of my own oratorical powers when excited by temper, save

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that my tirades were apt to be more biting and less direct, a slight difference corresponding with the distinction between our characters.

"Don't quarrel, ladies," I remarked. "You will completely spoil the situation if you get angry over it.

Oh, pour upon your parched and throbbing breasts
The gentle dew of patience.

My dear Ellen, your language is much too personal and severe. I had not thought it lay in your nature to discourse in so discordant sounds."

"I could not so far forget myself as to copy Miss Holt's insulting words," Margaret said in her most dignified manner, "nor shall I attempt to answer her absurd accusations.

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

To charge Captain Masham with spiteful persecution of a rebel is to outstep all rational bounds; and in uttering her unfounded suspicions before me, the captain's betrothed wife, your sister commits gross impertinence."

"You are right," Ellen replied, more meekly. "My tongue ran away with me, and spoke things almost as surprising to me as to you. But, however stated, the facts remain beyond disproof, and I feel as certain of Masham's treachery as of your coming years of torment in his society. Be warned, Margaret Seaford—wed not this heartless man for the glamour of exalted rank."

"I am cordially grateful to you for the warning. Your advice carries peculiar value, since your own choice of a husband is so happy. With all the captain's faults you must positively allow me to prefer a gentleman to a gaolbird."

This venomous thrust made both me and Ellen wince; although, as my sister had first indulged in strong language,

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she could not fairly cavil at being repaid in the same currency. She had taken altogether foolish ground, because in exchanging offensive personalities neither of us had the smallest chance against our visitor. While Margaret's keen stabs pierced home to our accessible souls, ours slid ineffectual from her armour of self-possession, or penetrating that found but a void within.

She was not in the least concerned about the truth or falsity of Ellen's accusations; supposing them to have been definitely proved she would have felt neither disgust of Masham nor pity for Stephen; all she desired for the present was to hold her own in the controversy between us, a matter in which she was exceptionally qualified for success.

With Ellen and myself the alleged injustice would have been the principal thing; not so with Margaret, for having overtalked us in trumpery dialogue she would dismiss the whole business from her mind, questions of justice or human suffering being no particular concerns of hers, since she was not born to re-set disjointed time. Consequently, perceiving that the Holt defences would be demolished in ten minutes, I effected a masterly retreat.

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

"I trust to receive an invitation to the wedding, Miss Sealord, although I can't dance at it. Commission me to write an epithalamium, or a bridal march."

"All friends will be welcome," she replied, with an emphasis on the noun intended to annihilate me.

"*Vita brevis*—we'll soon be dead entirely, as Phelim would say. Let us travel our brief course in amity. Am I too inquisitive in asking if the happy day is fixed?"

"April has been mentioned. Some troublesome proceedings against insurgents will detain the captain at Lancaster during March."

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"Troublesome indeed! These unfortunate wretches might surely avoid giving annoyance to men in high places. Selfishness, my dear lady! Obvious selfishness. Don't leave us!"

But she did, and frigidly too. Ellen's restrained tears began to flow, my brains commenced whirling, there was silence in the room for several minutes.

When my meditations were assorted I spoke in the character of censor.

"Ellen, you erred in exposing Masham. I presume his proposal was honourable—it should have remained a secret between him and you."

"I am not myself, Laurence," the poor girl sobbed. "My heart is breaking with the anguish of suspense. Another short month and the man I love so dearly may be put to death by these callous-hearted creatures, never dreaming that my whole existence is in his keeping! Unutterable pain compelled me to speak—I don't regret a single word!"

"You have another enemy to reckon with now, and yonder fair lady has cat-claws to her fingers. She will scratch, mark you, with tolerable vindictiveness, too, or I am no adequate judge of her attributes. Look to it."

"I fear you must regard me as deceitful and wicked to have concealed these matters from you. Be assured it was more on your account than my own. For Margaret's anger I care nothing—I have no thoughts to waste on such as she. Etiquette may condemn me, my heart does not."

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"Fortify your breast—emulate the courage of your lover. Read over yet again the manly words written from his prisonhouse here and let his strength inspire you. I suspect the document is still carried in your bosom."

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She produced it at the word. "Are not these the brave utterances of a noble mind! Oh, chivalrous heart, strong in self-sacrifice, never shall the dungeon shadow hide us from each other! Our lamp of love shall banish it and cast before us heavenly light! Thou shalt not easily discard m I will follow thee round the planet's bounds; in other scenes happiness shall brighten our lives!"

"Apparently you have everything planned," I remarked lightly, anxious to allay these hysterical humours. "Poor Laurence may go to the deuce, I suppose, when conquering Stephen bears you away. Please to remember that letter is my property, and kindly return it to its rightful owner."

She smiled through her tears, becoming more composed, kissed the letter, returned it to its hiding-place, and fled from my extended hand as a startled fawn evades the forester's grip.

XIII

A BRIGHT morning early in March saw a considerable party of our townspeople making towards Lancaster. Not merely such as could afford to ride or drive took the highroad; it was no uncommon feat among our working population to walk the distance in two or three days when attracted by important trials or sensational hangings, and as several prisoners from the Rochdale district were to be brought forward at this assize there was naturally a large crowd of friends and acquaintances anxious to be present.

The main road through Oakenrod and Bamford, leading through Bury and Bolton, was busy that day with hoof and wheel. Most of the pedestrians had started on the previous morning, allowing themselves convenient time for the journey. Not all, however. Many had still the whole

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distance before them, evidently not caring to be present at the first day's formal proceedings. We passed men, women, and children stepping briskly along, marking with deep sorrow the obvious signs of extreme destitution in their pinched faces and ragged dress. Some carried small bundles of food, some had nothing more than could be obtained from charitable people living by the roadsides, all looked forward to sleeping in the open air for one or two nights, as endurance decided the matter.

I rode in an open carriage, with Phelim and David for companions. Ben sat aloft acting as driver, phlegmatic and self-possessed as his habit was.

My sister, whom Scholefield expected to require as a witness, had left home on the previous day in company with Mrs. Butterworth. My own evidence would not be wanted, I was told, and my constitutional timidity was vastly relieved by the tidings.

Scholefield passed us early on the road, riding his lately purchased bay, a very handsome animal indeed. Behind him was Jim in a hired chaise, accompanied by Ferret and an Irishman called Clancy, of whom I had previously heard.

"Fine morning for a burst, Holt," Scholefield remarked as he came up. "I'd rather be scouring Ashworth Moor than bothering with miserable law business. Are you going through to-day?"

"That depends on Ben," I said. "We are all at his mercy."

"It'll be as it leets," Ben observed, leisurely turning in his seat and looking down upon us. "Aw'm hurryin' noane a good galloway beaut there's need."

"Are you there, rascal?" Scholefield asked, peering up

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at him. This is Wednesday—can you land by Friday morning?"

"Iv th' hee-road doesn't wear eaut. Are yo comin' away fro worn beaut Jim?"

"He rides behind us."

"Oh!"

"What do you mean by that, you scoundrel?"

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"Nowt mich," Ben replied, turning to his work again, while the lawyer, mute with passion, opened and shut his mouth like a fish gasping for water.

"Will it be Friday before Stephen is brought forward?" I asked, to divert an impending outburst of temper.

"The villain deserves shooting!" Scholefield broke out. "I would never have undertaken this case if I had dreamt of the infinite annoyance this ruffian would cause me."

"Yo con lev it ony time," Ben said, over his shoulder. "There's 'turnies enoo at th' shop we're bund for."

"Keep quiet, Ben," I said. "Your nonsense goes too far. For what reason do you fix Friday, sir?"

Scholefield muttered an answer, still chewing his wrath. "The sun can't go down twice on a convicted felon except where Sunday intervenes, so capital sentences are delivered after Friday sunset, giving condemned prisoners benefit of the Sabbath."

"Yo're noane for hangin' my lad next Monday mornin' it's to be hoped," said David. "Aw look for yo gettin' him longer life nor so."

"Everything shall be done in his favour. There are strong hopes—don't be despondent."

"Arrah, is it hang a boy wid his mathematical faculty!" cried Phelim. "The country would lose by it, man!"

As Scholefield touched up his horse to leave us, Butter-

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worth and his son came up in a light gig drawn by a fast mare. The justice accosted us in his noisy fashion.

"Hallo, Scholefield, is that a new cob? Pretty beast, dal him! What, Laurence on his travels again! Tha'd best have tarried at home, lad; it's no fiddler's business we're about now. Dash it, no! Men of standing and brains and knowledge are the sort wanted in these circumstances. I've attended every assize here for longer years than I can recollect. Crash it, yes!"

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"You are heartily welcome," I said. "One visit will suffice for me."

"Hi, Butterworth!" Scholefield called from the front. "I'll lay you five guineas you don't catch my nag in the next mile."

"Done!" Butterworth cried, slashing at his horse in his headstrong way. "Done for five, dal thee!"

They shot off along the road with a clatter of hoofs and cloud of dust, vanishing from sight almost in a moment.

"Th' 'turney's gam!" Ben grinned, hugely enjoying the sudden spurt. "Buttheroth'll have him, or else dhrive his mare through her skin."

He whipped up, desiring to see the finish of this impromptu race; failing, however, to overtake the impetuous competitors.

We ran easily along the green-bordered highway, meeting with none but common occurrences of travel, until within a mile of Preston, when we passed Butterworth's gig drawn up under a hedge, both shafts broken short off, horse and riders all gone. A general chuckle arose among us, for we all sufficiently knew our man to unriddle the mystery of this abandoned vehicle. Soon we crossed the river, where a group of barefooted women stood washing clothes and

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spreading them on the grassy banks, so coming to the old Magnet posting-house, renowned along the whole North Road for excellence of fare and honesty of charge.

"Put up here for to-neet," David said as we drove into a square enclosed on three sides by the wings and body of the ancient hostelry. "There's no hurry—th' castle's nobbut abeaut twenty mile off, an' there's some new facthries here aw'm wantin' to see."

Ben promptly and vigorously approved of this arrangement, and as none of us could object David's advice was acted upon. The old weaver trudged off all alone, promising to return soon after dark, and we were all pretty well satisfied to be left in quarters so comfortable.

Trade was brisk at the old inn. On a wooden balcony, extended to considerable length above the principal entrance and communicating with the ground by a flight of

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

steps at each end, a mixed throng of soldiers and civilians lounged or wandered, talking among themselves or chattering to a knot of maids, ostlers, and acquaintances in the space below. Gay patches of colour in uniform or lady's dress brightened the dingy house-front, on which a heavy timber tracery appeared, the wood covered with wholesome antique film like a deposit on old cheese. Straw littered the square, bundles and boxes were scattered around in chaotic masses, and an overpowering stable odour from the north wing permeated the whole, penetrating also to the inmost recesses of the human system.

"This looks a tidy shop," Ben remarked, surveying the crowded and perfumed scene from his secure eminence. "Law's a payin' job for some folk. Nobry could think to look at this lot 'at most on 'em are witnesses to talk again helpless prisoners, or sodiers determin't to freeten

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'em, or lawyers to swear their lives away. But they are, leet-hearted as they looken, an' there's mony a reaunt stomach here getten itsel' filled bi wortchin' for Ned Barlow. These lawyers are past bidin'. Life or dyeath's nowt to them—their case's everything—let 'em nobbut just talk t'other mon deawn or chet him bi lyin' a bit an' they're o reet! This is one mak ov a marlockin' jaunt shuzheaw."

"Hark ye there!" says Phelim. "Aloft he sits like Phaeton, and nearly as red in the face, bedad! moralising over the degenerate world he is incapable of lighting. Ben, ye haythen philosopher, get the horse stabled before the place is overcrowded entirely, while I attind to the lodgings."

"Get forrad, then," Ben returned, descending to unbuckle his gears while Phelim passed on to the inn door. "Set an Irishman to wheedle a bargain, a Scotchman to save brass, an' a Englishman to make it. Welsh folk aw know nowt abeaut. Steady, mi dandelion blossom! There's no sense i' shiftin' o thi feet at once!"

As he wandered off to the stables Edmund issued from the house, and came up grinning prodigiously.

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"Come along, Laurence," he said, lifting me carefully in kindly arms. "I've got a couch planted ready for you inside. You're stopping here overnight, Phelim says."

"Yes, if the landlord can squeeze us in."

"No fear of that, the place is like a rabbit warren."

He turned into a room on the ground floor and arranged cushions for me to rest upon. Scholefield sat there, asleep and breathing like a man full-stuffed with food; Butterworth was there too, smoking a long clay pipe without seeming to suck much content from it; remains of an expensive dinner filled a table.

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"Be dal'd to all lawyers, barristers, clerks, and jurymen!" Butterworth muttered as we entered the room. "From fox-hunting attorneys, good Lord, deliver us, dash 'em! Make thyself comfortable, Laurence; this is a homely tavern and they'll use thee well, lad. Tha'll make a traveller yet—at thy age I'd been over Europe, but my case is exceptional no doubt. I made the foreigners know I was there, too—crash 'em, yes! They need putting into their places, a lot of those hop-my-thumbs in France and Italy. I'd some rare adventures in those days—no man more perhaps—no man more! Now it's long pipe and spectacles, bed and ingle-nook, grey head and blood a-cooling. Blange me if I'm half the man! was, though few can tackle me yet!"

"What were you about to break your shafts?" I asked him. "Driving too fast, as usual, I expect."

"Brash thee, Laurence! whenever was I known to overdrive a nag? Here's Ned, now—he'll tell thee we ambled away as if a pet-lamb pulled us. Tha'll be certain we never hurried when I say that Scholefield's cob kept ahead. There's no driver in the world more merciful with his cattle than I am, ye grinning jack-ape; not that I claim any merit for that, because it's a sort of natural faculty with me, dal it! Here's this odd-legged attorney swaggering over me at a vast rate on account of his cleverness in keeping me at his horse's tail, as if I'd ever fairly tried—he was very little in front either—there's nought in it—tested again I should sweep him off the road and be dashed to him! Beside, my

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

shoulder's none right again yet, dal it! I knocked it out on Ashworth Moor a bit since, and it baulks me."

"There appears to have been a dinner in it," I said. "Who paid for that, Edmund?"

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Young Butterworth exploded into a laugh which awoke Scholefield, who rubbed his eyes and looked about for his gong from mere habit.

"I wonder if that villain Jim has got his witnesses safe." Here he rang a handbell and presently Jim appeared, red of nose, laconic, alert. "I travel no farther to-night, Jim. See about lodgings for those two scoundrels, and keep a watchful eye on them till morning."

"Yesslir."

"That's all; don't disturb me again."

"Yesslir," said Jim, departing. If the clerk had other words in his vocabulary certainly he made sparing use of them.

"Is that all the lad can say?" I inquired of his master. "In all my experience of him I never heard him use any other phrase."

"Good reason for it," Scholefield yawned, filling his wineglass. "He talked too much when I got him, couldn't arrange his ideas, and so wasted a lot of my time, a thing I can't abide; so I ordered him always to answer 'Yes sir,' undertaking to do the thinking part myself; and as you hear the unfortunate creature can't even speak so much without snuffling. This port is sound, Butterworth. We'll see it out."

"Have at it then, crash thee!" cried the half-appeased justice. "At drinking I'm above your match, at least, and not accustomed to give preference to any man. Ned, inquire if the knaves have gone to fetch our gig and bring two or three of the legal fry back with thee. We'll make a night on't, dal it!"

"You'll not drive me to-morrow, then," Edmund remarked. "Three bottles to-night will make you still more

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gentle with your horses, and for one journey my neck's been in quite enough danger."

"Ha, ha, squire, you're fairly beaten," Scholefield chuckled. "You would have done better to put up with defeat in the first mile, instead of challenging me to a second burst. But come! you've lost the dinners, I'll stand the wine—we'll never disagree about a trumpery match. Fill up, man, and better luck to you!"

The justice fumed away the remnants of his ill-humour in a volley of expletives, and the two worthies settled themselves down for a night's solid drinking, as the custom of the time was—and is still, indeed, perhaps in slightly diminished measure. Three lesser lights of the bar joined them—ready, intelligent, self-assertive fellows, who could have cracked jokes and amused themselves at a grave edge—and the table rang with merriment for some hours.

These diversions had no attraction for me. I was about to call Ben and retire to my chamber when David came in, looking with some contempt upon the jovial crew assembled at the table.

"Are these lawyer-folk wi cases o' life an' d'yeath on their honds?" he asked me in a low stern tone. "Throuble sits leet on their backs seeminly. Aw hope we'n gotten some chaps wi rayther moore thought nor these."

"One of these gentlemen is a junior counsel in our case. You'll find them all very different in court."

"Let's hope so—there's reawm enough for mendin'. An' where's th' greight mon 'at's talkin' for us?"

"He won't be likely to come until the last moment, and then probably he will have everything to learn about the evidence and defence."

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"The dickens he will! What, con he maister o that in a day?"

"If ever he does master it at all. Barristers often win cases without knowing much about them."

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

"Well, aw give it up," David said, tossing his arm with a gesture of disgust. "Sich carless wark wouldn't pass i' mony thrades, aw know that mich. Tha'll never get vally for th' brass tha'rt spendin'."

"Have you been allowed to see the factories in the town?"

"Aw've sin what aw wanted. There's nowt runnin' here fit to match my loom." His voice had dropped to a whisper. "Once we getten Stephen loase again we'll make short wark o' yon patent, but aw'm fast beaut mi lad. Some road aw cannot get forrad same as aw used to do. Whether mi wits are wearin' eaut or not it's hard to say, but get forrad aw cannot! Aw'm plump fast wi part o' th' action—everything abeaut it looks reet enough whol it comes to run, an' then it's plain there's summat wantin'. Aw've gwone through every calkilation, fitted every part into it place, proved an' gauged everything, an' for mi life aw con tell no rezon why th' frame shouldn't run reet enough. But it wain't, lad—it wain't!"

"Perhaps after all you have overlooked some trifling fault," I suggested, looking with concern at the weaver as he sat smoothing his troubled forehead, and wondering to myself if his strong mind was giving way, for his tone of despondency was quite new in him. "When you return to the work all may be simplified."

"No sich luck," said David, shaking his head decidedly. "Aw've pondher't too long an' too deep o'er mi hondiwark for owt o' that mak to be possible. Mi sowl's gwone into

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yon job, lad! There's hardly a bowt, or a tappet, or a bit o' metal onywhere abeaut it but aw've taen into mi honds an' loved as a fayther met a chilt! Nowe, there's bin nowt o'erlooked—it's summat aw'm noane diver enough to see. There con be nowt done whol Stephen's base—he'll set it reet aw'll warrand."

And suppose he never is loose, I asked myself, although I refrained from troubling my downcast friend with any such foreboding. At my request David willingly carried me upstairs to my quiet chamber, where, as a bright moon illuminated the magnificent breadth of landscape without, he laid me upon a couch by the window and went his way to bed.

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

Lofty fells, green meadows, glittering river, all lay peaceful and undisturbed under the misty radiance. Twenty miles away my dearest friend fretted in a dungeon; near his prison wall my beloved sister wept in her chamber. Below me were many rooms filled with revellers to whom apparently the passing moment was all; people of many degrees, from county families in the best parlours to the fiddler whose lively strains I could hear sounding from the kitchen. Of such things the world is made up—sorrow can neither extinguish laughter, nor keenest merriment escape inevitable pain. While man continues to exist Time's busy fingers shall twist the two-stranded cord of joy and grief; yet hope remains that we may in the future see its ragged coils wrapped with glittering filaments of everlasting light.

I had been brooding alone for a couple of hours when a knock at the chamber door roused me. Ben appeared, slightly unsteady on his legs and impeded in his utterance, his face blazing like a noonday sun.

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"Aw'll put thee to bed neaw," stuttered this doughty saddler out for a holiday. "It's gettin' lat for young folk to be up. Never were such doins as these—never!" He staggered about the room, helping me to undress myself. "Rare good ale, lad!" He smacked his lips and hiccoughed at the exquisite recollection. "There's some o' th' bon-bonnet-bonniest lasses deawn yon ever tha seed! Aw've a good mind to come a-livin' here otogether."

"Now I wonder if you are sober enough to carry me across to the bedstead?" I asked, laughing at Ben's drunken gravity and his ridiculous unconsciousness of the absurdity apparent in his figure and actions. "I don't want any further breakages among my bones, and if you were to fall over upon me the consequence would be a fatal accident. You had better fetch Phelim to do it."

"Th' Irishman's wur nor me," Ben remarked, balancing himself unsteadily. "Yon's him fiddlin' for th' dancers. He sits bi th' hobend an' he'd betther noane thry to shift, noather! He's reet enough propped in a cheer, an' he con swing his elbow wi here an'

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

theere a bant-scraper, but his legs wain't swing aw'll bet—or not as he wants 'em shuzheaw."

"Get somebody else, then, for you can never manage the job, that's certain!"

"Tha's desperate little pluck abeaut thee," says Ben, poising a didactic finger. "It were olez a faurt o' thine—an' thi fayther's, too. But howd thi wynt a bit—there's moore roads o' killin' pigs nor chawkin' 'em wi candles. Iv aw poo this thing tha'rt lyin' on closer to th' bedside aw con happen cob thee in beaut breighkin'."

"Clever man!" I said. "You are not over-fuddled after all."

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"Nowt to what aw shall be afore mornin'," Ben coolly answered. "Aw con see a new moon through spectacles yet. Betther ale aw've seldom let on." He pushed my couch across the room, lifted me with a woman's gentleness, and stowed me away for the night. "Poor ribs! Aw declare tha'rt nowt nobbut a skelinton when thi clooas are off."

"A miserable useless weakling, born to be a constant trouble to you."

"Why, God bless thee, my own bonny lad, who else should be throubl't wi thee? Isn't it my job, an' haven't aw bin like a fayther to thee ever sin' tha could crawl? What trouble is it for a lumberin' beefy chap like me to carry thee a bit neaw an' again? Nobry nobbut Ben mun wait on thee whol he tarries at th' Stirrup."

"Are you intending to leave us then?"

"Fuddl't folk getten o maks o' notions," Ben replied in his most oracular vein, quite as if the notions he referred to belonged to somebody other than himself. "We con tell betther to-morn. Arta sure tha'll be comfortable, an' is there owt else tha wants?"

"Nothing else, most profound chamberlain. Good-night, and God reward you for all your kindness to me."

"That'll be reet," said stolid Ben. "Accordin' to my thinkin' aws' have a lot o' back-reckonins to dhraw in a lump at th' Sattlin' Day. Good-neet, my lad, an' give o'er studyin'."

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

He found the door after a rambling search, stumbled down several flights of stairs, and five minutes later I heard his lusty voice chanting in the kitchen, accompanied by some remarkably weird chords on the violin, after which rough serenade I heard no more for that night.

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XIV

FOR Lancashire men and women the old castle of their county town must ever possess powerful fascination; its history must continue to excite universal attention, the sight of its massive walls and towers upon their magnificently placed elevation will never fail to call forth admiration and pride, while the tremendous fabric of the building resists the destructive assaults of time.

There is something frightful in the grim aspect of this formidable stronghold, for its terrible record of crime and blood throws around it a thousand associations of horror. Although it is only within the last twenty years that executions have actually taken place within the castle precincts, the old terrors of gruesome Gallows Hill, the northern Tyburn, depended upon trials conducted in the Crown Court, and must rank as appendages to the bulk of ghostly recollections insuperably connected with the mighty edifice. Hanging rights, or privileges of using pillory and gallows, were bestowed upon Roger of Poictou shortly after the Conquest, and it must be admitted that full use of the royal warrant has been made between those early times and these.

How many unhappy human creatures have suffered in the deep-sunk horrible dungeons can never be known until the grave gives up its dead. Immured from wholesome air, shut in from the light of heaven, condemned to life-crushing solitude, what heart so brave, what fortitude so constant, as to resist the grisly horrors of these unholy deeps?

Other prisoners, too, in later days have suffered long years of confinement within the castle walls. Debtors of all grades languish there in the score or so of cells provided for

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their accommodation, living within as without upon a scale fixed by the amount of disposable money each has at command. Luxury is by no means unknown among these prisoners, by whatever incomprehensible means attained, nor is extreme penury wanting among the humbler—and possibly more honest—members of this strange society.

Some of these unfortunates have been captive here for twenty years; in many cases for sums so trifling that one must of necessity hold the creditors callous to the protracted suffering of their kind, and desire speedy abolishing of a law that punishes misfortune as if it were a crime.

What figure is this standing boldly on a rude cart beneath the gallows tree upon this fatal hill? Shaven crown, monk's simple habit, girdle of cords, sandalled feet. Is it thou, John Paslew, Abbot of Whalley? That wild project of a Grace Pilgrimage has wrought evil for thee, and never more shall thy feet wander through that umbrageous valley, beyond these undulating fells, where heretofore life has held so many fascinations for thee. No more arrogant assumption or assertion, no further scaring of dying sinners, no further possibility of adding hide or oxgang of territory to domains already vast beyond credibility, no penance or refection, matin or vesper song; nothing left for thee but brief muttered syllables of prayer before the cart is drawn away and thou art left dangling before the noisy multitude, divided in acclaim and condemnation.

And in the unhallowed autumn of a later year what band of wild pitiable affrighted women attends dread tribunal here by hurried summons, whirling like storm-blown withered leaves across the gloomy stage to vanish in the gloomier chasm of eternity? Witches, forsooth! Cry you mercy, my lord, gifted with intellect and learning of pro-

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found extent, wherefore should these trembling wretches possess powers over life or death, health or disease? Is a chattering old woman's voluble malice so awful or unusual a matter as to merit extreme rigour of the law? You have personal fear of their machinations? Ah! precaution is well warranted in such an event. Gape, dungeon! Drop,

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

noose! Away, ye beldames, from the range of forensic vision, that peace may again fall upon Israel!

Barely sixteen years more and a certain Father Arrowsmith must needs disturb judicial equilibrium, hardly as yet restored. With determined audacity this fellow chooses to arrange religious beliefs by the light of his own conscience, or such other lamps as appear to burn within him. Heretical, obdurate, unshrinking, there remains but one method of convincing Arrowsmith. A convenient spike still perceivable over the gateway receives his decapitated head, his right hand is preserved as a healing charm, the rest of him—or such remnant as is capable of being handled—disappears underground. The religious problem is solved—Arrowsmith will harangue against orthodoxy no more.

Come forth, stately figures of the past who have held sovereignty upon this sea-commanding mount. Henry Earl of Derby, Hubert de Burgh, John of Gaunt—all swaying in regal power in their day, exhibitin immense contempt for churls and vassals, presuming doubtless that much special importance attached to themselves in the scale of creation. It would appear now that their authoritative dealings and conceited assumptions were hardly warranted; in fact, unless some worming historian chances to disinter these and other such mighty names to serve indirect purposes of his own, the universe revolves unshaken by any sound of them in this generation. Splendour, pomp,

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power, wealth, rank, may adorn a man until he shines admirable and heroic in contemporary ages; yet death strips him of these accidental gildings, reducing self to its true insignificant dimensions.

But supposing that in all the weary progress of centuries since history was chronicled one just man had arisen to rule from this "bad eminence." A man capable of speculating within himself: "These serfs in the dungeon—as I am even so are they—liberty must be their portion. These raids upon my neighbours' lands—they are born of greed and mischief—they shall cease. This crushing and robbing of vassals—violation of

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wives and daughters—denial of all human privileges to helpless human beings—shall continue no longer. Equity shall be my standard of action—revenge, passion, selfishness, I will no longer permit to work unrestrained."

Would *his* name have followed those of the stately ones into oblivion's void? Certainly the equitable man would have been speedily dethroned, overrun by the very neighbours he spared, robbed and imprisoned by the vassals whom he desired to entreat fairly, for justice is not pursued with easy feet, nor its yoke carried upon unscarred shoulders. History records no such proceedings—through the long procession of ages we seek in vain for one just ruler!

Oh, Castle of Lancaster, stern emblem of oppression, cruelty, despotic power, transferred down the broad line of generations; blood-washed sign of imprisonment and death, elevated above as fair an expanse of earth and ocean as ever the Almighty endowed with freedom and life; stand yet in grim majesty until thy impenetrable shadows are riven asunder by the sun of brighter epochs ere long to be, until thy ghastly chronicles pass to the devouring worm and

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are supplanted by fairer records inscribed with enduring symbols of humanity and love!

XV

AN eventful Friday morning in March of the year 1812 found the Lancaster Crown Court filled to the doors by an excited crowd. It was known that a number of persons indicted for rioting would appear for trial during the day, and rumour was not backward in deciding that some at least among these unfortunates would receive sentence of death. Baron Stewart, familiarly known as "Lord Hemp," occupied the bench, casting stern glances about him as he assorted a bundle of documents lying on his table, his massive features richly framed by ornate wood carvings above his seat. The jurymen occupied a box to the judge's left hand, on his right a gallery was reserved for ladies. Below him stood a large table for use of advocates and their prompters, excellently lighted by a dome in the roof.

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

It was with agitated feelings that I saw Stephen enter the felon's dock, and with exquisite sorrow that I perceived his wasted figure and stem looks. His manly proportions had shrunk into gauntness, the bones of his large-made frame asserting themselves through the folds of his mean prison costume, and close cropping of his hair had strangely altered him. It was Stephen, though; altered, yet the same. His smile revealed him as he saw David and me sitting near Scholefield, when for one swift instant he looked his own bright self.

I thought the charge insignificant enough to bring a man's neck within peril of the rope. Technically stated it was, "Assaulting soldiers while engaged on duty," a simple formula with no hints of blood-thirstiness about it; but

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that was nothing—lives had been staked and lost for slighter offences still.

Sergeant Phillips, a queen's counsel of established reputation, conducted the prosecution, confining himself to the bare details of Stephen's attack upon the yeomen. These damaged warriors themselves gave evidence in corroboration, one of them reluctantly admitting under the persuasion of our junior counsel that the first blow was struck by himself. Captain Masham also appeared as a witness, adding intelligent testimony to the somewhat crude statements of his uneducated men, and the evidence, simple as it was in outline, assumed a strongly convincing character. The gallant officer freely unburdened his well-padded bosom of such particulars as he chose to reveal concerning the business in hand, looking about him with his accustomed aspect of lofty coldness, and occasionally fingering his heavy black moustache.

As he turned to leave the box Sir John Cresslet rose, saying quite simply: "Just a moment, if you please."

Masham paused, surveying the distinguished advocate, who was a sleek, unaffected gentleman, quite ordinary in appearance, and who spoke in the most natural, conversational tone imaginable.

"Had you any previous acquaintance with the prisoner?"

"None whatever."

"You had never happened to see him?"

"Not to distinguish him from other artisans and people of his class."

"Be good enough to refrain from contemptuous and irrelevant remarks. The prisoner stands in a position which should command sympathy rather than sneers from witnesses."

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"Hear, hear!" David whispered to me. "He's a sharp little mon."

A faint approving murmur ran through the crowded court, as if Masham's manners were not much admired by the auditors. Cresslet took out a handkerchief and wiped his forehead, looking for a minute as if he had forgotten all about the case. Then thrusting a hand into his pocket he lounged over the table, carelessly inquiring:—

"Did you ever chance to hear of him?"

That question sounded fully as innocent as the rest, yet something in it perplexed Masham greatly. He gnawed his moustache, hesitating to answer.

"Come, sir," Cresslet continued indifferently, as if the question were really not worth insisting upon, "oblige me with a reply."

"I have no recollection of previously hearing his name."

"Excuse me, you are a little vague. In plain terms, had you ever heard of the prisoner prior to this riot or had you not?"

"I had not"

"You swear that?"

"I do, sir."

"Can I trouble you for a pinch of snuff, Scholefield?" the advocate asked in precisely the tone he used to address Masham. Being supplied with the pungent dust he inhaled it slowly, gazing up at the crowded galleries for at least two minutes as if he had not a solitary thought in his head. The captain was becoming restless and nervous under this unconcerned and dilatory treatment, plucking at his moustache as if dreading the next question to be propounded by his wily examiner.

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When the snuffing process came to its lingering end Sir John fastened a direct, firm gaze upon Masham's countenance and asked:—

"Have you any cause to be jealous of the prisoner?"

Masham's strong self-possession was unequal to the shock of this sudden, totally-unexpected demand. He faltered, muttered indistinctly, finally seeking refuge in a burst of passion.

"You insult me by putting so preposterous a question!"

"Compose yourself, captain, and limit yourself to answering my queries. Yes or no?"

"Certainly not!"

"Are you acquainted with a Miss Ellen Holt?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you ever propose marriage to that young lady?"

Masham glared at me with absolute ferocity.

"I decline to answer."

"You are not allowed to decline, sir," Cresslet said, prompt and decided in manner now, his mask of indifference thrown away. "Yes or no?"

The captain remaining mute, our advocate calmly appealed to the judge, who spoke for the first time in a deep penetrating voice.

"The witness must reply."

"Excuse my pertinacity, captain. Yes or no?"

"Yes," Masham growled in a sullen tone.

Sir John's face and attitude changed to broad comedy as he archly inquired: "And were your regimentals effective, my dear captain? Were you accepted?"

A burst of laughter arose, immediately checked.

"I was not accepted," Masham said in passionate

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declamation, his fury only increasing the general merriment at his expense. "My lord, it is intolerable that my private concerns should be so exposed before a public rabble. I would have refused to appear in this court if I had suspected that the consideration due to an officer and a gentleman would not be extended to me."

Baron Stewart paid no attention whatever to this harangue. Cresslet smiled blandly upon the excited soldier, and observed conversationally:—

"Take a little time, my dear sir; you seem flurried. Your attendance here would have been insisted upon, with your consent or without it. We are deeply interested in your affairs, and must really pursue our investigations to a further point."

Here he helped himself again to snuff, relapsing into apparent indifference, as if he had done enough and it mattered nothing whether the case were ever carried further or not. Masham simply writhed under this ingenious process of torment, evidently in terror as to what was coming. David turned a face of profound admiration upon me and muttered softly:—

"Eh, but he's a flogger is this! Aw do believe he could turn ony livin' mon reound his finger!"

"Calm yourself, captain," Cresslet proceeded at his leisure, becoming more deliberate as his victim's fiery impatience increased. "Surely my queries are of too commonplace a character to give you perturbation. Let me see—what point were we discussing, Mr. Junior? Ah! certainly. What was the date of this proposal of marriage?"

"I do not remember."

"At least you can approximate to the time? Was it six months ago for instance?"

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"More than that"

"We are now in March, remember. Have eighteen months elapsed since your declaration?"

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"That would bring us nearer to the date."

"My duty compels me to press a question of a slightly delicate nature," Cresslet proceeded with rapid decision. Was any reason given for your rejection?"

Masham started, as if he suddenly perceived a hitherto invisible net closing upon him. "I understood that Miss Holt had already bestowed her affection."

"Upon whom?"

Absolute silence in court, every ear poised in suspense.

"Upon a weaver, as I understood."

Is that the man?" demanded Cresslet, throwing out a dramatic arm towards Stephen.

"I believe so."

"Be more distinct, sir," cried the advocate, dashing his fist heavily upon the table, his whole figure thrilling with energy. "Were you told by Miss Holt that Stephen Grindrod was the man? Yes, or no!"

"Yes," said Masham, completely overcome, looking round him as if for a way of escape; like a wolf that, intent upon its own devices, finds an unforeseen trap biting hard upon its limbs.

At this point a light illuminated Stephen's face which neither attenuated frame nor felon garb could hide. His eyes sought mine, we exchanged looks of meaning, for him I saw that all anxieties of trial were over. Hope was rising within him, and a wealth of bliss which left no room in his mind for uncertainty of sorrow. But even as I watched his open countenance, with the affectionate interest he inspired within me, shadows again curtained his forehead,

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gloomy thoughts re-asserted themselves, he sat down and covered his face.

If Masbam had enjoyed small favour among the spectators before his reluctant confession it was natural that he should now fall still lower in public estimation. A low murmur of indignation from many tongues filled the room and could not be silenced for a time.

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"So!" Cresslet presently resumed in tones of the most searching scorn it was ever my fortune to hear. "Yet a few moments ago you could audaciously assure me that the prisoner was unknown to you before the rebellion occurring so lately as November last. On discovering that you had a rival of course you would endeavour to wreak vengeance upon him?"

"Certainly not!"

"Will you swear in this public court that you have never taken measures to injure the prisoner?"

"I will."

"Have you at any time employed, authorised, or paid accomplices to deal roughly with him?"

"Never!"

"During the term of his imprisonment have you in any fashion hindered communication between the prisoner and his friends?"

"If I had desired to do so I could not have accomplished any such purpose. What authority have I within the walls of this gaol? "

"Excuse me, sir; you misapprehend our relative positions, and forget that your business is merely to answer questions as my province is to put them. Give me a definite reply—have you interfered to prevent the prisoner's friends from gaining access to him or have you not?"

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"He's fair at th' far end!" David whispered. "He con ston very little moore. Aw wouldn't ha believed a mon could be so badger't an' brokken deawn!"

The weaver was right. Masham had endured all that his fortitude was capable of beajing. He hesitated long to answer, but at last faltered out:—

"I have not."

Sir John smiled, waving an arm in contemptuous dismissal. "You may go, sir."

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Masham stayed no further bidding. He vanished from the pillory he had so unwillingly been forced to occupy, bearing his shame with him.

As no other material evidence was advanced by the prosecution, Cresslet was shortly engaged in the important task of expounding his defence.

"It will be proved," he said, after some preliminary comments, "that this prosecution arises from the determined malice of an individual who, indeed, arrogates to himself the proud designations of officer and gentleman, however little his behaviour seems in accordance with those honourable titles, however much less his personal sentiments may be shared or approved by persons who are content to hold themselves simply honest and respectable. The actual assault complained of is not denied, but we refuse to invest this accidental misdemeanour with the important colours lent to it by the prosecution, and we claim that extenuating circumstances have been deliberately suppressed which would have gone far towards removing all criminal weight from the charge. No hint of disaffection has ever been uttered by the tongue of calumny against the prisoner: On the contrary, he has a reputation for diligent employment of his whole time in manual labour and intellectual

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improvement. It is notorious in his native town that he abstains from intercourse with those from whom the partisans of sedition are chiefly drawn, preferring to live a busy, studious, almost solitary life devoted to the honourable and praiseworthy aim of his own advancement in worldly position. It is not by men such as this that we customarily find the king's authority defied; in perfect safety we appeal to them as solid buttresses which effectually assist to strengthen the foundations upon which the glorious fabric of our country's prosperity immovably rests.

"But what will be your indignant feelings, gentlemen of the jury, when I prove—as I clearly shall prove—that these proceedings are the result of as vile a secret plot as ever issued from the perverted ingenuity of the falsest traitor whose fiendish cunning has disgraced this kingdom since history began? I shall call reliable and truthful witnesses

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to show that Captain Masham harboured unworthy desires of revenge against the unfortunate prisoner; that the rioting at which this assault occurred was planned to carry out the captain's vile purposes; that money was paid by this irreproachable officer to certain ringleaders, on the distinct understanding that a desperate attack should be made upon the prisoner during the disturbances; that when this blood-thirsty attack was repelled by the prisoner's dauntless courage and bodily vigour the captain arrested his victim, determined to deprive him of liberty at least since he was unable to rob him of life; and that deep, abiding malice pursued the prisoner into the recesses of his dungeon, shutting him off from all sight or hearing of human sympathy, and forcing even his solicitor to insist upon legal privileges before he was allowed to enter the cell for the urgent purpose of preparing a defence. On no

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occasion during the whole term of my practice at the bar do I recollect so determined and virulent an endeavour on the part of a responsible servant of the king to persecute even unto death a helpless man entirely innocent of any purpose to offend. Human language contains no phrases adequate for the description of conduct so utterly inhuman. By the blessing of Providence the prisoner's established rectitude and lofty character have won for him faithful friends, whose cordial assistance and persevering efforts in his behalf may, it is trusted, confound the dastardly projects levelled against him, and by enabling his defence to be competently argued before the court establish irrefragably that his behaviour is far more deserving of reward than blame. The prisoner's persecutor was probably not counting upon this happy accident. He anticipated no difficulty in securing the condemnation of his victim to long imprisonment, if not to the scaffold; but, gentlemen, although traitors may conspire and to outward appearance succeed in their plots for a time, the power of God continually overhangs them. By His mercy help has arisen for the supposed helpless prisoner, and a strong wall of defence has been erected round one presumed to be defenceless. I shall now call witnesses to prove the truthfulness of my statements, and shall then with the

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utmost confidence leave you to vindicate the innocence and reputation of as honourable and brave a man as ever was illegally dragged before an English court of justice."

The difficult task of preserving silence had severely tried the patience of several court officials during the effective delivery of Cresslet's speech, of which the above is merely a brief abstract. At the end of it a sudden uproar of applause rang from every corner of the crammed chamber,

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passing through the door to an echoing mob without, who could hardly be aware of the reason for shouting, but produced none the less clamour on that account.

Several witnesses were now called and examined by Morton, our junior counsel. Edmund Butterworth came first, entering the box with easy composure like an upright man who neither courted nor shrank from public attention. Edmund was no beauty, and carried no traces of ornament or foppery about his person, but there was something in the expression of his square sensible face which commanded respect from most people who had dealings with him. He gave clear evidence of Masham's rancour against Stephen, gathered from conversations with the captain on various occasions, and particularly on one night in October as they rode home together from a card party at Belfield. Masham had lost heavily and fumed with passion until Edmund parted from him near the river bridge. By that time the captain had ranged from laments over his lost cash to other grievances which weighed upon his lofty soul, especially declaring his fixed and long-nursed intention of causing young Grindrod to suffer, waxing so loud in denunciation of his rival that Edmund interfered to check him.

When Morton had obtained such information as he thought necessary the opposing counsel rose.

"Do you consider it honourable to reveal confidential matters entrusted by one gentleman to another?"

Edmund smiled. "Under ordinary circumstances I should consider such a proceeding dishonourable in the extreme."

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"Then, sir," continued the counsel, simulating terrific passion, "what are we to think of the value of your evidence?"

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"Think whatever you please," Edmund quietly returned. All I have said is true, and if it be dishonourable to expose treachery with the desire of saving a man from imprisonment or death I will cheerfully sustain the blame."

He was troubled by no more questions. As his robust figure disappeared its place was taken by the cringing body and cunning features of Ferret, who, being sworn and duly recorded, delivered himself to the following effect:—

"Aw were deawn at th' bridge late one neet, an' aw seed th' captain an' Ned Buttheroth come ridin' up. Th' captain were in a ravin' tanthrum, sheautin' eaut whol aw could yer very near o he said. 'I'll crush him!' he skrikes as leaud as he could, thinkin' there were nobry abeaut, for it'd turn't midneet. 'Sooner or later I shall find a way of revenge, and the rascal shall suffer as surely as his name's Stephen Grindrod!' 'Hello!' aw thought, seein' what gam he were afther, 'there's happen some oppenin' for me i' this job!' so when Buttheroth rode off aw went up to th' captain, an' aw says, 'Heigh, captain!' Then he looks deawn fair ditherin' wi temper, an' he says, 'What do you want, rascal?' So aw says, 'That Stephen yo were talkin' on—aw've a grudge again him misel, an' so has plenty moore mates o' mine!' 'Well,' he says, 'what concern is that of mine?' 'Noane at o,' aw says; 'nobbut there may happen be a row started afther t' next bull-baitin', an' iv Grindhrod happens to get hurt there'll be some docthorin' to pay for.' 'You must have the devil's own audacity to propose such a scheme to me,' he says. 'I've half a mind to arrest you.' 'Times are very bad, captain,' aw said, 'an' folk are venthursome when they're clemmin'. But iv there is ony feightin' it'll nobbut be among tuthri weighvers, so if Grindhrod gets

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lamed it'll nobbut be accident like, an' yo're as likely as not to come gallopin' up wi yor sodiers just to make sure there's no damage done.' 'Certainly,' he says, 'if there are disturbances I shall be present, and if I catch you harming the young fellow you speak of swift and heavy punishment shall follow, so be careful what you do.' 'There'll be nowt done o' purpose,' aw said; 'it'll nobbut be accident, aw tell yo, iv owt should happen, an' that's noane likely.' 'I am pleased to hear that,' he says, an' aw seed his temper were coolin' fast. 'What is your grudge against this poor man?' 'It's a dyeadly grudge,' aw towd him. 'Him an' his fayther's doin' their best to ruinate us o, an' we're determin't to be level wi 'em. They're for makin' machines to do hondwark, iv we're foolish enough to let 'em. We'n brokken one up, an' thought we'd sattl't their dodgin', but they're agate again, wur nor ever, an' this lad's wur nor his fayther.' 'Then it is simply a trade dispute you have in contemplation?' th' captain axed; so aw said: 'To be sure it is! Nobry could give ony different rezon for it.' 'Now my worthy schemer,' he says then, puttin' five gowd guineas into mi hond, 'my business is to preserve the peace. I give you this money on condition that you immediately abandon your wretched project and allow your animosity against Grindrod to cease. Then if he comes by any injury I shall be certain at least that you have not perpetrated it.' 'That'll be reet,' aw said, knowin' weel enough what he were dhrivin' at; so he rode off, an' aw started shappin' for th' row next mornin'. It o coome off reet enough, nobbut Grindhrod were rayther too bowd for us an' we couldn't lame him."

"That will do," Morton said in disgust, turning his high-souled witness over to the opposing junior counsel for crossexamination.

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"If you acted in Masham's interest, as you profess to have done," this gentleman inquired, "how comes it that we find you now employed against him?"

"Becose aw'm weel paid for it, an' nobry could have a bettther rezon nor that!"

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"Step down, sir," the counsel said. "I decline to disgrace these proceedings by further interrogating so debased a wretch. The jury will know what value to set upon your evidence."

Ferret wriggled himself away, and was succeeded by an Irishman gifted with a twinkling humorous eye, who said his name was Patrick Clancy and his occupation landscape gardening.

"Indeed!" cried the wondering counsel. "Whatever do you mean by that?"

"Sure, your honour, don't I rise vegetables for the Salford markets!"

"Oh! Well now, are you acquainted with a certain Isaac Shepherd, sometimes called Ferret?"

"Sure I am, your honour."

"Were you in his company on any particular occasion last November?"

"Sure I was."

"Tell us in your own way what happened between you."

"Why, 'twas just this way, your honour. 'Twas after a bull-baiting by the same token, when I happened to stand in the Angel yard dhrinkin' a malt, and Ferret comes by, and says he, 'Patsy, are you the bhoys for a fight?' then says I, 'Not this evenin';' so says he, 'I want Steve Grindrod down by the river—can you persuade the bhoys?' then says I, "'Tis mesilf could coax an ostrich to follow me,

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weather permitting;' so then says he, 'Away you run past his house screeching of a muldoodherin obstruction at the Stirrup; tell him we'll knock the place into little pieces, and then burn it down,' says he. 'That'll fetch him,' says he. So off went I, thinkin' 'twas but a joking thrick, and screeched till Steve put his head through a chamber windy. 'And what's to do?' says he. 'The divvle's own delight down at the ford,' says I. 'Sure there's all the hungry men betune this and Christmas pulling all the houses down,' says I; 'then they'll burn everything up,' says I, 'and have a torchlight procession through the ruins!' So then I ran along up the road, screeching again, and Stephen hurries off downhill wid

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a weaver's beam in his fist. And that's all I know, your honour, more by token I didn't trouble meself to lave home again that same night."

"Had you no payment for your trouble?" Morton inquired, smiling.

"Maybe I might—'tis so long ago I disremember. Maybe there was some thrifle of a tinpenny-piece passed betune us."

"No doubt there was," the counsel returned. "Well, you may go unless my friend requires you."

As it appeared that his friend did not, Mr. Clancy departed, and Phelim was called upon to add such particulars to the defence as he was cognisant of. From his long connection with Stephen he was able to trace the young man's career from boyhood, and to paint in strong colours the diligent, plodding, intelligent devotion to labour and duty which formed so important a feature in his pupil's character. A detailed account of the riot as witnessed from my window followed, Phelixn's evidence as a whole telling

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weightily in Stephen's favour. The old schoolmaster began by interjecting many classical allusions and scraps of quotation, until Morton drily begged him to confine his statements to the English language.

"Bedad, so I will," Phelim returned; "but I warn ye my iloquence will lose its most characteristic flavour by that same."

The old man's shrewd countenance gave place to the broad ruddy face of Ben, who lounged as it were accidentally into the witness box, which his ample proportions nearly filled.

"Oblige me with your name," said Morton.

"Ben at th' Stirrup."

"Oh, no! We can't record that. State your surname."

"Co it Buttheroth," Ben said, after stolidly regarding the counsel for a moment. "It's likelier to be that nor owt else."

"Why, man," the astonished barrister exclaimed, "is it possible you can have forgotten your own name?"

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"Buttheroth's near enough," Ben said. "Put it deawn so, an' there'll be nowt brokken. There were a B in it, aw know."

"Are you a saddler by trade?"

"Ah."

"Are you acquainted with the prisoner?"

"Acquainted wi him? Why, it's Steve Grindhrod! Done yo think aw should ha bin i' this hole to-day beaut hem' acquainted wi him?"

"No matter what I think," Morton replied, laughing in spite of himself. "Please to answer my questions, however unnecessary they may appear to you."

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"Get forrad then. Aw've known Stephen mony a year, an' his fayther too."

"Were you present when the prisoner was arrested?"

"To be sure aw were!"

"Tell us how that affair happened."

"Well, it were on a baitin' day, done yo see, an' there's olez a lot o' slotchin' an' bullscurryin' afther one o' those doments, nobbut this time things went rayther fur nor common. Aw hardly expected havin' to meddle misel, but Ellen—that's my young missis, yo known—geet among th' creawd in a carriage, so aw'd to go deawn takkin' care on her. Steve coome pushin' up wi a lump o' timber in his hond, so aw sheauted on him. 'Thee tent that side,' aw said, 'an' aw'll watch this misel'—that were th' carriage aw myent, yo known, wi Ellen ceawerin inside. 'I'm your man, Ben!' he says, so wi that we buckl't to an' kept o th' swarm off for above ten minutes whol th' sodiers coome throttin' up."

"That was a bold feat. Your courage must be equivalent to your stature."

"Done yo co that bowd?" Ben asked, leaning a huge arm on the box ledge and bending forward to address his questioner more confidentially. "Why, mon, aw'd ha bin homnmer't into saddlin' leather afore one among th' reskils should ha laid a finger on yon lass, God bless her little heart! Aw've partly brought her up, mon; hoo's olez had me to look to ever sin' hoo were born, an' aw were sarvant to her mother afore that. Then

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again, done yo see, when there's ony feightin' wanted aw've olez to do it, becose her brother's a lame back an' her fayther's no moore pluck nor a leause. Yo could hardly find onywhere a less likely mon for a puncin' match nor Joe. So iv aw'd missed stonnin' up an' feightin' a bit for her what would folk ha co'd me then?"

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"Did you see the prisoner assault the yeomen?"

"Oh ah! Aw seed him."

"Have you ever suspected him of being a rebel?"

"Do aw favvour one misel?"

An irrepressible chorus of laughter greeted this innocent query. Certainly Ben's appearance was anything but that of a rebellious subject. Even Baron Stewart's stern eye twinkled as it dwelt for an instant upon the witness's imperturbable countenance.

"You don't indeed," Morton chuckled. "I dare guarantee myself that you are loyal enough."

"To be sure aw am, an' Stephen's just as gradely a chap as me. We'n olez bin too busy mindin' eaur wark for rebbelin'."

"How can you account for the assault then?"

"Yezy enough. Yo see Moss an' Big George an' hawve a dozen moore had bin hommerin' him abeaut th' yead whol he were fair flustrated, so when th' sodier hit him he sthroke back, beaut ever knowin' what he did. Why, mon, him an' me were wishin' for th' sodiers long afore they coome, an' were it likely he'd ha sthruck his best friends?"

"Did you allow him to be carried away without speaking in his favour?"

"Noane likely! Aw tow'd th' captain misel heaw th' job had happen't, an' so did Ellen too, but we met as weel ha talked to a stoop. He were determin't to lock th' lad up, that's my belief. Nobry else could ha thought o' sich a thing."

Morton sat down and Phillips rose to cross-examine.

"Do you expect to make us believe that the prisoner could possibly strike these yeomen from their horses without recognising them?"

"Plez yorsel. It's thru whether yo believen it or yo dunnot."

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"The thing is impossible."

"Not it! Haven't aw tow'd yo plain enough th' poor lad had bin hommer't whol he were mazy an' moidher't?"

"Speak in clearer language!" Phillips cried pettishly. "What is the meaning of 'mazy and moidher't'?"

"Well, iv that isn't a flogger!" Ben exclaimed, coolly gazing down the lines of wigged barristers. "Aw thought yo reckon't to know everything i' this hole—Greek an' Latin an' o maks—an' here yo're knocked eaut o' flunther bi a bit o' plain English. Yo looken fawse enough, sittin' there like a row o' poll parrots wi yor white toppins, but yo're noane mich at talkin' seeminly. Bein' mazy's when yor inside whuzzes reound whol yo cawn't ston up beaut stickin' to summat; an' yo're moidher't when yor brains getten so maddl't 'at yo con gawm nowt."

"Heaven preserve us!" cried Phillips. "Your translation is worse than the original text. For the life of me I can't comprehend how the prisoner could be ignorant as to whom he was dealing with. Can you make your argument any plainer?"

"Just come a bit nar," said Ben, uncovering a thick red arm. "Let me have a couple o' cleauts at yor earhole, an' yo'll undherston middlin' soon."

His voice was overwhelmed by shouting and laughter from his auditors. It was useless for the ushers to raise their voices, or even for Baron Stewart to threaten clearance of the court; silence could not be restored for some moments.

"Come on, neaw," Ben continued persuasively when he could again make himself heard. "Aw'll soon show yo what maziness is, an' make yo believe a chap may look at a sodier beaut seem' him."

"Get along with you!" Phillips said, reseating himself.

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"I ought to have stopped your discursive twaddle long ago."

Ben waited a moment, looking round as if expecting further interrogation; then he asked in very audible tones, "Am aw done wi, Scwofilt?" and receiving an assenting nod from that worthy lawyer walked leisurely from the box, leaving everybody in good humour excepting perhaps those who had no friendly feelings for the prisoner.

A high official of the gaol was next called upon. This gentleman testified unwillingly, after severe examination, that he was an associate of Masham, and that for the gallant officer's pleasure he had intercepted several messages intended for the prisoner, and refused admission to several visitors. He had undertaken this upon his own responsibility, without acquainting the governor, and confessed that similar interference between captives and the outside world was neither unusual nor reckoned of consequence in the gaol.

"I take a note of your replies," the judge said, bending a grim look upon the tortured official. "Both the tone and substance of them are unbecoming to a man in your position."

Sir John now returned to his place, from which he had been absent for a time, and my sister was called. She entered the box with her veil down, but immediately raised it exposing her beautiful sorrowful features to public view. Her modest eyes sought Stephen's face, while his clear burning gaze fastened itself upon her, compelling her timid glances to fall. Through the oaken barriers their hearts melted and flowed together in secret joy, the young man's ardent expression confessing the pride that had inspired him when Ellen's declaration of faithful love was wrung from a rejected rival's unworthy lips.

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When Ellen had been sworn Cresslet addressed her in his most polished manner.

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"Miss Holt, I have deferred your evidence from its strict chronological place out of regard for your feelings, and also in order that your statements, upon which proof of the main point of this case absolutely depends, may remain prominently fixed in the minds of these gentlemen of the jury. I must ask you questions strange indeed for a lady to answer in public, and can only endeavour to spare your modesty as much as clear recording of your remarks will allow."

The ghost of a smile passed across Scholefield's dim eye, and I gathered that our experienced tacticians had some notion of an effective climax in view when reserving Ellen's appearance, in addition to the reasons just stated.

"Sir," Ellen replied in a clear voice, "I will cheerfully answer any question relating to my private affairs, since to conceal the truth now would be a crime."

"We have been already informed that Captain Mashain proposed marriage to you. Is that a fact?"

"It is, sir."

"Can you give me the date of that proposal? Ladies remember such things better than gentlemen."

It was during July of the year before last."

"I believe you declined the offer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you state any reason for refusing?"

"I did, sir."

"Will you favour me with that reason?"

Ellen blushed, but proceeded without hesitation. "Sir, Captain Masham was extremely importunate and would not accept refusal for a long while. He appeared to suppose

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that his offer ought to be a command, and showed great indignation, even passion, because I held his rank and birth of small account. It was to appease his foolish anger

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that I revealed what had previously been a secret in my own breast by declaring that my heart was already given to Stephen Grindrod."

She had said it! In that strange place for love-making—in a criminal court with all the law's grisly terrors encircling him—Stephen first heard from his beloved's lips the declaration of her love.

"Was there an engagement existing between you and the prisoner?"

"No, sir. Words of affection never passed between us. Stephen has not heard my confession until this moment, when I fear, unless these gentlemen are clement, he may never listen to words of mine more."

The court was deeply moved by Ellen's innocent candour and grief. Many eyes filled with tears under the spell of our despairing beauty, upon whose pale countenance sincerity was written in signs which none could doubt. Stephen sat down, again hiding his convulsed features from view, and causing Scholefield to pass over to me a written slip:—

"That's a good pose—the lad has an eye for effect."

I chuckled inwardly, knowing well that theatrical posing was far enough from Stephen's habits of thought, and imagining that fitter explanation of his emotion might be found; yet even my own fancies failed to comprise the varied causes combining to produce his agitation.

"You are positively certain that Captain Masham was distinctly told by you the name and position of his rival?" Cresslet proceeded.

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"Quite certain, sir."

"Miss Holt, upon absolute proof of this point depends the whole fabric of the defence. There is no possibility, you swear, that the captain could be ignorant of these facts after leaving you?"

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"No human possibility, sir," Ellen returned with prompt decision. "I not only swear that, but can easily prove it by repeating what I remember of my conversation with Captain Masham upon those identical points."

Cresslet smiled—a natural smile of intense satisfaction, not one of his professional grimaces. Scholefield turned in his seat and deliberately winked at me, as if satisfied that our case was won.

My sister went steadily on with her narrative in a tone of convincing truthfulness: "The captain was dreadfully wroth to learn that I was willing to throw myself away upon a handloom weaver; so I teased him a little by saying that most great geniuses rose from the common people, and that Stephen's descent quite equalled mine, since my grandfather was himself a weaver." Her eyes met Stephen's here with a sad smile. "My intention was to persuade the captain into better humour, but he continued to mutter about his condescension in selecting me and his astonishment at finding himself unconditionally rejected. I distinctly remember that he asked when preparing to leave me: 'Of what family is this particular Grindrod?' His manner was very offensive and he certainly had no right to the knowledge he sought, but to get rid of him I described Stephen's father and mother. 'Yes,' he said, 'I have seen the father—he is a grizzled stern-looking old fellow. The son has some little talent I believe; he contributed a set of diagrams to a class in which one of my fellows was inter-

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ested.' 'Very good,' I remarked. 'You know more of Stephen than I did myself.' He said: 'It is impossible that you can ally yourself with a low vulgar set of people such as these!' 'Ah!' I said, 'evidently you don't know Stephen after all! His nature is chivalrous, his ambition laudable, and I should not be astonished if some day he were reckoned almost equal to an army captain.' Sir, I am prepared to attest upon oath these recollections of our dialogue, and if you choose to set Captain Masham before me in this room I will dare him to deny a single word."

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"Thank you, Miss Holt; I am deeply obliged," said Cresslet, who hardly cared to conceal his delight. "That completes my case."

Phillips tried his hand at cross-examination, for which process he could scarcely have selected a worse subject than my sister. Her absolute candour and direct truthfulness baffled every quibbling argument the lawyer's longtrained intellect could invent, and his endeavours to undermine her firmness and self-possession were entirely without effect. Strong in her unselfish love, and conscious that her testimony was of high consequence to her unfortunate lover, Ellen was transformed from a shy, modest maiden to an invincible amazon who held all opposition at easy bay. Phillips retired ignominiously from the contest without having secured a single effective point, and immediately afterwards the court adjourned.

XVI

"REMAIN where you are," Scholefield said, leaning over his bench to address me. "I'll send you some refreshment across from the tavern. Make your mind easy now, Mr. Grindrod; your son's life is quite safe."

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"Will he get off?" David asked eagerly.

"Nay, I can't promise that! I said his life was safe, but can't assure him against imprisonment. There is good hope, though—all the chances are on our side."

"Surelee iv talkin' con save him this mon yo'n gotten con do it! Eh, aw ne'er let across a customer like yon—he's everything at once!"

"Of course he'll get all the credit," Scholefield said coolly. "You may be surprised to know that Laurence and I had a finger in arranging matters for the great man. Your sister's a splendid lass, Holt; I never saw one go through a trying examination better. Nothing like a touch of sentiment for a finish, eh?"

"Aha, plotter!" I returned. "It occurred to me that somebody had arranged this touching *finale*. It does your imagination credit."

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"Pooh! there's no imagination, lad—the dodge is ancient enough, but it always takes when properly worked."

He turned away and left the room, probably intent upon old port, David and myself having a quiet half-hour together. A buzz of voluble chatter from the crowd behind us showed that deep interest was generally felt in the case, public sympathy seeming to be all on the prisoner's side. Looking closely along the ladies' gallery I saw Miss Seaford seated by Mrs. Butterworth. So the betrothed had witnessed and listened to the exposure of her plighted husband's infamy, although from her smiling countenance none could have supposed her to be concerned in the matter at all. She had come expecting to see her dignified soldier strut loftily across the stage, while other men dwindled into insignificance beside him; she had seen him moulded as clay in a potter's hands, convicted of lying,

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proved to be a traitor, debased for ever from the honourable standing he had long audaciously claimed. I saw Butterworth approach the ladies, carrying refreshments for their sustenance, and heard his noisy emphatic tones rumbling up into the roof, but his words I could not distinguish.

Practically, of course, the hearing of our case was now over, since the leaders on each side had merely to knit together the many ravelled threads of evidence. It was astonishing to see how different were the fabrics produced by these ingenious specialists, both limited to use of the same materials. Sergeant Phillips pointed out forcibly that the defence made no endeavour to meet the actual charge against the prisoner. The alleged assault had been thoroughly proved, and even admitted. An amount of extraneous and irrelevant sentimental matter had been introduced with the plain object of blindfolding the jury and tempting them to allow their emotions to overcome their powers of ratiocination. For the life of him Phillips could not discover why the court's time should have been so freely expended in listening to the rambling, vague and incredible statements made by several witnesses called by his learned friend.

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Whatever slight value this extraordinary body of evidence might otherwise have possessed, its importance was effectually destroyed by the fact that acceptance of it necessarily included belief in the evidence of the man Shepherd or Ferret, which was too heavy a draft on human credibility. We were asked to believe that Captain Masham stooped heedlessly to use so degraded an instrument for perfecting his plots of vengeance. Could anything more utterly improbable be invented? Phillips was convinced that no British jury would accept evidence from so polluted a source, and he earnestly appealed to them in the sacred name of

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justice to concentrate their intelligent minds upon plain facts, discarding all fictions and elaborations merely tending to confusion.

Sir John followed him by saying that he had not intended speaking again, feeling absolutely certain that both the hearts and brains of the jury were with him, and consequently that their deliberations could have but one issue; but he found himself compelled to rise in protest against his learned friend's remarkable conclusion, that nothing had been advanced by the defence which explained away or extracted venom from the accusation brought against the prisoner. All would perceive, his friend's ingenuity in evading the many strong and startling points adduced for the defence; none could possibly agree with his friend's opinion that because Ferret was unreliable, the whole framework of defence dropped to the ground. Doubtless Shepherd was a being of execrable stamp, yet even he could be persuaded to speak truth on certain occasions; and it must be remembered that his story was amply confirmed—or at least invested with extreme probability—by Edmund Butterworth, Miss Holt, Clancy and others, all witnesses of the highest standard.

Doubtless it was extraordinary that Captain Masham should foolishly put himself into the power of a man like Ferret, and that he should so far forget his position as actually to incite disturbances, while supposed to be engaged in supporting law and order, and perhaps the captain himself now clearly saw the rashness of his conduct; but

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to assert that occurrences of this nature were incredible was absurd, for similar or even worse vagaries of the human mind could easily be pointed out in criminal annals.

"My lord and gentlemen," Sir John concluded, "we

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are told that no sentiment must be imported into this case. I insist upon introducing sentiment, and I appeal to you not as callous precisians determined to enforce iron-bound precedents of the law, but as living men eager to recognise in the prisoner a human creature of like passions with yourselves. A vile plot, intended by one standing in high places to annihilate a rival whose poverty, it was supposed, would leave him an easy prey, has recoiled upon the head of its contriver. Within the compass of these awful walls which encircle us here, many wretched innocent men and women have lingered despairing into protracted agonies of death, or, broken by intense suffering, have found even in release from their dungeons no consolation for the inhuman torture forced upon them. I solemnly appeal to you, add not this day another spotless name to that abhorrent list; increase not the terrible roll of fiendish oppression and martyrdom for which assuredly at some distant hour a fearful reparation must be rendered! Let it not be whispered in this advanced and educated age that a free Englishman, however lowly of degree, can fail to receive honest trial and impartial verdict in a court devoted to the furtherance of justice, humanity and truth."

The popular advocate was again applauded as he resumed his seat. It was not difficult to perceive that his versatility and capacity for expressing many differing shades of emotion accounted for the high position to which he had attained; but I was disinclined to closely criticise methods which had been so effectively used in my friend's behalf.

After a moment's pause Baron Stewart said in his vibrating tones: "If the prisoner desires to make any statement the court will now hear him."

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Stephen at once rose and stood erect, resting his hands on the dock rail in front of him.

"My lord, I have little to say, for already you have been made acquainted with all necessary facts connected with my arrest, and I can only add my testimony to the truth of what has been advanced in my defence. I know not what importance is attached to the bare word of an honest man in this place, but I solemnly pledge my word and my honour—if a weaver can be presumed to possess such a virtue—that in committing this assault I was utterly unconscious of what I did. But the actual assault in itself is nothing—I am not to be told that all this costly machinery of trial would have been set in motion for so trifling a matter, one indeed that any country justice would feel himself competent to settle. It is the implication of treason which alone gives serious weight to the charge against me. My lord and gentlemen, from my earliest years of life no treasonable wish was ever in my breast. I have desired, and still anxiously desire, alteration of laws which appear to me unjust, and I have sought by legal remedies to improve the lot of myself and other handicraftsmen. I have never attempted more, and cannot be accused by any man of unfaithfulness by word or acts to my king and country. So far as these hints and suggestions of my disloyalty go they are absolutely untrue. This assault upon men who had just delivered me from a violent death was a mere accident. I was bewildered and blind with running blood, and I thought myself still among enemies. We had ridden some distance before my senses returned, or I should not so easily have been carried off without either protest or struggle, for an offence of which I was morally innocent. There is nothing more to be said. If the jury are not con-

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vinced of my truth after all they have listened to nothing in this world can convince them."

"He talks weel, Laurence," David said in my ear. "What a thing larnin' is!"

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Stephen's simple and direct oratory had great effect with his auditors. Few were prepared for words so strongly marked by intelligence and education from the mouth of a common artisan, and his expression of earnest sincerity told strongly in his favour.

The judge summed up in a few sentences, and in five minutes the jury arrived at their verdict without quitting the box. The foreman rose, setting my heart off at a gallop, and said in expressionless voice:—

"My lord, we find the prisoner guilty, but are unanimously of opinion that a light punishment will meet the justice of this case."

"I entirely concur with you, gentlemen," the judge returned. "The prisoner has been sufficiently punished by the confinement already undergone, and is now at liberty to rejoin the friends whose sympathy and powerful aid have been so signally exerted in his favour."

If everybody in the court had been relieved from death no greater clamour could have been raised than ensued upon this welcome decision.

David's stern face became cheerful, and my own delight was past describing. We lost no time in getting out into open air and seeking our friends. My sister awaited me under Ben's faithful guardianship, her whole figure trembling with excess of joy. Ben's feelings, of course, nobody could discover—hanging itself probably would hardly have made him demonstrative. Phelim displayed rather more emotion, shuffling his feet to the measure of a jig, the melody of

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which he whistled softly. That was no place for conversation; my business was to convey Ellen to our lodging without delay. Ben hired a carriage and accompanied us, Phelim and David waiting until Stephen emerged from the dread portal so nearly closed upon him for ever.

They were not long in joining us. A vigorous foot came bounding up the stair, a bold rapid hand dashed open the door of our withdrawing room, and the lovers were clasped in each other's arms for the first time in the curious history of their courtship.

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"My noble girl!" Stephen cried, pressing the strong kisses of intense affection upon Ellen's lips. "Your courage and love have saved me."

"I feared that my effrontery would offend you," Ellen murmured.

"Effrontery! Surely no more touching figure of modest sensibility ever graced a witness-box. You can never deny your love again, my dear, for all the town has heard it proclaimed."

"Give me your affection in return, and my tongue shall never deny you."

"My affection!" Stephen replied, leading Ellen to a couch and seating himself beside her. "Don't you know well that my whole heart has been yours ever since I became old enough to think of courtship? Are you not well aware that consideration for your happiness has alone kept me silent, and that I have always promised myself a time of triumph and reward for suspense and uncertainty? And can you doubt that an attachment so well worn and long tried will last my life out with unrelaxed force?"

"Are yo talkin' saycrets?" Ben demanded, appearing, hands in pockets, at the door, which his wide carcass

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blocked up. "Con aw tarry here, or aw'm noane wanted no moore?"

"Is David there?" I asked.

"Ah, he's deawn below, an' th' Irishman too."

"Send David up, will you, and keep Phelim company awhile."

"Oh! Aw'm nobbut one o' th' family whol there's throuble afloat then?"

"Get away, you humbug! Send David here, that's a good lad!"

"Owt to plez thee," says unmoved Ben. "Steve, tha'll feel betther neaw! Tha's ne'er had th' good manners yet to thank me for gettin' thee off."

"Here, give me your fist!" Stephen said, striding across the room. "You know I'm thankful and grateful without being told of it, and if I had framed to make any fuss over the business you wouldn't have been suited. I can't do anything in return at present, but if ever you stand in danger of imprisonment—"

"Here, noane o' that!" cried Ben.

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"—perhaps for months, in some dark mouldy dungeon—"

"Oh Lord!"

"—nothing to support your strength but hard dry bread and brackish water—"

Ben's fat sides quivered with horror.

"—or ever come within the circle of a hangman's rope—"

"Stop that an' let me goo," Ben ejaculated, pulling his hand away and turning pale.

"Tha'll freeten me to t' dyeath in another minute!"

"—then, Benjamin of the doubtful surname, what-

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ever belongs to me shall be devoted to your service, even to the last penny in my pocket or the last blood in my veins."

"Ne'er mind," said doughty Ben, uneasy at the dreadful picture called up before him. "Aw'll let thee off—say no moore! We're reet enough as we are."

Stephen had touched a hitherto unsuspected weak spot in our redoubtable champion. Ben lacked imagination, and upon his literal mind the young man's words fell almost with the force of prophecy. Actual hanging would not have shaken his brave spirit, but the terrible possibility that such a fate might befall him, catching a superstitious tinge in its passage through his mind, overcrowded him quite.

"Give him a kiss, Ellen," Stephen laughed, pulling the huge saddler well forward into the room. "He well deserves one, and if that payment won't satisfy his covetousness we will discard him altogether."

"Ne'er mind," Ben said, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "Aw'll be gooin'."

Ellen ran forward laughing to inflict the operation requested, Ben struggling hard to escape from Stephen's powerful clutch.

"Hold him fast!" Ellen cried. "Stoop down a little, Ben, and turn this way."

Ben made one more lusty endeavour to overthrow Stephen, and failing in that sheepishly presented his broad face to be operated upon. Ellen put her arms round his

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

neck, gave him a couple of hearty busses upon his right cheek, and asked him if he wanted any more.

"Nowe, that'll do," Ben replied. "Aw'm weel cuddl't an' o'erwrostl't. Steve, prison meight's noane so lowerin'—aw wouldn't ha believed a single mon i' this teawn could ha pinned me this road!"

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He wandered off, passing two fingers across the kissed cheek and appearing to be lost in bewilderment.

"Are yo wantin' me?" David inquired, coming into the room shortly.

"Yes, come in, father," Stephen said, setting a chair for the old man and shutting the door. "The people have not pulled you into ribbons, I'm glad to see."

"What people?" I asked.

"Why, there was a big crowd waiting for me outside the castle. There was some nonsense talked of carrying me shoulder height, so I ran for it, leaving my father and Phelim to save themselves as they could."

"Nobry meddl't wi us," David said. "It were thee they wanted. Well, we're o safe an' hearty, thank God! an' that's moore nor some on us expected yestherday."

"I wanted you here, David, to assist in settling off this tender couple," I said presently. "We must learn what they propose to do."

"Oh, it's all settled!" Stephen interrupted, nodding decisively.

"The hour of triumph you mentioned just now seems almost within reach."

"On the contrary, it is still distant." Ellen turned pale, fixing an astonished look upon Stephen, who clasped her hand in his own.

"Surely there is no new difficulty to disturb us?" I asked. "I have been dreaming that general and lasting felicity would illuminate our future paths. What is the hindrance?"

"Is it sensitive Laurence Holt who asks that? I am not over sensitive myself, yet I should be ashamed to show my face in Rochdale again after this humiliation."

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"What humiliation? Your position can only excite universal sympathy. You must return with us, of course!"

"And exhibit my prison crop to the satirical mirth of every dweller on the Roch side? Hardly, I think."

"What arta for doin'?" demanded David, who had been listening intently.

"I intend to sail for America without any loss of time. There is a fortune waiting for me in that country; I have only to go and gather it."

Ellen gave a faint cry of alarm.

"We have waited long, my dear, and our patience is not threadbare yet. Perhaps in one year, certainly in two, I will return to fetch you; and I hope to establish you in a fitting position there, free from all the contempt and indignity certain to be levelled here against any woman who marries a gaolbird."

"Very pretty reasoning, that," I remarked, "and an encouraging future outlook for me. My mother is dead, my chiefest friend crosses the ocean to return on a buccaneering expedition with the purpose of stealing my sister, my father and I are left forlorn. I will cheer his increasing age with wise counsel, and he will proudly tend his feeble son. How happy we shall be!"

"Not only that," Stephen said, but I shall have to borrow money from you to pay my passage."

"I haven't got any more, fortunately. My vast wealth is all scattered in various directions; only fiddle and brains are left me. Another friend has helped to pay your counsel's fees and lawyer's charges, or you might have been detained in the castle yet as security for costs."

"Aw towd thee tha'd ruin thisel!" David exclaimed.

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"Happen a less expensive chap met ha done. Who han we to thank for helpin' us eaut?"

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"Edmund Butterworth. He offered money without asking and said nobody must know; but now that all is over and we have got into a general habit of breaking confidences I can't see any reason for concealment. So you perceive that I can play the impenetrable schemer myself when I like."

"Every farthing shall be repaid!" Stephen cried, his face lighting up with excitement. "Edmund is a fine fellow—he figures well against my other despicable rival. Yes! all this money shall be returned to the friends who have so freely emptied their pockets to secure my freedom. Twenty pounds more I must have to carry me across the Atlantic, and I answer for the rest. Hawkins would help me if I had time enough for going back to Rochdale, but that's out of the question."

We all looked at him with amazement.

"Why, surelee tha'rt noane for levin' us to-neet?" David asked.

"I intend sailing from Liverpool to-morrow, if any vessel can be found to take me as a passenger."

"Oh, Stephen, you can never be so cruel!" Ellen whispered, half in tears.

"I pain you now that happiness may sooner come. We know what returning home means—a week or fortnight dawdled away to no purpose, and this northern journey to travel over again. Certainly I should have wished to see my mother before leaving the country, if my impatience to clear away this debt and dishonour were not so keen. Don't seek to hinder me—everything is planned, let me go and work out the result. Ellen, I expect encourage-

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ment from you, and patience to support you through my absence."

"My will is yours, dear Stephen," Ellen faintly returned, and immediately broke into a flood of uncontrollable tears.

"My dearest girl," Stephen said gently, drawing her to his breast, "am I too callous and selfish in compelling you to admit my desires? Don't weakly endeavour to hold me

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dangling at your heels until our course is assured and open. Wipe your eyes and fasten the rivets of my armour, that I may venture into the world and conquer fortune!"

"What a foolish creature I am," Ellen said, bravely drying her face and forcing a smile. "You have trouble enough without any fuss from me, and not another tear will I shed."

"There your higher nature speaks," Stephen said proudly. "Now is revealed the beloved one who fires my soul to lofty achievements!"

David here interposed, having heard sufficient of these rhapsodies. "Stephen, lad, tha'rt forgettin' o' abeaut yon loom."

"Not at all, father, for I shall introduce it into American centres, and gather wealth there while you are doing the same here."

"Well, but aw cawn't finish it misel, so tha'll be like to come."

"What's the matter? You have all the drawings to scale, and you should remember how the first one was adjusted. I can't understand you sticking fast now."

"Aw cawn't undherston it misel, lad," returned David, looking very despondent. "Iv onybody had tow'd me twelve month sin' 'at ony machine could ha' festen't me

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this road aw should ha' cleauted him. It's no use, Stephen; aw've thried every road aw knew an' then bin forced to give in. It depends o'together on thee whether aw mun see it runnin' or not."

Stephen was much disturbed by this unexpected intelligence. "That's a serious complication," he muttered. "Of course I am bound to see the loom finished after all the years we have spent over it. I wish to the Lord, father, you had trusted Hawkins with the job! Why don't you? Or buckle up your old energy and be determined to master the thing yourself. I never saw you beaten yet since we first worked together."

"My yeapiece's noane what it were bi a long way."

"Get Hawkins, then."

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"Nowe, aw wain't!" David replied, doggedly. "Mi word's bin passed, an' aw'm noane pooin' it back. Aw'll have thee or nobry."

"That settles you, Don Stefanos!" I remarked; "you will not ignore filial duty unless your moral fibre has strangely warped inside the castle. Your venturous sail will not proceed to woo the buxom wind yet awhile."

"Of course I can't refuse," Stephen answered reluctantly enough. "My father knows I should never leave him in a difficulty, whatever happened to myself. It's a bad job, for I'm thoroughly set against remaining in England. Some hidden instinct urges me to fly, and if superstitious forebodings had any hold upon my faculties I should almost prophesy that evil will dog my footsteps here."

"Prison vapours," I said. "A good supper and comfortable bed will extinguish every ghostly feeling you carry about you."

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"If evil comes," said Ellen, "you may avert it more surely by keeping near your friends!"

"Aye, pile your arguments together," Stephen muttered, giving his head a discontented shake, "prove yourselves right and me mistaken, so far as talking can accomplish the feat. If I agree to what you urge upon me it will be with the greatest unwillingness and dead against my strongest convictions. Better let me go, father!"

David shook his head in grave negation.

"I can't in honour resist," Stephen concluded after a pause, throwing out an arm as if casting aside a hampering burden. "I will go back to Rochdale."

In our wisdom we applauded this dutiful decision and rejoiced to see our young man's ardour for wandering cooled for the time, but Stephen's usual cheerfulness was still markedly absent. He and Ellen went out after awhile, to look over the town and exchange confidences too sacred even for my sympathising ear, David and I being left to entertain one another.

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At a much later hour a clatter of heavy bodies blundering upstairs announced the arrival of Scholefield and Butterworth, who had been drinking heavily somewhere, and now found much difficulty in ordering their limbs and tongues. They contrived to find a chair apiece and sat blinking across the room at us like "fresh-wakken't ulyets," as David whispered to me, meaning owls startled from sleep.

"Tha'rt very quiet here, Laurence," Gabriel cried, moving uneasily in his chair to adjust his large frame in a comfortable position. "There's not a sound, dal it! Come to think on't there's always quietness about thee, for tha never makes a din thyself and obstreperous folks seem to trouble thy company as little as they can. Yes, I can

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reckon that up plainly, though very few men could. Dal! 'twould be my death to crouch in a nook peering about at everything and everybody, hitting off this chap's temper and yon chap's wit in thy style, striving chiefly to escape public notice. Blange me if I can understand how tha lives such a life and yet keeps thy good spirits!"

"If your limbs were paralysed you would comprehend more easily."

"What's that!" Butterworth suddenly exclaimed. "What blundering stuff has my tongue been chattering now? God bless my heart, lad, I hope there's nought been said to wound thy feelings! Tha knows I should never dream o' such brutality as that! Dang my ribs, if the knowledge of my own great bodily strength isn't continually leading me to forget that few can be so favoured! Give us thy hand, my poor lad, and think no more on't!"

The worthy man took some unsteady strides forward to grasp my hand, assuring me again of his sorrow and good feeling.

"The man's clean fuddled, Holt," Scholefield muttered, trying to fix me with wavering eyes; "worse than a woolcomber on St. Blaize's Day, and quite as likely to see ghosts. Port's deuced good at the tavern yonder, and we've both had nearly enough. While I think of it, Squire, you forgot to pay up your five guineas for the race t'other day. Hand over—I can do with the money better than you."

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"I'll pay thee nought," the justice proclaimed, shaking his lion mane. "Nobody but an attorney or other such landshark would dun for debts of honour on a drinking bout! Thy money's safe, brash thee! I've brass enough to be trusted, I believe, by a pettifogger like thee. Why, dal it! at this minute I've more brass than I can contrive profitable

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use for. I'll invest in cotton factories, dang me if I don't! I took up five hundred shares only last week in a new mill, and if that answers I shall dip deeper."

"Is it spinnin' or weighvin'?" David quietly put in.

"Both, my man—yes, dal it, both! None of your halfand-half jobs for me! We'll be building in a month and have the place running in half a year, fitted with the best power machinery money can buy."

"Iv yo're likely for wantin' looms there's one just comin' eaut betther nor owt on th' market. Aw should like yo to see it an' spend yor judgment."

"Whose patent is it, my man?"

"It's noane bin patented yet, but aw con show yo th' machine an' insense yo into th' action. We mun have another word abeaut it some time else."

"Dash the fellow, he thinks I'm not sober enough to talk!" Gabriel blurted out. "Harkye, old Surly, my brains were never stupefied yet since I drew breath of life! They've been well tested, too, for hardly any man's seen the jollifications I've gone through myself; yet home I always go steady as a rock. It's a gift, a natural gift, dal it! But if we're not to have an understanding about the loom, show gratitude at least by thanking me for helping to get thy son off."

"Aw ne'er knew yo'd bin helpin'."

"Ask Laurence there where the money came from. Yes, dal it, who provided the brass?"

"Was it your money, then?" I asked wondering. "Edmund said nothing about you being a sharer."

"That's right enough, lad—yes, right enough that is! It wouldn't have looked seemly for a man in my lofty station to defend a disorderly rioter against a crown pro-

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secution. No, crash it, that would never do! I put Ned up to it, for somehow it went against my stomach not to help the young weaver; though he's only one of a rascally dissatisfied gang, still he's a townsman, dal him, and I never heard anything particularly bad of him neither. So I told Ned to visit thee, Laurence, and get the young fellow well defended, and I would undertake to pay the cost. Blange me! these low people are our neighbours, after all, and we can't abide to see the wretches dragged to their deaths quietly."

"God bless you, justice!" I said. "Your cordial heart is ever at work correcting the mistakes of your hard noddle. I am proud of your acquaintance, and never esteemed you so highly in my life as I do now!"

"Tha'rt beginning to find me out, lad," the justice returned with large complacency. "My nature lies deepdal it, yes!—very deep it lies, and it's too comprehensive to be mastered without long study. It's natural thy liking for me should increase, of course; everybody tells the same tale about that. Smash me! I won't be guilty of bragging, but my experience has proved that few men ever lived who could inspire respect and awe as strongly as I can!"

"You would be more respected if your debts were promptly met," Scholefield growled half asleep.

"I'll pay thee nought, 'torney! Thee be dal'd!"

"Neaw, aw'm as fain as ever mon could be to yer this news," David said earnestly. "Aw thank yo, Buttheroth, wi o mi heart, an' it'll be quare iv aw cannot do summat to partly pay back yor kindness to us. Yo shall have th' first thrial o' yon new loom—nobry but yo—an' once it's fairly wortchin yo'il make t'other facthry owners oppen their e'en."

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"All right, old mystery," carelessly, replied Butterworth. "Bring out your phantom machine, dal it! and if you've an interest in the thing and I can assist you, why, count upon me, a man who was never trusted in vain. No, dang my buttons, never!"

A knock upon the door disturbed us, and a servant brought in a folded paper for Scholefield, who roused himself to read it over.

"Court just risen," he said in a drowsy, indifferent voice. "Three men and two women condemned to death on a charge of rioting. Busy morning on Monday for that villain Barlow, who deserves hanging himself more than any of these wretches. He'll string 'em up cleverly—all in a row! Pop! Off goes the bolt—down drops the lot! Amen!"

"Good riddance to troublesome rubbish," Butterworth said, staggering to his feet. "A man with choice blood in his veins can't be bothered for ever by such folks, dal 'em!"

David rose and fronted the fuddled moralists with the stern air of a prophet.

"This is nowt but cowl-blooded an' wilful murdher! Yon oppressin' judge may goo his road wi cruel peawer to sweigh us deawn, but as God's aboon there'll come a day when he'll be fain to hud hissels fro torments wur nor he con invent to punish helpless folk here. It's wanton useless murdher! What could those poor miserable starvin' women do to freeten th' law or damage th' State? Yo maken mi heart cringe wi yor shockin' talk—but there, yo known no betther! Yor larnin's nobbut shaped blinkers for yor

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selfish e'en an' helped to swell th' punishment ready to ddrop on yo. When th' weary days o' bondage are o'er there'll be a terrible revenge takken for every yure in these helpless yeards."

"Get along, Scholefield," Butterworth yawned. "I've heard enough—the man's a rebel himself, dal him, and a revolutionist to boot!"

XVII

STEPHEN entered my chamber at an early hour next morning, pulled aside a curtain's hanging folds and threw open the diamond-paned casement, filling the room with air and light.

"Are you awake, Laurence?"

"Yes, and have been for an hour."

"My sleep has been disturbed all the night. Freedom runs restlessly through my system yet—I shall consume some days in regaining old habits, and learning to bear my happiness with equanimity. What a glorious landscape is this! With what feelings would you look upon this foliage-bordered river, these stretching meadows, and the curve of sea yonder, master poet, after three months and more of daily staring at dungeon grating and mildewed wall?"

"I should never survive the confinement. No sight in the universe could interest me after that dreadful agony."

"Yet I have survived it, you see," Stephen continued, seating himself beside me, "and you are much better fitted to undergo such an ordeal than I am."

"Are you serious?"

"Come, where is the subtle knowledge of character for

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which we all give you credit? I am vigorous and practical—inaction sickens me, bondage makes me chafe and fret. Three months more of the castle would literally have killed me. Now you have a woman's capacity for quiet endurance—have you not amply proved that by patient resignation extending almost through your whole life? A dungeon would have no horrors for you. At first your fetters would gall, but imagination would expand and fill your prison with brightness and motion. Memory would come to your aid with a thousand pictures, you would jingle rhymes and find solace in them, or in your small way imitate the labours of Cervantes, Raleigh, or Bunyan. I warrant that in six months,

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providing the cell were clean and dry and the food satisfactory, you would become attached to your secluded nook and decline to abandon it."

I laughed heartily, feeling that Stephen had touched off many of my lazy aptitudes in bold outline.

"Have you been scribbling in bed so early?" my friend, asked, taking a writing-pad from the pillow. "What's here—a poetic outburst? Shall I read it?"

"If you please. Read aloud and let me hear the stuff."

Stephen obediently lifted his strong manly voice, which sorted oddly with the sentimental verses.

"AN OLD CALENDAR.

"Brief record of an ended year,
Sure guide to many a thought-slipped day,
Thy tale is told, thy purpose here
Is done, and thou art cast away.

"What need to reckon now the cost
Of all I've known since thee I knew—
To figure what is gained or lost,
The good to reap, the bad to rue?

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"Another leaf will fill thy place,
To chronicle the coming year:
Let me from memory's page erase
The shadowy records lingering there.

"And yet relentless Time has scarred
Some random lines within my breast,
Like pencilled marks upon this card
Assigned to what is first and best.

Or if they measure many a thing
Content would urge me to forget,
Remembered pain can solace bring,
Past sorrow lighten coming fret.

"Ah no, the past I cannot loss!
Go, idle leaf—thou hast the skill
To number but a twelvemonth's dues,

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While memory's scroll no years can fill."

"There, master engineer!" I said as he finished. "Does not your geometrical brain see immortality in those lines?"

"I'm afraid not," Stephen replied, not laughing, however, as he usually did at my rhymes. "They are smooth enough anyhow, if not very strong."

"Strength belongs to organisations of richer vitality than mine."

"Don't say that, Laurence, or you will make me feel like a brute. Curious that you should have hit upon this train of thought just now!"

"Why so?"

"What do you suppose I have disturbed you for at this unseemly hour?"

"To cheer me by your friendly voice and pleasant looks, and to assure me that your idea of leaving England is given up."

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"No, no! The first duty might have waited an hour or two, and I can give you no assurance of the other matter. When I left this house with Ellen last night a lad was waiting at the door with this note."

He put into my hand an intricately folded paper, marked outside: "For the hands of Mr. Stephen Grindrod. Private." Inside were these words in a beautiful feminine handwriting, which was quite well known by me:

"Miss Seaford desires to speak with Mr. Stephen Grindrod this evening at eight of the clock.

"4 GAUNT'S TERRACE,
"THE HIGH STREET."

"Formal and distinct," I said. "Of course you went—first seeking my sister's consent."

"Precisely. The jade wants me to run away with her."

"The first time I saw that girl, Stephen, she appeared to me as an angel, incapable of the failings common to humanity. What does she propose to do with her betrothed?"

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"Get out of his reach. She professes to lament her connection with that villain, and is willing to cross an ocean or two by way of escaping further attentions from him. As it would be to my advantage also to leave this country for a time she offers to give me money for travelling expenses, and openly hints that I may have her company too for the small trouble of asking. My prison crop must have fascinated her ladyship."

"You have fascination enough to capture any woman," I said, "and so far there is nothing to wonder at. The extraordinary thing is that you should so completely have removed her class prejudices, for anything is possible if

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Margaret Seaford consents to marry a common weaver. For yourself the temptation of catching a woman of breeding, whose father was a wholesale provision merchant, will be too strong. You must of necessity succumb, capitulate, desert your old colours, and take arms with the enemy. From the lofty eminence to which your aristocratic wife's money will raise you, none but distant glances can be cast to these degraded depths where all you once loved abide, and every thought wandering in the direction of old associations must be strangled in its birth. Lucky youth, to whom so many golden roads lie open!"

"I found her, handsomely dressed, in a private room," Stephen resumed, passing over my weakly humour without remark. "She is a good-looking woman, everybody must admit that, and pity her for not having more sense. She began by congratulating me on escaping the gallows, and I replied by pointing out that her beloved captain was not to thank for that.

"'Oh, do not mention the horrid man's name!' she cried. 'He has cruelly imposed upon me, and his disgrace is providential, because it furnishes a good excuse for me to break our engagement. I shall be free again to choose where I will.'

"It occurred to me that if she had really loved the captain she would not have been in such a hurry to discard him, and I fancied that no true woman would have turned so dead against the man without some attempt to minimise his faults.

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"As I said nothing she took up the talk again. 'Miss Holt displayed a most unwomanly and immodest spirit in the court to-day.'

"'We must differ in opinion there,' I said. 'Even if her

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behaviour were all you think it common decency should restrain you from pointing a moral by it in my hearing, and must prevent me from criticising conduct unselfishly undertaken in the truest spirit of womanhood for my benefit.'

"'You are insulting,' she said, and blushed. 'Is it possible you can care for that shrinking old-maidish girl with neither distinction of manner nor elegance of form to recommend her?'

"'You must not abuse my future wife,' I said.

"'A man with your genius and physical endowments would he justified in seeking higher for a mate.'

"'What do you call higher?'

"'In spheres where good breeding and wealth are considered necessities of life.'

"'Necessities they cannot be, since I have contrived to live without them for twenty-five years. Don't you think love and amiability quite as valuable as money and conceit?'

"Before we had talked many minutes she had given me suggestions which no one but a fool could have failed to understand; then, finding me still unimpressionable, she knelt before me appealing for love and pity. She had long admired my beauty and brains, I was informed, and she was wholly mine if I would consent to link my fortunes with hers and carry her across the sea. In a new country we could be all-in-all to each other, and unlimited sentimental advantages would be ours. The poor woman wept freely as she confessed her passion, declaring herself quite carried away by the force of my personal charms.

"In the middle of this emotional nonsense Captain Masham was announced, and Miss Seaford had barely time to seat herself before he came into the room."

As Stephen spoke these words a feeling of apprehension

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grew upon me. I had already perceived a certain subdued air of gravity in his speech, foreboding news of no pleasant character, and now that Masham was found meddling in the business I was assured of coming evil. What was I to hear? My restless mind ran on far in advance of Stephen's voice, exhausting every possible combination of chances, yet after all missing the true one, which was the simplest of any.

"The captain exhibited all his old pretence and swagger when he discovered me and his sweetheart together. 'Do I intrude?' he asked in lofty condescension. 'Oh, you terrible man!' Miss Seaford cried. 'What dreadful conspiracies have you been engaged in without my consent? I can never tolerate you more!' 'Possibly you have other reasons for desiring my absence,' he returned. 'I will leave you for the present, and if this gentleman's interview is over I will bear him company for a short distance.'

"Of course I was more inclined to send my fist into his sneering face than to dally with him; however I was glad of an excuse for taking leave, so the captain and I went out together. The fickle jade secretly squeezed my hand, but was very amiable with the other fellow too, keeping him in reserve in case I disappointed her hopes, apparently thinking a perjurer better than nobody for a husband. When we got outside the captain said in his grandest manner: 'I still find you interfering in my affairs, sir. You have brought disgrace and ruin upon my head and presume to suppose that any liberty will be allowed you. This has gone too far. We must meet, sir!'

"I told him we were already met, and that time and place were both fitting for whatever he purposed to say or do.

"'I had conceived you to be more intelligent,' he said.

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'Name your second, that I may refer mine to him. Our enmity can only be washed away in blood, and although your low station cannot warrant your being permitted to meet an

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officer and a gentleman I consent to waive my privileges with the object of chastising you according to your deserts.'

"That seemed to me pretty good—a liar and villain of his quality stooping to meet an honest man whom he had striven his hardest to hang. I told him how the matter presented itself to me, incidentally mentioning that he was a cur and a scoundrel, and offering to box or wrestle him for all he was worth. Upon that he called me a coward and struck me in the face, so I knocked him down without ceremony. He gathered himself up without attracting attention, as nobody happened to be near us, emptied his mouth of curses and demanded again that I should meet him. By this time I had studied things over, and decided that a duel was the only course open. I could have banged him into a jelly in ten minutes, but that would have been a coward's trick as his strength is nothing to mine, and I was determined he should not have the shadowy satisfaction of crowing because a weaver refused to accept his challenge. So the long and short of it is that to-morrow morning at five o'clock we shall take a shot at one another, when I shall figure as an accepted gentleman for one occasion only."

This narrative filled me with shuddering horror. I was a very coward at heart and shrank from all violence and bloodshed as I did from injuring the smallest insect or animal in God's world. My own helpless state had perhaps something to do with my morbid feelings in this direction, but certainly no timid woman had a more righteous dread of firearms than I. My voice went, my face blanched, my arms lay inert on the coverlet.

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"Have I startled you?" Stephen asked, seeing my fit of terror. "Brace your nerves together, my friend, for this secret must be hidden from Ellen at any cost. I judged it best to confide in you, and if all goes well my dear girl may never hear of the matter at all. You must behave just as usual, showing no sign that any trouble is in your mind, and you will carry it through."

"What if all does not go well?"

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"Never anticipate disaster, man! Have faith and courage! Remember that I am of masculine stamp and can face the scoundrel's pistol without winking. He shall have a fair mark I promise him."

"Have you any prospect of hitting him?"

Stephen laughed heartily. "I fired a pistol ten years ago when I was obliged to use both hands to pull the trigger. That's all my experience in shooting. The fellow is safe enough unless I catch him by accident, and you may be sure I don't want his blood upon my conscience."

"You were to have driven home with us this morning," I said, gasping myself into something like life again. "How will you explain your change of plan?"

"My father and I stop at Preston for the day to examine machinery—a truthful story so far, because we shall look round the mills while waiting. The rest of you go forward home as arranged, and the more light-hearted you all feel during your journey the better. We shall return here during the day, and I shall have a chaise ready in the morning, so before night you should hear news. You are now acquainted with all the facts, and if I fall can report me aright. Compose yourself now for an hour, so that you may come down to breakfast with your proper face on view, and don't worry your mind with foolish presentiments."

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Compose myself! If I had been fighting the duel some shadow of composure might have blessed me, but reason refused to contemplate the existing problem. If Stephen fell chaos might as well return, so inextricably were all my interests in life tangled with his. Yet I had sense enough left to recognise the wisdom of his advice; the meeting was inevitable, the less we babbled about it the better, and by the time Ben appeared to help me downstairs my countenance was carefully masked over with deception.

Other customarily truthful men descended to falseness that morning, disclosing an artful ability to deceive which practised knaves could not have surpassed.

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David of all men was the primal sinner, commencing a series of lies as we sat at the breakfast table by remarking to Stephen, as if the idea had just occurred to him:—

"Steve, it looks a pity for thee to pass Preston beaut seem' o yon new machinery 'at's runnin' there. Tha'll very likely pick some fresh notions up bi gooin' reaunder. Heav would it be iv we tarried there to-day eaut an' went forrad worn to-morn?"

Stephen smiled at Ellen. "Here is another scheme to part us! Better a dinner of pot-herbs where love is, father, than patented machines and severed hearts."

"Plez thisel," David said unconcernedly. "Happen there'll ne'er be as good a chance again."

Ellen rose to the occasion, as the rascals expected.

"Do not neglect your business because I have been foolishly sentimental, Stephen. You shall find no more unwomanly weakness in me."

"That's reet an' sensible," David said heartily, seeing that his son, that arch conspirator, was unable for the mo-

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ment to speak. "It's nobbut a day, shuzheaw, an' we con make profitable use on't."

"Very well," Stephen said. "Order it your own way, father. Still I would much rather go straight home."

That statement was true enough, but the smile he returned for Ellen's was a hollow lie, because he knew the poor girl would interpret its meaning wrongly. Never had my friend fallen so far from rectitude, yet it came not within my province to blame him.

We left Lancaster behind us in good time, hoping to reach Rochdale soon after nightfall, a change of horses having been arranged for at a midway posting house. David, Stephen, Ellen, and myself filled an open carriage, Phelim sitting beside Ben on the box, in which order we rolled steadily along until we reached the Magnet at Preston. Here Ben pulled up to refresh his horses and secure a supply of the home-brewed ale which had so tickled his palate on our journey north, and in a few minutes we took to the high road again, leaving David and Stephen behind. I can still distinctly see them as

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they stood bareheaded against the white wall of the tavern; David dark in feature, sturdy of frame, Stephen bright and strong, shining under the morning sun. He had kissed Ellen and pressed my hand in a lingering clasp. Our words of farewell were few, almost indifferent in outward sound and seeming, and so we parted—for a day.

My sister's fortitude could not prevent some quiet tears from falling, and I felt the hidden secret thumping at my breast for expression. Something must be done to divert our thoughts and throw off the dolefulness threatening to settle upon us. Phelim had come down into the carriage, leaving Ben alone on his perch with a gallon bottle f ale

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tucked inside the box beneath him, resembling in some measure conventional prints of Bacchus enthroned above a wine butt.

"Ben," I said, "are you coming back to Preston or have you given up that idea?"

"What mun aw comeback for?"

"You talked of settling here and leaving Rochdale altogether."

"Me lev Rachda!" Ben exclaimed, astonished for once. "An' what could yo do at th' Stirrup beaut me?"

"We should undoubtedly miss you greatly; still we cannot in fairness detain you against your wishes."

Ben solemnly stopped his horses and turned towards me.

"Well, aw ne'er yerd thee say a nastier thing nor that in o th' time aw've known thee, an' tha's a born knack for scornin', too! Have aw rear't thee fro a babby to be turned reound on this road afore tha's gotten gradely shut o' thi milk teeth? First aw tarried eaut o' likin' for thi mother, an' kept on tarryin' becose o' thee an' Ellen whol aw've frogetten whether yo're belongin' my family or aw'rn part o' yors. Heaw is it tha'rt weary on me neaw belike?"

"You will never weary me, for I should bitterly fret to lose you. But you certainly talked of remaining in Preston. I had it from your own tongue."

"Whenever were that, lad?"

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

"At the Magnet when we slept there."

"Oh!" says Ben, beginning to understand. His eye met Phelim's and the hardened toppers grinned at each other. "There'd bin some ale stirrin' that fleet—"

He was interrupted by a loud bang followed by great fizzing and spluttering inside the coach-box, through the crevices of which a liquid shower fell

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In gentle rain
Upon the place beneath.

"Faith, that's more beer!" Phelim cried chuckling. "*Facilis decensus*, Larry. Down dhrops the malt!"

"There were some," Ben remarked, peering into the hollow seat with disconsolate eye, "but where is it neaw? There's nowt left nobbut brokken pots an' a cork wi no neck to fit it. Aw'd hawve a mind to sup that ale afore we started—aw should ha bin sure on't then. 'Foldherido,' says Moses fro Yelley, 'there's olez summat to throuble a felley!' Well, it's gwone, but it desarved betther luck nor slattherin' deawn a cart-road."

"It's pneumatics ye should study, Ben," said Phelim. "Always allow a margin for windage in corking a bottle. Sure it's gaining experience ye are if ye're losing the beer."

"That may be," Ben returned, starting his horses again, "but for o that aw'd sanner th' Owd Church had fo'n nor that bottle had brasted."

"Larry, boy," Phelim said as we bowled along between the budding hedgerows, "who should accost me last night but that whimsical divvle Clancy! A fine story he towld me of Master Ferret, d'ye mind, and faith it's iligant shport we had over the telling. 'Twould appear the lawyers refused to pay the homuncule's expenses until his evidence was recorded, not being eager to trust the honest man, and Clancy surmises that Moss expected to share in the money. Without a doubt Moss's brains had schamed for Shepherd to appear in court, while he kept in retirement himself lurking for spoils of war. So Ferret shpakes him fair before the trial, but when he clutched the booty 'tis little anxious he felt to divide it, and away he would have

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wriggled into some secure shpot till all excitement had lapsed. 'Twas Moss for guessing the wretch's thricks, though, and a beautiful ambushade he planned wid Big George's help, and they tuk the little man between their fingers and thumbs as he sneaked behind the castle hill. Faith, 'twas a sayrious matter for the Ferret then, and short notice he got before he found himself in a field ditch, wid empty pockets and a twist in his neck. 'Twas in crawling back to the town Clancy met him and listened to the histry from the victim's own lips. 'Tis brokenhearted Shepherd professes to be, by the same token; and indade I do be always persaving, Larry, that your real professional traitor is the worst able to suffer injuries himself. 'Tis a profound metaphysical problem that's involved there, me boy, and I misdoubt your feather-head would not follow the reasoning of it."

"You are right. I'm glad Ferret has met his reward. There seems a sort of rough justice about the arrangement, although I can't precisely define the true adjustment of it."

"Ah, boy!" Phelim replied, shaking his head gravely, "'tis all through neglect of the mathematical sciences. Sure 'tis years enough I've spent endivouring to saturate ye wid the faculty of exact calculation, and seldom was a pidagogue's anxious labour so wasted. 'Tis that errant fancy has been your ruin, me poor boy! Art has flown away wid ye shpite of all I could do! Plutarch and Euclid clutched ye by the middle, and I mesilf tuk ye by the head wid a tutor's authority, yet mark the end of it, says I! Not all of us could dhrag ye back into sober fact! Faith, Larry, 'tis a fearful example ye are to a mind thrained into comprehension of exact science!"

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"I can't help it, Phelim; you must endure that among my other imperfections."

"Sure I love ye, boy, wid all your faults, and 'tis plenty ye have little beknown to ye. And there sits your charming sister widout ever shpaking all this while, lost in

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

sorrow like a wood nymph wid a thorn in her foot. Faith, my dear, Ulysses will return to ye bearing gold and gems. Parting and meeting is half the world's work."

This aphorism appeared to strike Ben favourably, for he turned to remark with phlegmatic approval: "That's noane a bad un for a schoomaister."

Ellen raised herself into a show of cheerfulness at Phelim's challenge.

"I fear my trouble makes me selfish, and after all I have every cause for happiness. I am sorry to be such dull company for you."

"Arrah! 'tis no dulness can live in sight of your face!" said Phelim gallantly. "But I grieve to see ye dhrooping like a lily deprived of its morning dhrink by razon of the gardener's neglect. There's a similitude for ye, master poet—approach that in beauty if ye can!"

"There's no dhrink here," Ben interjected. "Hoo'll be like to wait a bit iv that's what hoo's pinin' for."

"Be aisy, charioteer!" Phelim cried. "Tend the revolving wheels, and don't insult the colleen wid your jabber. Now I wondher if 'twould plaze ye, Miss Ellen, to hear the shtory of my own courtship?"

"Very much indeed."

"Then 'tis mesilf can expound that matther as well as or may be better than any other man. Our thoughts are running on love, bedad, and the time's convanient. Have ye chanced to see my wife, Larry?"

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"No."

"Aw've sin her once," said Ben. "Once were plenty for me beside. Yo ne'er sorted yon eaut becose ov her looks."

"Whisht, whisht! 'Tis little knowledge ye boys have how to choose a wife—"

"Iv aw couldn't choose one different to thine aw'd stop single."

"Be done now, and lave me to narrate dacently. For the text of my discourse I'll take the owld Roman poet's lines:—

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A bachelor leads a very good life,
Few there are that live better;
And a man may live well if he gets a good wife,
But the puzzle is how to get her.

'Twas a gay spark I found mesilf to be after laving college, and the sight of Norah Brady who lived convanient to Maynooth at that time set my heart smouldherin' like a tindher-box. I talked classics to her by day, and in the dark nights fiddled shwate music to her from among the cabbages in her father's garden; more by token the dog would often be howling and shpoil the tunes. Arrah, 'twas all labour for nothing!

"*Amo te*, Norah,' says I; 'sure 'tis a verity I can't exist widout ye. 'Tis the light of your eye must show me through the world, and the gold falling from your tongue will be riches in plenty for poor Phelim. Only bless me wid your love and by force of my janius I'll conquer adversity,' says I.

"Faith, 'tis the pity your eyes do be crooked,' says Norah, 'and I mistaste your iligant black coat a thrifle. How will I ever get to fairs and markuts if I marry you? 'Tis well you'd look twirling a shillelagh to defend me from rival bhoys, and niver a village dance could I attind if I was a scholar's

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lady. Ah, 'tis foine society would soon be the death of me!

"Arrah, 'twould be you for ornamenting any nobleman's parlour in the land!' said I. 'Do but consait yourself sitting in shtate in a silk gown, wid servants at your call and gentry whispering in your pretty ears! Bedad, 'tis that's the life worth having.'

"And you shtiff in black cloth,' says she, 'wid a face of wood and arms hangin' down prim and nate! And 'tis mesilf would be afraid to laugh out or shpake loud or take a twirl round my ankles! Get away wid your blarney, now, and don't be thryin' the comether on me, for sure I'll never lave the honest people who brought me up to be a laughing-shtock for ladies and noblemen. And then, betune you and me and the pig,' says she, 'Dennis Malone plazes me betther than all your scholarships, Phaylim; so shwallow that dry crust, and I hope 'tis to your worship's liking.'

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"Norah dear,' said I,' history repates itself, and I number but one more in the list of classical scholars and distinguished heroes befooled by love. I have courted ye *secundum artem* and plucked for ye the choicest flowers of amatory iloquence to be gathered from ancient or modern poets, at which ye did nothing but laugh by the same token. *Fronti nulla fides*, ye desaving crayture,' said I, 'there's no depending on looks; from the way ye shmiled on me I deduced a theory that my company for life would be plazing to ye, and now ye shrink *a vinculo rnathrimonii* as if 'twas a benighted haythen ye rejected.'

"'Ah, what larning!' Norah cries. 'Tis not half ye say I can understand, but 'tis fine to hear such powerful scholarship rowling from the tongue like rocks down the Liffey! But Dennis has the shwatest brogue, and dances

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like the demijohns ye towld me of-' "'Tis demigods ye mane,' said I. 'Faith, 'tis all one,' says she, 'and 'twas wondherful to watch Dennis swinging his blackthorn when the O'Briens disagreed wid him last time he tuk me to the fair.'

" "'Tis well, false colleen,' I said. '*Amicus Plato, et magis amica veritas*—the classics I love, and verity delights me still more. Wid you I could cultivate neither,' says I, 'so to Dennis I lave ye, for I am no fighting man—'And indade ye are not!' cries Norah. 'No!' says I, 'nor would my profession allow it, however fierce my sowl might be. Sure 'tis not *vi et armis*—wid brute strength and blackthorns—I would be winning a wife. So go to your Malone,' says I, 'and may you never repint.' 'He's a betther man than you any day!' says the colleen. 'He's not!' said I. 'Faix he is!' says she. 'Only at the *argumentum baculinum*,' says I. 'And fwhat's that?' says she. 'The end of a shtick,' says I; 'so farewell, ye cruel jilt.' 'The best of the night to you, Phaylim,' says Norah, 'though you do be calling me bad names. 'Tis nothing but good luck I wish ye, for sure 'tis the clever man you are, and a rale lady ye deserve to marry.' 'Niver think it!' says I. '*Aut Norah aut nullus*—'tis none but you can warm my heart. Drive me forlorn from your side to-night, and, by the Pope's toe, I'll marry the ugliest and worst-tempered woman in Ireland;

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ergo, beware what you do!' 'Arrah, that would be Nance Rooney of Enniscommon,' cried Norah, crossing herself, 'for she's as ugly as sin, the blessed Virgin stand betune us and harm!' 'That's the woman for me!' says I. "'Tis seven years owlder than you she'll be!' 'All the betther!' 'To throw yourself away on an owld witch like her!' sobs Norah. 'Faith, 'tis a desperate

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man I am, and nothing but a black swan will satisfy me!' 'And have ye niver a kiss for poor Norah before ye lave her?' 'No! I'm done wid you!' 'Not the laste token of a kiss, now?' says Norah, dhrawing closer. 'Not one!' says I very bowld. 'Not the laste taste?' says she, putting up her rosy lips. 'Then take it!' says I, wild wid disappointed hope, and I kissed her exactly fifteen times; for you know, Larry, the calculating instinct was ever sthrong in me, and I counted without knowing. 'So now good-bye t'ye, Phaylim,' says the artful crayture, 'and, if ye do be marrying Nance, beware of her twisting ye round her finger as I'm twisting ye now!' And with that she fluttered off giggling, and that was the end of my coorting expayriences."

"Tha shapped badly," Ben said, turning a commiserating eye upon the schoolmaster. "Hoo wouldn't ha left me that road. So tha wed th' ugly woman to spite thisel, like?"

"'Twas so," Phelim replied. "Sure, being a philosopher I had sound precedents for coupling wid a shrew."

"Norah must have been a shallow creature," Ellen said. "She was hardly worth an earnest man's regard."

"Then no courtship was necessary with Miss Rooney?" I asked.

"Divvle a bit! She was only too plazed that any man tuk her. Faith, Larry, when I first saw the owld girl her looks frighted me; but habit's a fine thing, me boy. 'Tis not so much her face shtaggers me now."

"What else fretens thee?" asked Ben.

"'Tis no matter," Phelim returned. "*Ariston metron*—moderate courses are safest. I skipped from one extreme to the other, and faith 'tis a glorious reward I've got by consequence. Maybe ye've learnt, Ben, that parallel lines can never meet?"

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"Nay, that's summat fresh. Aw know when there's two clooas lines belongin' different women i' th' same yard there'll be a row on a weshin' day."

"*Reductio ad absurdum*," said Phelim, smiling complacently. "By such paraboles can the unschooled mind evade doctrines of wisdom!"

XVIII

THE night was late before our journey ended, yet I rejoiced that Ellen's cheerful spirits had reasserted themselves before we reached home. When she retired for the night her troubled thoughts seemed entirely put aside; she looked forward to the morrow with pleasure, anticipating Stephen's return, and perhaps hoping yet that love's sweet persuasion might overcome his stubborn intent to fly from his native land.

Her bright face gone, my own gloomy meditations overwhelmed me like a rising sea, and the unexpected appearance of my father was perhaps wholesome as a relief from the strain upon my tense nerves. I guessed without telling that some business of importance to himself dragged him to my room at so late an hour, and was prepared for the chief bearing of his remarks before his diplomatic tongue enlightened me.

"I am truly pleased to see you and Ellen safely returned, Laurence, and I hope the long journey has not been too fatiguing for you."

"We have come through it all very well, father. What is better, our highest hopes have been realised and Stephen has been acquitted."

"I am truly delighted to hear you say so! Stephen is a promising young man, and as you are aware I have always

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considered it my duty to assist his family to the full extent of my limited powers. Possibly I may have been rather too generous in that and similar cases. Providence has been kind to him, and I must perforce be uplifted in heart if only for his lonely mother's sake."

"Stephen does not purpose to remain with her. He talks of sailing for America."

"Leaving his unfortunate mother in poverty, deserted by her husband! One cannot conscientiously approve of so unfilial a course of procedure."

"She will be well cared for—in fact money troubles will shortly cease in Grindrod's family. David will soon amass riches enough to set him independent above the world's cares."

"Are you in earnest, Laurence?" my father asked, watching me curiously. "You appear to be serious, yet knowing your genius for ironic phrases—"

"I am perfectly sincere, father; my genius is entirely absent to-night."

"In that case I am thankful for having been graciously privileged to do so much in their behalf. Suffering grave business losses myself, I am the more overjoyed to hear that friends are on the road to prosperity. Unfortunately the Lord has not blessed my transactions of late."

"Are you again embarrassed for money?" I asked, concealing some feelings of uneasiness; for my weak head was filled with anxiety sufficient without this additional burden, paltry though it was.

"Truly I grieve to confess it, my dear son, and I have diligently endeavoured to avoid annoying you further by drawing upon your private resources. Providence has ceased to favour me, perhaps in punishment for past backslidings, and my ventures are no longer a source of profit."

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"Surely the business pays, unless you have been allowing customers to contract irrecoverable debts? You promised not to gamble any more."

"It is human to err, Laurence," my worthy parent replied. "I cannot deny that since your angelic mother has been removed from us some indulgence in the excitement of speculation has gained upon my mind, until by dint of habit it almost appears to be a portion of my being. I have been wary, however, not to risk any considerable sum this year—probably forty pounds will extinguish my liabilities completely, and I know your affectionate disposition too well to doubt your willingness to supply the required amount. I regret to introduce this unpleasant matter at so advanced an hour, when possibly you are somewhat exhausted by travel, but we must not desecrate the Sabbath by discussing commercial difficulties, and time presses."

It was on my unruly tongue to tell him that his extreme consideration for me touched me almost to tears: but I refrained, remembering a promise once given that no sarcasm of mine should sting him more, and thinking it as well that one of our family at least should value plighted words.

"Father," I said, "you heard me declare not long ago that whatever money belonged to me was yours to expend for your own purposes, and you must remember how largely you availed yourself of that offer. Since then I have undertaken heavy charges in connection with Stephen's trial, so unexpectedly heavy indeed that without aid from a wealthy and munificent friend I could not have discharged them. Here is my banker's account—you will see that I have less than half the amount you ask for standing to my credit, and even these few remaining pounds may soon be required of

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me in the sacred cause of friendship. I ask, as a dutiful son anxious and bound to serve you in every honourable way, that you will seek elsewhere for the present, leaving to me this remnant of my savings for my own uses."

"Truly, my dear Laurence, you possess a thorough right to dispose of your own property, yet much as it pains me to admit the fact I am really at a loss where to obtain

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the sum urgently needed unless you consent to help me. You have here, I see, some fifteen guineas available, which probably would tide over immediate claims, and doubtless in a few days cash could be collected on outstanding bills—"

"Take it," I said, interrupting his flowing periods. "If you have courage to ask it is not for me to refuse. You shall have the money when the bank opens on Monday morning."

He thanked me effusively, and I was secretly hoping that he would now allow me to make for my much-needed bed, when he astonished me by commencing another harangue.

"There is another subject, my dear Laurence, which my conscience urges me to lay before you and perhaps the present occasion will prove the most fitting for that purpose. As my son you are, of course, interested in my welfare, and would no doubt desire me to secure such little share of happiness as in this unequal world may come within my reach. It cannot be unknown to you that since your mother died my lot has necessarily been lonely and void of charm, and I hope you will be gratified to learn that I shortly purpose making arrangements for cheering my solitude with suitable companionship. Man is not formed to exist alone."

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"Very true," I said, wondering for what I had been formed myself, "but surely you are not solitary. You have a daughter of whom any parent should be proud, and a son for whom you have recently—perhaps somewhat late—expressed considerable esteem; both these interesting personages would be delighted to give you more of their society than you have yet permitted them to do. No doubt you have severely felt my dear mother's death, yet, although she never complained, I am convinced that she often experienced pangs of loneliness herself. Affection for her did not hinder you from habitual nightly absences on the plea of religion, often a shallow pretext for escaping to haunts and recreations with which piety had nothing to do. I fail to understand this sudden fit of repining."

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"The workings of our finite minds are frequently inscrutable, Laurence. It would perhaps not be possible for myself to follow all the causes which have weightily cooperated to produce my present frame of mind; still, my decision is now arrived at, and I am firmly persuaded that the finger of Providence has pointed out my course for the future."

"And what may be the nature of this providential arrangement?"

"You are acquainted with Mrs. Seaford I believe?"

"Certainly I am."

"I have frequently enjoyed that lady's very agreeable society during the past winter, some unseen attraction apparently drawing us together. We have discovered in each other much to please, and our ideas are in singular harmony. The widow lives an extremely solitary life, which she is naturally desirous of changing, and there again our hopes are in accord. In fact, to abbreviate further narration, I

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may inform you at once that a union between us appears certain to promote not merely our passing worldly interests, but also our eternal welfare."

"Did you tell the widow how many pounds you have expended this year by laying odds against Nudger, the fast greyhound, or did you consider that idea insufficiently harmonious for her tuneful ear?"

"Who told you that, Laurence?" my father asked, turning pale and seeming slightly ashamed.

"I have many sources of information. So you seriously contemplate marrying Mrs. Seaford?"

"Truly we have both been mysteriously impelled to that conclusion. Let me hope the project will impress you favourably."

"Undoubtedly whatever tends to secure your happiness must have my approval. But there are difficulties you know. For instance, you will continue to live here, I suppose?"

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"A little uncertainty surrounds that point. Perhaps Mrs. Seaford may object to my remaining in trade, or may desire a more fashionable house."

Will her daughter live with you?"

"Probably so—probably so!"

"Father, Ellen must be considered and provided for."

"My dear Laurence, naturally that will be my first care. It is a sacred duty."

"Well, that seems all straightforward enough," I said, nodding with irrepressible sleepiness. "How about paying the cost of all these fashionable plans?"

My dear son," returned Mr. Holt, bending towards me with a smirk, "the moment my engagement is publicly known I shall have no difficulty in raising money, Mrs. Seaford is very well off for this world's goods."

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"Do you intend to borrow on the security of her wealth?"

"That is quite an everyday occurrence, my boy; a very ordinary commercial transaction."

"Is it honourable?"

"Pooh, pooh, Laurence! You know nothing of business and harbour very peculiar fancies. A wife's property belongs to her husband. I will retire now and ask Benjamin to attend upon you. I requested him to remain below until my return. Your dutiful and sensible views concerning my proposed change of state are very cheering to me—very cheering indeed! Good-night, my boy, and may the Lord refresh you by sound and dreamless sleep. To-morrow is the Sabbath, when our meditations must be occupied in more important subjects."

"Good-night, father," I replied, "and sleep if you can."

He glanced askew at me as if suspecting double meaning in my words, and departed without further remark. Next minute Ben came heavily up the stairs, yawning wide.

"Come, mi bonny lad," said this faithful guardian, "aw'm sure tha'rt fair o'erset. It's close on midneet, an' aw guess thi fayther's bin plaguin' thee again."

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"You describe him well in calling him a father," I said, long-repressed bitterness breaking out of me in spite of myself. "He has plundered me of my last penny."

"It's like him," says Ben, unconcerned. "Joe were olez a quare chap. But ne'er heed him, my lad, for aw'll ne'er see thee hamper't for brass."

With that he produced a leather purse heavy with gold. "There's five-an'-twenty guineas there," says he, pressing the bag into my unwilling hand, "an' plenty moore where those coome fro. That's honest brass, lad, getten bi hard wark an' careful savin', so there's no danger on thee lowerin'

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thisel bi takkin' it, an' there's nobry livin' moore welcome to it nor thee, beaut it's yor Ellen."

In my wearied and overwrought condition this new proof of Ben's affection was too much for me. I sobbed aloud, and was carried to bed weeping like a fractious child in its nurse's arms.

"Gristle up!" Ben said, tucking me comfortably into my nest with the skill of a practised valet. "Thry to think thisel a mon, an' fo asleep pratty."

"Take your money away, then, for it is impossible that I should use it."

"Well, tak care on it for me," Ben yawned. "It'll nobbut get wasted i' foolishness iv aw carry it back."

He left the bag under my pillow in cool defiance of all I could say or do, leaving me with his usual kindly formula:—

"Good-neet, lad, an' God bless thee!"

I had some hours of disturbed sleep, waking between four and five o'clock with my head full of surmises as to the progress of events in Lancaster. The combatants would be alert and busy, perhaps they were already on the way to their meeting ground. This would probably be some quiet grove or field in the peaceful and fertile Lune valley. A picture presented itself in the breaking dawn of David and Stephen confronted by Masham and one of his high-bred military friends. I could see the professional warriors

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

smile as the plebeians displayed awkwardness in handling firearms and thorough ignorance of the laws regulating the polite art of manslaughter. As our ancient long-cased clock on the staircase landing struck five I seemed to hear the sharp double crack of pistols mingling with the vibrations of its sonorous bell. For good or evil the affair was decided,

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although a long anxious day must pass before I could learn the result.

As my father had suggested, pious meditation should have occupied me during the space of that Sabbath; but across the calming influences of the day of rest continually passed and re-passed the unanswerable questions, "How has the duel ended?" and "What tidings will come by the chaise now speeding towards us?" Ellen came down in cheerful spirits, and I played solemn sweet melodies of Handel to her until church time, her pure soprano occasionally rising in unison with the throbbing strings.

For the greater part of the day I was alone in my chamber, a circumstance common enough and one that rarely troubled me, but on this day I would fain have heard the murmur of friendly tongues and been relieved from the irksomeness of strictly keeping my own company. Books were my closest companions, as a rule, and from habit I made some feeble efforts to lose myself in their bewitching pages, only to discover that my restless demon refused to be exorcised.

Evening came and deepened into night, relaxing somewhat the tension of my straining mind, for now the hours of suspense could surely not be many. Ellen returned from evening service, and began to question me as to the probable time of Stephen's arrival.

"He will scarcely think of calling here to-night," I said, lying with the ready ease of a commercial transactor. "I advise you to get off to bed and postpone the rapture of meeting until to-morrow."

I had said nothing to her about Mr. Holt's plans; that matter would keep until she was better able to face it, for I knew the recital would cause her keen sorrow.

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"I will take your advice, dear," Ellen said, "and if Stephen should call you must apologise for me."

"Content yourself," I said, "and leave me to restrain the young man's ardour by fatherly counsel. Take yourself off before your roses fade."

I was anxious to get rid of her, expecting as I did that news might come at any moment, and determined if the worst had happened to ensure her one more untroubled night.

"And what have you been doing all day, Laurence? Reading, fiddling, perhaps writing?"

She turned over some loose papers on the table, and picked up a sheet of verses. "Is this the secular outcome of your Sabbath leisure, wicked boy?"

"Not guilty, your serene highness. My employments have been entirely profitless."

"These lines are new to me," Ellen said. "It appears that my last Beethoven sonata has inspired you. Oh, I must certainly read this remarkable work! "

"You had far better go to bed."

"You are afraid of my critical acumen, sir, but you shall not evade it. Listen and tremble!"

She read my verses aloud in her sweet and sympathetic voice:—

BEETHOVEN'S SONATA QUASI FANTASIA, IN C SHARP MINOR

"Adagio.

"Murmuring, murmuring, rollest thou, restless sea;
Murmuring, murmuring, pausing not, ceasing not.

"Even in the holy night I find no peace!
The rounded moon floats on among her stars,
Turns upon earth a mildly-pitying face,
And lines the mournful wave with shimmering bars.

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To parted lovers night for ever brings
Sad memories, as if the evening wind
Played on tuned Nature as upon the strings
Of some Olympian harp, to cloud the mind
With melancholy dreams and visions fading,
While the sad ocean lends a surging bass
To fill the harmony. My life is shading
From twilight into darkness, and, alas,
This sun of love gone down there is no moon
To make of midnight a reflected noon!

“Allegretto.

“’Tis well, my bending heart to raise,
That I should dwell on vanished days,
On calmly-happy hours when she
The splendour of her eyes would turn
In anxious glances upon me
And all my soul with passion burn.
Oh, happy days, in sorrow lost!
Oh, painful bliss, now passed away!
Oh, living love, now turned to clay!
Oh, pleasure, bought at bitter cost!

”Presto.

”Back, boisterous sea of passion sweeping o’er me,
Thy billows shall not overwhelm my spirit!
The toilsome paths of art lie steep before me,
Though loveless, Fame’s high throne I would inherit.
Dwell, manly fortitude, within my breast,
And guide to cheerful thoughts this fevered brain!
My lonely hours should not be all unblest
While over music’s boundless realm I reign.
What if I never to my breast may fold her?
My heart to steely temper shall be burnt;
What if I never more on earth behold her?
The peace of resignation shall be learnt;
And down the vistas of far years may come
Memnon-like echoes from Love’s sun-gilt tomb.”

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Ellen laid down the verses, asking: "Is that all the master-work says to you?"

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My weak nerves were quivering in anticipation of her criticism, although I knew precisely what it would be.

"Certainly not—it is simply all I am able to express in words. Why don't you kneel in admiration of my genius?"

"I miss the profundity that underlies the music, Laurence, and the proofs of giant power apparent on every page."

"All my critics tell the same lamentable tale. It is high time for me to renounce ballad-mongering and cry mew. Go to bed, my dear, before my suppressed fury becomes ungovernable."

With little more parley Ellen took herself off, to my unspeakable relief. For the first time in my life I was glad to get rid of her.

Before she had been gone ten minutes the housemaid brought in a letter, delivered to her at the door by a lad. It was a sheet of coarse paper folded into an irregular square, the flaps being drawn together and sealed securely with yellow beeswax. Outside the sheet was a written address, all in rudely formed capital letters:—

FOR LAURENCE HOLT.
PRIVAT.

On the inner side of the paper was the appalling message:—

MY LAD'S KILLED.
DAVID.

There are moments in life when our faculties are paralysed as it were, refusing for a brief space to perform their functions. I read the dreadful words again and again

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without realising their gravity, lying benumbed on my couch. I simply could not believe the fact so grimly stated, but a second later my senses resumed their natural sway, overwhelming me with agony and despair.

At that moment of intolerable anguish my sister began to sing one of the melodies I had played earlier in the day, her voice falling faintly to my ear from her room above:—

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"Angels, ever bright and fair,
Take, oh take me to your care!"

Her pure and innocent heart must be soon riven by intense pangs, yet no breathing of her irreparable loss should she hear until that painful night was past. If angelic ministrants could indeed hover round her beloved head, their gentle presence might inspire her with resignation to endure the terrible affliction which had so suddenly befallen us.

How to tell her of Stephen's death I knew not, but that she would perceive dreadful tidings in my face was certain, and well I knew that from no lips but mine must she learn the crushing of her dearest hopes.

XIX

NEXT morning I lost no time in acquainting my sister with the sad news, suspecting that all the town would be ringing with it before noon, and being anxious that her first knowledge of it should come from me. I narrated briefly all particulars connected with the fatal meeting, so far as they were known to me, and gave her David's message in a modified and less naked form. I was obliged to acknowledge the deception we had practised for her good, and found it hard to meet the stern look of reproach in her eyes, so rarely turned upon me with any but affection's light.

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When the first shock of pain was over she made small outward demonstration of grief; not even before me could her faithful sensitive heart reveal its anguish. She retired silently to her chamber, remaining there for the whole of that day, her white drawn face alone showing what she had suffered when we next met. I expected to hear from David, but the day passed without sign, and on the following morning I determined to call at his house, feeling myself unable to wait longer in vague uncertainty.

Ellen accompanied me, and Ben wheeled my carriage up the hill. White blinds were drawn over the cottage windows. Mrs. Grindrod sat rocking in her darkened kitchen, a

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

group of neighbours offering rude but sincere consolation. She had seen nothing of her husband, he refused to cross the threshold of his house. Stephen's body had been brought home by Moss and George, and now lay encoffined in the next room. Moss had shown much kindness and consideration for her, breaking the news of her bereavement with tact, and offering his services freely if she should further require them. Moss, of all men!

This astonishing intelligence was pieced together from the good woman's answers to many questions. She would never have called Moss considerate, for any kindnesses bestowed upon her were accepted as matters of course, oftener eliciting complaints than thanks. "He were very quiet like," she said, "an' he went a good way reand i' tellin' his tale." She never dreamt of feeling grateful to the man for his trouble, and had no curiosity regarding the incidents leading to her son's death.

"What mun aw do—what mun aw do? Whatever mun become on me neaw!"

These phrases were the staple of the poor woman's lamen-

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tations. Fully occupied with self she had small capacity for woe on other accounts, and I desisted from some feeble attempts at condolence, seeing they were idle.

We turned to the room in which Stephen's body lay, and I heard the women whispering behind us: "Hoo's a bonny face ov her own," "They'd ha made a pratty couple," "Eh, it's a theausan pities!"

Ben raised me in his arms, Ellen lifted the latch, and we passed with bursting hearts into the awful presence of the dead. Upon a rude wooden bedstead rested an open coffin, holding all that was mortal of the lost friend who had been to me more than brother. Ellen with a trembling hand removed a linen cloth from the dead face, and we looked for the last time upon the features known and loved so well. Their expression was calm, save for a slight compression of the lips which only added to the firmness of the whole countenance.

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

I whispered to Ben, who still held me in his arms: "Put me down somewhere and look for the bullet mark."

As he obeyed I saw that tears were streaming down his broad cheeks. He found a resting place for me, approached the coffin and gently drew aside the folds of linen which covered the cold breast.

"It's here!" he said with a sob. "Fair through his heart, God help him!"

Ellen burst into tears as Ben lifted me that I might examine the wound. It was merely a small bluish-red circular spot low on the left breast, looking nothing to kill a man.

"Cover it, my dear," I said, shuddering, and she rearranged the linen with steady hand. Taking a black ribbon from her neck she drew it into a love-knot, laid it upon her

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lover's lifeless breast, kissed the cold lips, and replaced the kerchief over the firm-set face with more composure than I felt capable of displaying myself.

Our errand was done. We sadly left the death chamber, and taking leave of Mrs. Grindrod returned home, bearing our sorrows as we best might.

But what had become of David? While that question lacked an answer I could not be easy, and as it naturally became obvious to me that Ephraim Moss must hold the threads of knowledge in his hand I despatched Ben to scour the town until he captured the cunning man. In an hour's time Moss appeared in my room, and I was soon in possession of the whole story. He sat down nervously fingering his chin-tuft as if doubtful of the reception he was about to meet with, so by way of encouragement I thanked him for his kindness to Mrs. Grindrod, expressing my surprise that he should have been the man to carry Stephen home.

"Aw darsay it looks quare to yo," he said, "but it's simple enough. Happen yo'd like to yer heaw this job happen't?"

"Nothing would please me better; but tell me first of all if you know where David is hiding himself."

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"He's tarryin' wi a cousin ov his at Hamer Bottoms, waitin' for his lad's buryin' to-morn. Yo'll see him in th' churchyard an' find him very sthrange too. Summat's gwone wrong inside his yead, it's my belief. We dhrove him into th' teawn here, but nowt could persuade him to go wom."

"I am not surprised at that. Well, now, my knowledge of this bad business reaches to Saturday night; if you know anything of Sunday's occurrences speak out freely."

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"Aw know everything, for me an' George seed it o through; an' let me tell yo, Misther Howt, iv there's onybody i' th' world sorry for this shockin' job it's us two. God knows aw ne'er undherstood what black wark we were helpin' forrad whol Steve were sent to th' castle. Aw've bin a big reskil, an' bin carried forrad doin' sich things as aw'm freeten't o' lookin' back on, but aw'd ne'er ha consented to usin' yon poor lad as th' captain's used him. Nowe, never, as aw'm a livin' mon!"

"Not even for money?"

"Let me tell yo summat abeaut that, for aw con see yo don't believe me. When th' case again Steve were bein' dhrawn up aw geet a paper one day ordherin' me to co at a 'turney's office at sich a time. Th' captain were sittin' there when aw went in, an' he reckon't to make a lot o' fuss on me, shakin' mi hond an' sichlike, astid o' lookin' as iv aw were nobbut dirt undher his feet same as he used doin'. Then th' owd 'turney said they'd a thrifle o' business to consult me abeaut, an' iv aw were willin' to give mi sarvices aw should be weel paid. When Steve stood for his thrial they wanted me to swear 'at he'd bin mixed up wi my gang an' made me promise to feight th' sodiers iv they coome botherin' us; so aw hearken't their talk, thinkin' to misel iv aw swore that there'd be nowt less nor hangin' for Steve. When they'd done aw tow'd th' captain sthraight eaut, 'Yo geet this bother up, an' there's moore nor me knows it.' He turn't as white as dyeath, an' th' owd 'turney says, 'Husht!' an' ran to his dur makin' sure nobry were hearkenin' at th' lockhole. He coome back lookin' mad an' said: 'You cannot

understand the captain's actions. Military men have often to employ subterfuge, and you can plainly see now that he adopted the best means for dis-

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persing the rioters.' 'What made him give that brass to Ferret?' aw said, an' that question made th' captain turn red again. Then they said there were nobbut me an' Ferret knew, an he'd promised to swear ony road they wanted; so everything depended on me an' aw could fix mi own price, for expense were no considheration. 'You see, my good fellow,' said th' owd 'turney, 'it would never do to have it stated in court that Captain Masham had given money to Ferret. Most people are inclined to be censorious and might put a wrong construction upon his action. Keep your tongue still about all that and I will write an outline of the evidence you must give. Ferret must swear to the same story. If you manage cleverly and stick to your tale when cross-examined our case will be materially strengthened by your evidence.' Then th' captain put in some wheedlin' talk, thryin' to make me believe he respected me as mich as he did onybody, but thry as they would aw gav 'em no gradely onswer."

"Moss," I said, "your narrative sickens me. From every accomplice in these diabolical plots I learn new complications of villainy. But evidently you did not accept the offers of these men—I can derive a gleam of satisfaction from that."

"Wait a bit whol aw've finished mi tale. Aw left th' 'turney's office beaut comin' to ony sattlement, thinkin' to misel they'd bin rayther too diver for once. They'd felt cocksure aw should jump at th' chance o' sellin' mi sowl, an' so they'd letten o their saycrets slip. Afore aw'd gotten a road-width fro that office dur aw swore deep an' hearty 'at those devils alive should be cheted eaut o' their gam, an' aw'd wit enough to see 'at th' winnin' cards were safe in mi own hond iv aw could nobbut shap to play 'em reet.

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Aw fund Ferret an' axed him what he'd promised to do, so he laughed in his quare road—just like blowin' a whistle—an' towd me bwoth sides had bin afther him, an' he were playin' wi 'em to see which'd pay th' biggest price. Scwofilt were Steve's mon, he said, an' were likely to pay weel for what could be towd abeaut Masham's thricks; then th' captain were terrible freeten't o' bein' exposed, an' a hundherd peand were nowt in his road. Otogether Ferret thought he'd stick bi th' captain, becose he could olez squeeze enough eaut o' th' sodier's pocket to keep him beaut wortchin', whol iv th' saycret were towd on t' thrial-day there'd be no moore profit in it. 'Neaw, Isaac,' aw said, 'tha'rt helpin' Steve eaut o' this job, brass or no brass. We're havin' no finger i' th' hangin' o' yon lad.' Ferret cared nowt abeaut Steve, he reckon't; we owed him a grudge, an' th' chance o' makin' a fortin didn't happen every day. 'Tha'll go wi me to Scwofilt's office,' aw towd him, savage like, 'an' when yon thrial comes off tha'll ston up i' th' witness-box an' tell every word o' Masham's bargain wi thee. Tha'rt fast undher my thumb, for iv aw set again thee tha'rt a lost mon, an' aw'm ordherin' this law business to mi own fancy.' Well, he skrieked an' wrigg'l't, stonnin' eaut again me for a good while, but that matther't nowt. He knew aw could fettle him iv we disagreed, so th' upshot were we went sthraight to Scwofilt. We fund him asleep, but he were soon wakken enough when aw started talkin'. 'We're ready to swear,' aw says, 'at Captain Masham paid us for gettin' that row up, becose he wanted young Grindhrod to get lamed among it, an' neaw he wants to pay us for tellin' lyin' tales i' th' court.' 'What's that?' he says, rubbin' his e'en. 'Say that again!' Aw said it again, an' made Isaac tell his tale abeaut meetin' th' captain. 'This

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will be a money question, I suppose,' Scwofilt said. 'What is your price?' 'Whatever yo're willin' to give us,' aw said. 'We'n harmed yon poor lad enough, an' mi conscience wain't let me do no moore.' 'Your what?' he axed very sharp. 'Mi conscience.' 'Why do you pester me with such balderdash?' he says. 'You have your own motives in coming here, and they are no concern of mine. I will pay Shepherd twenty pounds to swear the

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

truth of his ingenious story in the box.' 'Twenty peaud!' Ferret skrieked. 'Aw mun have a theausan. There's a fortin i' this saycret.' 'You should have kept the secret, then, you simple fools! Haven't you sense to know that I could now compel you to appear as witnesses without paying you a single penny?' 'Aw'm weel aware on it,' aw said, 'an' we're ready to goo beaut ony makin', for this is noane a matther o' brass.' 'Egad, you show every mark of a truth-teller!' Scwofilt says, 'if one could believe such a miracle. Well, I'll stand to my word and you shall have the twenty pounds.' Ferret squeal't an' skrieked, sayin' he were ruinated, an' towd Scwofilt he mut hondle th' brass aforehond, so th' 'turney looks at us very suspicious like an' says: 'Oh! that's your game, is it? You shall have a cheque immediately after the evidence is given, not a minute sooner. Ferret must appear, as he is the party actually concerned. We need not trouble you, Moss.' 'Wouldn't it be weel for me to back him up? Two should be betther nor one.' 'Not in a law court,' he says laughin'. 'One is far better than two where risks of cross-questioning have to be allowed for. Shepherd's statement will be fully sufficient for my purposes.' So we left him at that, an' yo're weel aware everything happen't just as we planned it then."

Here Moss looked inquiringly at me as if won-

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dering whether I believed him or not, and I said at once:—

"I feel certain you are speaking truth. You could never have invented so circumstantial a narrative, and I am not only proud to find you dealing honestly again, but promise that your invaluable aid in Stephen's defence shall be well rewarded."

"Aw've done wi roguery an' need no rewards," Moss replied with an impressive outward sweep of his right arm. "What use is it savin' a mon fro hangin' o' Monday when he's shot o' Sunday mornin'?"

"You cannot be blamed for that anyhow. Did you hear no more from Masham's party?"

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"Ah, plenty! They sent clerks, an' pappers, an' th' owd 'turney coome, an' then last ov o th' captain coome hissel blazin' wi passion, thinkin' to freeten me, so aw punced hint eaut o' th' heause."

"Punced? You are speaking figuratively."

"Aw punced him weel wi these very clogs," Moss replied seriously, "nobbut they'n had new irons sin'. He coome lat one neet when o were quiet, offer't me fifty peound every year as long as aw lived, an' when that wouldn't do he hit savage at me in his temper, so aw showed him a style o' feightin he'd ne'er larn't. Aw'll bet he's holes in his shins yet!"

"There is sound stuff in you, Ephraim, to withstand so powerful a temptation. You will do yet."

"Thank yo, Mither Howt. Aw vally yor opinion moore nor gowd, for aw'm weel aware yo'll tell no lies shuz who else does."

"You are mistaken. I have been actively and passively lying within the last few days. We are all deceivers in one direction or another."

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"Yo'll ne'er hurt nobry," Moss said, waving my statement away with a bony hand. "But aw've bin talkin' o this time beaut tellin' what yo're most wantin' to know."

"Every word has been of importance, and the rest of your account will follow on naturally after this prelude. Now that I understand your change of feeling, it is easy to guess how you came to be associated with Stephen and David. I suppose you made friends with them in Lancaster, and were invited to accompany them on their expedition?"

"Nay, nay, yo're otogether wrong! It's this road. Aw were determin't George an' me should join in th' brass Isaac were to dhraw, an' aw were weel aware th' little mon wanted th' lot hissel; so we watched him middlin' sharp whol he crept off, followed him to a bank where he swapped his cheque for gowd, followed him again to th' river edge, where he aimed at takkin' a boat an' so slippin' us. We carried him skrikin' into a

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meadow, emptied his pockets, cleauted him a bit an' left him there. Then we geet agate o' dhrinkin' an' kept it up whol Sethurday neet, spendin' mony a peaund. Sunday mornin' we geet up at dellit ready for walkin' wom, an' o'together bi chance we seed Daff an' his lad makin' toard th' fields an' followed 'em to see what were afoot. They went through a plantin', stoppin' in a bit ov oppen greaund a piece fur on, so we tarried among th' timber an' watched. Masham rode up in a minute, bringin' two moore sodiers, an' another chap 'at turn't eaut to he a docthor. One sodier walked up to Steve, shakin' honds wi him an' showin' hin heaw to hondle a pistil an' heaw to ston. Then t'other sodier an' owd Daff measur't a length o' lond off, Steve an' th' captain stood up facin' one another, an' afore we'd time to wink their pistils went off.

"Th' captain kept steady on his legs an' aw seed his white

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teeth showin', but Steve dhropped like a stone. T' docthor ran to him an' we ran too as hard as we could. 'He is quite dead,' t' docthor says, 'the sooner we are all off the better for us.' Daff's face freeten't me—aw've ne'er sin sich a look as he had then, bwoth savage an' wild. He never noticed us come up, for he'd no e'en for nobry nobbut his lad an' th' captain, an' he kept muttherin' to hissels brokken words beaut sense. 'Are you friends of these men?' a sodier axed me, so aw towd him we were, an' then he says: 'They have a chaise waiting in the lane over there; can you undertake to carry the poor fellow home, for his father seems quite demented?' 'Yo may safely lev him to us,' aw said; 'we'll be onswerable for him.' Masham had meaunted his horse an' he coome ridin' up, so th' sodier turned on him: 'This is a damnable business, Masham; a finer and pluckier young fellow I never saw! I would have stopped this murder if he had allowed me. You must have known he had no idea of firing a pistol.' 'Of course I regret his death,' Masham said, 'but we had equal risk.' 'You are a despicable liar!' t'other said. 'I have done with you!' So he unteed his horse an' rode off, an' th' captain never said a word to hindher him. Daff festen't his starin' e'en on Masham, an' part ov his wits coome back to him. He shook his neighve at th' captain, an' sheauted: 'As sure as God's aboon aw'll make thy

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

blood onswer for this lad's!' Masham nobbut laughed, an' that maddened Daff whol he sthrode forrad to rive him eaut ov his saddle. Th' captain poo'd his sword eaut an' said: 'By heaven, I'll drive this through you if you come a yard nearer!' Daff never heeded, an' it were o George an' me could do to hindher him fro' breighkin' forrad to his dyeath. It's two chaps' wark onytime to howd Daff, an' wi that sthrange crazy fit on him his limbs were like iron rods.

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Iv we hadn't bin there he'd ha bin kil't, by gum! 'Be off!' aw sheauted to th' captain. 'He'll maisther us in another minute!' so he throtted away an' th' owd chap gav o'er wrostlin wi us. 'Aw know his curs'd face,' he mutther't; 'aw'll find it again somewheere!' Then he dhropped on his knees beside his lad, sobbin' very wild, 'Oh, mi lad! Oh, mi bonny lad!' o'er an' o'er again. Aw spoke to him but he never heeded an' didn't know me. He kept on mournin', rockin' hissel on his knees. Everybody had gwone but us, so we picked Steve up an' carried him to th' carriage, an' Daff followed us quietly but olez mournin'. George dursen't be inside wi th' body, so he rode wi th' coachman an' aw kept Daff company misel, for aw couldn't ha fund i' mi heart to lev him in th' state he were. That were heaw we rode wom."

"A dreadful ride for you!"

"Misther How; iv aw'd bin ever sich a villain those weary heurs shut up wi crazy Daff an' his dyead son were enough to cure me. Aw con never forget it whol aw live. Yo mun have yon poor owd chap takken care on, for aw'm sure he's noane fit to goo wandherin abeaut bi hissel."

I assured him that David should be cared for, and thanked him warmly for all he had done in connection with the tragedy. I discovered that he had paid five pounds for the coach fare from his own pocket, and promised to refund the money when I could afford it, a statement that surprised him considerably.

"Aw've olez thought yo were weel off; but there's no hurry."

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"The money shall certainly be repaid," I said, "although for the present I am as poorly off as you. I will not forget all your kindness to my friends; you shall find rectitude more profitable than law-breaking."

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He thanked me and rose to go his way. I offered my hand, a trifling sign of friendship which seemed to affect him deeply. He brushed a hand across his eyes, gave me a cordial grip, muttered some indistinct words, and left the room.

Moss had all the graphic directness of description to be expected from his intelligent and reasoning mind. Every detail of the fatal meeting by the riverside copse had been clearly presented, invested by voice and gesture with rough dramatic force, the homely dialect he employed having for my ear at least special power to command attention.

His revelation of Masham's under-workings proved that the gallant officer had dreaded facing the trial, and could only have hoped to brazen his way through it by absolute impudence, an expectation which Cresslet had speedily dispelled. His punishment had been severe, and I presumed that he would be forced to resign his commission, even if he were lucky enough to escape indictment for perjury. Yet all my foresight failed to show me the still more terrible fate destined to befall him before that eventful March had run its course.

XX

As nobody formally "laithed," or invited us to Stephen's funeral, Ellen and I perforce joined a large crowd of less interested spectators in the parish churchyard, where we sought shelter from persistent drizzling rain beneath an elm grove, until the sad group of mourners appeared winding slowly along the green hillside. The church doors stood open, but the most reckless, among a mass of people gathered from all corners of the town, refrained from entering the sacred building until the body had been reverently carried into the nave. The coffin was borne on a hand-bier by four

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young men. Behind it Mrs. Grindrod walked, supported by a female friend and followed by a few sympathising neighbours. Last of all came David with a grizzled, elderly man, obviously of the same kin, beside him. Other relatives there appeared to be none.

Mrs. Grindrod's affected outbursts of tears and rustling new habiliments of woe had not escaped me, but the sight of David sent every thought of others flying, forcing me to concentrate my whole attention upon himself. His hair and beard had withered snow-white, his strong body drooped, his resolute features were haggard and attenuated as by disease, his eyes stared wildly, fixed before him as if seeing no external object.

"Poor owd chap!" Ben muttered at my shoulder. "He's takkin' it badly, an' nobry con blame him noather, for there's few faythers wi sich a son to loise as David's lost."

"Did you see, Laurence?" Ellen whispered. "Can he be sane with that dreadful face? Oh, has there not been horror and anguish enough already without this added fear!"

I tried to speak calming words to her, full of apprehension myself, and we went slowly to the open grave without attempting to enter the now crowded church. Many familiar faces were gathered about the heaps of fresh-turned earth, many eyes surveyed us as we approached, yet no looks of recognition were exchanged. A sense of awe strongly moved us all.

Hawkins stood near. He gave us his hand in silence, and we waited together until the coffin passed again before us and we heard Dr. Drake's consequential voice lifted in familiar phrases of solemn power.

"Man that is born of a woman bath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down,

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like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay."

Mrs. Grindrod's wailings broke across the vicar's measured sentences, her attendants murmuring subdued words of comfort. David stood apart from his wife,

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

making no sign until the words "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" fell upon his ear; then he crumbled a clod of soil, cast it into the grave, and I saw his lips moving like those of a man who registers some earnest vow.

It was past. Low in the moist ground that gallant form was laid, gone from earth's courses for ever was the beloved friend whose future should have proved so bright. Basely murdered with all due advantages approved by etiquette and fashion, no more to be a hindrance in any gentleman's path, never again with low-bred presumption to claim right or privilege against decrees of authority, no longer to employ his rare powers for the benefit and advancement of his kind, there lay one for whose blood the accursed divisions of society must answer. My soul overflowed with bitterness as I dumbly appealed to heaven for the time when the poor man might defy the rich man's grudge, when gold should cease to outweigh humanity and truth.

All was done. Mrs. Grindrod was led away, the crowd dispersed. Most of those associated with events of Stephen's trial and tragic end—Phelim, Clancy, Edmund, Scholefield, Moss, George, and others—passed near us, but we were accosted by none. I waited, wondering if David would treat me with the indifference he had shown towards his wife. Presently his attendant left him standing motionless by the graveside, and coming up to my carriage addressed me with earnest brevity.

"Yo're Mистер Howt aw think? Aw'm Grindhrod's

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cousin—his fayther an' mine were brothers. He's bin livin' wi me this day or two, but he's for gooin' off somewheere else neaw he reckons. It'll ne'er do for him to wandher abeaut bi hissel. What con we shap for th' best?"

"We must have a talk with him before he goes," I said, puzzled by the question. "He is not easy to persuade."

"Aw know that weel. When his mind's gradely set on a thing there's no stirrin' him."

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"I felt sure you were akin to David. You are very like him—or like what he was five days since. I would not have believed it possible for a man to alter as he has done. Have you had much trouble with him?"

"Not a bit! He's quiet enough, poor lad, an' yet sthrange. But come, aw'll bring him here an' yo'll see for yorsel."

David spared him the trouble, for he turned and seeing us came forward at once. There was a visible change in him since entering the churchyard. His eyes were clearer, his face was less distorted, his expression far more rational.

"Laurence, my lad," he began, with the ghost of his old manner, 'aw could like to shake thi hond just once again. Tha's proved thisel a good friend to me an' mine, an' aw've noane forgotten it. God bless thee!"

As David released my hand Ellen gave hers to him.

"Will you not spare a remembrance for me also?"

"Eh, my bonny lass, this is weary wark for thee! Aw could tak thee into mi heart as free as ever Stephen did, but sichlike tendher thoughts mun tarry in my mind no moore. Tha'rt innicent, tha'rt young, tha knows wheere comfort con be fund—wheere sich as me darnot look to find it. Bless thee, mi beauty—daughther-i'-law as were to be—an' tak an owd sinner's word for it tha'll live to be happy yet when this terrible job's done wi an' long passed o'er. Recollect

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what aw say, chance aw should ne'er see thi pratty face no moore."

"You speak as if taking a last farewell of us all," I said anxiously. "Surely you are not intending to leave us?"

"Sthraight away, lad! Aw may happen never meet a sowl here again."

"But this is nonsense! We shall not lose sight of you so easily. Where are you going to?"

"That depends," David replied, the wild light gleaming again from his eyes. "It's hard to say an' betther noane spokken on."

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"Stay with us for a few days at least," Ellen pleaded, taking his arm as if to lead him away with her. "Come home with us and rest until you are more composed. Come!"

"Aw darnot, chilt," David returned, putting her gently aside. "Aw'm i' little humour for restin'."

"What about your loom?" I asked, hoping to subdue his fevered brain by practical talk about what I supposed to be his chief interest in life.

"Mi loom?" he said, staring vacantly. "What loom, lad?" Then, as I watched him with increasing alarm, he suddenly broke out: "Ah, to be sure—aw'd clen forgotten it for th' minute!"

Now that he was reminded the subject had no apparent interest for him. I hazarded another question.

"Can you finish the work without Stephen?"

"Aw've done wi it!" David impatiently exclaimed. "Aw've no patience to think o' that cursed invention, an' mi fingers'll dhrop fro their stumps afore aw lay hond on it again! Let onybody finish it 'at will! "

"That's Mr. Hawkins talking with your cousin," I said. "Suppose you have a word with him about it? Shall I call him?"

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"Ony road," was David's indifferent reply, so I called the manager and made the two men acquainted.

"So yo're Hawkins," the weaver said, beginning their conversation. "Aw've ne'er met yo afore to mi knowledge, though aw've oft yerd Steve mention yor name. Yo were a good maisther to him, an' aw thank yo for it."

"It's no credit o' mine, Grindhrod. We ne'er had a cliverer lad on th' ground nor yors, an' I'll assure yo we con ill spare him."

"Aw'll reet him," David said, smoothing his troubled brow. "Never deaubt but aw'll reet him, an' wi this very hond!"

He clenched his right fist, shaking it fiercely before him.

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"Tell Mr. Hawkins about your loom, David," I said.

"To be sure, lad; it's no saycret neaw. Aw've done wi't." He paused for a moment, passed a hand across his forehead and turned abruptly to me. "Tell him thisel, Laurence; my wits are like wandherin' a bit just neaw."

I had guessed so much without being told, and thought it a good sign that he was partly conscious of his aberration.

"Mr. Hawkins," I said, "this man, little as you may suspect the fact, is an inventor of original genius. He has designed and partly built a power-loom, superior in his opinion to any at present known in the trade. He was depending on Stephen's help to complete the work, and talks now of abandoning the whole project when success and fortune are within easy reach. With your assistance there can be no difficulty in constructing the machine, and I want you to help him out."

"It's a good thing iv Stephen's had a hand in it," said Hawkins promptly, "an' it happen means business for yon mechanics o' mine. Where is this frame? Let's be seem' it."

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"It's at Ashton," David said. "Laurence knows wheere. Yo'll find full dhravins an' sections, but aw misdeaubt yo'll never make it run as it should do."

"All the more reason why you should explain your design to Mr. Hawkins before going away," I said. "That would help him greatly. Come home with us to-day, and he will see you to-morrow."

"He'd betther come wi me," Hawkins said with rough kindness. "Yo're welcome to a bed i' my house, Grindhrod, an' we con talk there beaut havin' onybody to bother us."

I whispered in his ear: "If you can manage to keep him employed for two or three days it will be the saving of him."

The manager nodded. David was hesitating what to answer—evidently a trifle would turn him.

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"It is the very thing Stephen always desired," I said. You owe it to his memory that no chance shall be neglected of finishing the loom."

"Hawkins con hardly shap beaut thy advice," suggested the cousin. "There's sure to be some bit ov a thing croppin' up, an' aw'd make sure o' th' job bein' done reet iv aw were thee."

"An' look what time yo'd save us, Grindhrod," said Hawkins, advancing perhaps the strongest argument of any to David's practical and thrifty instincts. "Yo con show me in five minutes what may take us a month to find out."

Wilful waste seemed an intolerable offence to the old weaver. All his past life rose against it. "Aw'll tarry one neet an' sketch mi frame deawn; then yo mun manage as best yo con."

With that compromise we were fain to be satisfied, hoping that a night's rest would tend to soften our friend's obstinacy.

"Adam, this'll be moore to thy intherest nor mine,"

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David continued, addressing his cousin. "Laurence mun see tha gets thi fair share o' profit fro th' sellin' o' this machine. Aw'll set yo three on a level footin' an' every one mun make it his business to see 'at mi wife never wants for nowt. Give th' poor woman whatever brass hoo axes for, an' yo'll have plenty left to divide."

"This wain't do, man!" cried Hawkins of the business mind. "Han yo no moore relations beside Adam?"

"Noane i' th' world as ever we knew on. Follow what aw say an yo'll be reet. To give mi wife a big lump o' brass could nobbut be ruination for her. Keep her nicely gooin' an' nowt no moore, bury her when hoo dees, an' yo're welcome to every hawpny beside."

"Adam shall have my share," I said. "Don't expect I'm going to finger this money."

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"Don't thee tak it, Adam," said David. "Tha'rt single, an' one share'll be moore nor ever tha con live to spend. Tha'rt th' main mon abeaut this business—just see it's ordher't as aw want it."

"Ne'er bother thisel," said the cousin, who seemed as self-reliant and honest as David himself. "Everything mun be just as tha sattles it neaw. Tha knows me—say no moore! There's nobbut one thing aw cawn't undherston—what abeaut thisel?"

"Lev that to me," David returned. He was talking and planning his affairs sensibly enough, yet madness smouldered in his eyes.

"This bargain con never howd good," grumbled Hawkins. "It's clen again law. Give Adam yor invention an' let him pay me for makin' th' machines. That'll be a fair thing."

"Aw've sattl't it," David returned, waving off the subject. "Aw nobbut hope th' loom may turn eaut reet an pay

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weel for yor throuble. So neaw, iv yo'n a mind, we'll he gooin'."

The three men went away together, and I looked after them thinking that few better examples of the best characteristics of our home-grown men could be found. But the soaking rain put to flight all reflections, and we hastened down the hill in search of shelter and dry clothing.

Ellen left her chamber no more that day; the grief courageously borne before public eyes was now to be suffered and overcome in silence and seclusion.

At five o'clock next morning Hawkins came banging at the shop door, rousing Ben from ponderous snores and demanding admission to my room. Ben brought him up and discreetly retired to his couch again.

"He's bowted clen off," Hawkins began without preface. "What's to be done now?"

"Has he gone during the night?"

"That's it! I saw him safe to bed, promisin' to call him up this morin' an' take him down to th' works, but his chamber's empty—he's gwone!"

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

I could only say it was a great pity, and begin sorting my brains to discover a reason for David's flight.

"He were fair brokken deawn last neet," the manager continued. "When we'd had some baggin' I got him paper and pencils to mark out his design; so he laid down his frame reet enough, but when he coome to th' workin' parts he couldn't manage. I picked up a good outline of his new ideas, an' it's my opinion there's brass in 'em—a big lump too. I'll send a cart over for his model first thing."

"Then the poor fellow was actually unable to explain his own invention?"

"Quite, quite! His yead's gwone. He bothered awhile

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makin' aimless lines on his sheet, then he threw th' pencil away in a temper. 'There's nobry nobbut Stephen con make it run!' he says, poor owd chap! Talkin' o'er it made him wur, so I persuaded him off to bed, little thinkin' him deep enough to sup me this road. He'll be turnin' up afore long, so we'll finish off his loom an' be ready. When he comes again he'll very like be moore sensible about dividin' his brass."

"I am not sanguine about his return. You dont know how obstinate that man is."

"Oh, he'll come again! What else con he do? I declare, Holt, it welly made me cry to see his pitiful look when his design festened him, an' he sit starin' at his scrawl't sheet on th' table thryin' to gether up his lost memory. Poor owd mon, his troubles ban bin too mich for him!"

The busy manager hurried off to begin his day's duties. Reaching the stairfoot he turned and came back with a small packet in his hand.

"My yead's gooin' too, I believe, for I clen forgot to lev this. David charged me last neet to make sure yo had it. It's been in his pocket tuthri days—he'd forgotten it too."

I thanked him and opened the parcel as he hastened away. It contained a few sheets of paper covered with bold masterful handwriting as well known to me as my own irregular spider-legged scrawl. For a minute tears blinded my sight, and when that

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

sorrowful mist cleared away I read Stephen's last message in this world, which sounded in my ear as if with audible voice my beloved friend spoke from the grave.

"To ELLEN AND LAURENCE,

"If ever these words reach your hands their writer will be

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a memory only in your thoughts, for in mortal substance you can behold him no more. Without unmanly fears for the morrow I recognise the possibility of death, and prepare these last expressions of unchanging love to be used if I fall. They will add to your anguish for the moment, yet neither of you can desire, nor can I deliberately risk, that we should be parted without some sign from me. Therefore painful as the effort is I must endure it, hoping in God's mercy that by tearing the record to-morrow the pain may be confined to myself.

"My dearest girl, left by me with lies upon my tongue and deceit upon my countenance, what shall I write to comfort you! From my earliest recollections you have been undisputed empress of my soul, long gazed upon as a radiant dweller in unclimbable heavens, of late years loved with ardour of devotion and growing intensity of hope. Have I been diligent? It was for you. Have I denied myself? It was to gain that priceless treasure, your heart. Have I talent? It was assuredly inspired by you. And now, if life must fail me at a moment when future happiness seemed certain, I shall die for you, because I would not that the lover of your choice should give to any coward reason for wagging a derisive tongue. Mourn me well, for I have loved you long and deeply, yet when your days of mourning are past, condemn not all your years to unhappiness on my account. Many suitors will seek you, and among them I hope may be one to solace and bring content. Consider this as my last wish, and do not consume your life in fruitless grief for me.

"And you, dear friend, brother, bound to me by the most affectionate links possible between men, you also I must leave to regret my unlucky fate. To you I am indebted for

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such elevation of thought as belongs to me, from you I have learnt to set lofty ideals before myself, to strive for nobler ends than the murderous scramble for gold, to subdue my impulses against honour and duty; in brief, most that I possess of true education comes not from Phelim but his dreaming pupil, for whose imaginative mind mathematics have no charm.

"If length of years had been mine I would yet have striven to lighten the arduous lot of the toiling, patient, sterling people of whom I am proud to reckon myself one; if this zealous endeavour cannot be mine I leave to you the legacy of my long-nursed hope. It is by you and such as you, men who see with open eyes and spread abroad the gospel of truth, that national opinion must be led to give us not merely justice but mercy; for in dealings between men strict justice will not serve—there must be a wide selvage of charity or all is naught. How long in the providence of God this gift may be deferred we know not; the fighting is ours, soon or late victory is inevitable.

"Farewell, wife and brother, fond titles not to be written without a rending of the heart, not to be longer dwelt upon lest I should fail to creditably play my part in the coming drama. Farewell, beloved Ellen. Farewell, dear Laurence.

"STEPHEN."

XXI

I PURPOSELY pass over several days during which I was fit for nothing, taking up my narrative again in the last week of March. My sister had outwardly mastered her great affliction, and I had made her acquainted with the smaller irritation attending our father's determination to marry. Ellen's regard for the memory of our lost mother caused her to look

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upon Mr. Holt's unexpected proposal as something very like sacrilege, nor could I honestly declare myself free from symptoms of the same feeling; nevertheless she at once accepted the argument that our duty was to further our parent's happiness by refraining from disagreeable opposition. The poor girl was also distressed by fear of the Seafords invading our home, although I assured her there was small probability of that.

"I cannot remain here if they come, Laurence. You must rent a house somewhere and I will live with you."

"Happy poet, whose dwelling shall ever be gilded by beauty's presence! Still, let me suggest that I greatly prefer to stay under this roof. Don't hurry, my dear; Margaret's vanity will refuse to accept this humble abode as a refuge. You can't imagine so fine a lady condescending to live over a saddler's shop—her mercantile connections have long ceased."

"I can't imagine her living in the same house as myself, nor tolerate any thought of such a thing either."

A day or two later Margaret called upon us, probably with an intention of wounding my sister by impertinent condolence; however, as Ellen was upstairs by good luck, I refused to disturb her, caring nothing myself what my unprincipled visitor might consider it a point of good breeding to insult me with, but caring very much that my dear one should be protected from needless pangs.

Miss Seaford was brimming over with gay humour, and looked extremely well in her fashionable apparel. She fluttered about my room, disarranging papers which it was my habit to keep in neat order, striking snatches of tune from the harpsichord, fingering my violin in burlesque imitation of my style, and chattering like a magpie.

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"Your sister is engaged? What a misfortune, when I desired so much to see her! She will have recovered content of mind by now, I suppose—one can't be weeping for ever.

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

Dreadfully sad about Stephen—horrid! To think that naughty lover of mine should be mixed up with the accident, too! Awfully sad! Is she really engaged? I burn to comfort the dear girl, and indeed I must see her before I go, to give her a warm invitation to my wedding next week. Why do you lengthen your dismal face, sir? What extremely disagreeable company you are!"

"Whom are you marrying this time?"

"Captain Masham, of course—whom else should I marry? Don't presume to plead ignorance, since I condescended to enlighten you long ago from my own lips."

"As you remark, that was long ago, and I understood that your ideas had recently changed."

"Why should they change?"

"Nay, it is for yourself to expound reasons. You had an interview with Stephen Grindrod at Lancaster I think?"

If I had expected this statement to daunt Miss Margaret my expectation was far from being realised.

"I had an interview?" she asked with perfectly simulated astonishment. "Assuredly not! I saw the young man in the criminals' dock, of course, and that was all."

"You would observe Captain Masham in court also, and I trust his manly ingenuous behaviour gratified you. However, you sent a message to Stephen?"

"Never at any time."

The false hussy's letter lay in a drawer within reach of my hand, but nothing was to be gained by producing it. A lie more or less was of no importance to her and anger on my side would have been idle folly.

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"Very good," I said; "it is always desirable to have mistaken impressions corrected. You seriously propose, then, that Ellen shall be invited to attend your wedding?"

"I came for the very purpose of asking the dear girl. We have always been such cordial friends, you know. You speak as if some objection existed."

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

"Oh, no! Ellen would be delighted to meet her lover's murderer. There can be no objection which etiquette would recognise."

"Murderer!" she repeated with fine scorn. "There is the outcome of your local prejudices! As if duelling were not an understood practice among gentlemen! Your language is offensive."

"Very well. I wish you all the happiness your union is likely to produce. Other marriages are contemplated I am told. Have any rumours assaulted your ear?"

"My mother is infatuated!" Margaret cried, her hot temper breaking out. "I have reasoned with her and declared my entire disapproval of her folly. By marrying a tradesman she will simply disgrace us all."

"Thank you. I am glad you reasoned with the misguided lady."

"Assure your father from me that our family—the titled Masham family—can never receive him. My mother will be permitted to visit us, of course, but we cannot possibly admit a man of Mr. Holt's standing, as you must know."

"Certainly, I perceive the difficulty with much clearness. Your principles are strictly correct."

"I am unable to comprehend what my mother is thinking of!" the lady proceeded, fuming in a fashion which convinced me that we were getting near the real purpose of her visit at length. "She never had a becoming appreciation

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of our position, certainly, but this degradation is too much to be endured. I desire that you will exert yourself to break off this most unsuitable match."

"Do you? When a man has panted from childhood to become allied with his country's peers, and receive the exquisite bliss of their serene patronage, can you dream that he will forego that noble ambition in a moment?"

You will receive no recognition from the Mashams—do not suppose it!"

"Alas, you overwhelm me with despair!"

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"I do not say that you need to be hopeless of securing our patronage if your influence prevents this absurd union; indeed I should have pleasure in calling attention to your ability myself, and could probably induce his lordship or my husband to accept the dedication of your next volume."

"Ah! Now you overcome me with bliss!"

"Only, between ourselves, there must be no unseemly revolutionary sentiments in the book, and no descriptions of low characters must appear. I wish you to introduce decent people and write of them in a proper manner."

"Nothing can be easier. I am not to drop below the level of military men for instance?"

"Of course you are necessarily unacquainted with the manners of good society, which is probably your chief reason for dealing so much with poor people in your writings, and you must of necessity fall into many errors in treating of persons of breeding. Perhaps we could assist you there by reading over your manuscript and suggesting improvements; or if any trifling solecisms escaped our attention I could promise that they should pass without complaint from us."

"You are making one radical blunder there, for I am sadly too well acquainted with the habits of society people."

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"Within limits perhaps you are. A flattering and humble dedication to his lordship, together with my commendation, would no doubt secure his approval."

"My flattery would astonish him I think."

"Not if you phrase it decorously, avoiding presumption of any kind. He is always willing to assist struggling persons of correct thought and behaviour. I might even contrive an interview between you."

"Why, then, my fortune is surely made. But, as I understand you, all these prospective blessings depend upon my power to hinder your mother from disgracing herself by marriage with a saddler?"

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"Of course they do."

"Yet my father is a presentable man, and shall discourse to you by the hour on most elevating moral topics. Give the poor man a trial."

"You seek to further your own selfish ends, but consider seriously what I tell you, and reflect where your true interest lies. Decide as I wish, and an invitation to my wedding shall be forwarded to you at once. You will meet there many gentlemen of position whose favour would be profitable."

"Jealousy prevents me from attending that interesting ceremony, for to speak truth I wanted to marry you myself."

In the way of superciliousness I never saw anything superior to the glance Miss Seaford bestowed upon me after that admission.

"Marry *you!*" she cried in a withering tone, while I chuckled secretly. "Your audacity passes all bounds. Apart from everything else, can you suppose that I should demean myself by consenting to reside in this paltry house?"

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"There are worse residences than this, and worse husbands than I should make."

"Your mind lacks all sense of proportion! I should be very angry with you if I were not aware that your ridiculous hopes arise from supreme ignorance of the world."

"Spare me your wrath, lady, even if you disdain my suit, and for heaven's sake if you can't credit me with fashionable knowledge allow me to retain my perception of humour!"

"Oh, don't fear that I shall meddle with your vulgar proclivities! There is a tone about your remarks which I dislike intensely, and I have simply tolerated your impertinence from a desire for your welfare. You will forward your decision to-morrow, and my conduct will be guided by your answer."

"Your disinterested instructions shall be digested."

Miss Seaford rose, and I hailed with delight that sign of deliverance.

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

"We go to France for the honeymoon, so that several months may elapse before I can see you again. In the meantime let me hope that you will succeed in what you have undertaken to do."

"Pardon me—I have undertaken nothing."

"I depend upon your good sense," she said. "Make my excuses to your sister, if you please. I am sorry not to have seen her."

"She will excuse you," I replied, and with that assurance she departed, leaving me heartily sick of her shallow pretence and brazen self-seeking.

By way of relief I went to see Scholefield, who had sent for me to settle some last details connected with our law business. Ben carried me up into the private office as usual,

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and was at once assailed by the attorney, who for a wonder was awake.

"Are you here again, rascal? I shall submit to no more of your offensive impudence, so be careful!"

"Aw'll plague yo no moore, 'turney," said Ben. "Yo'n managed this law job very weel for us, an' desarven credit. Yo were nobbut shappin' in a sleepy road one while—aw deaubted yo'd make a foo on us, an' that made me rayther impident."

"You have a glimmer of sense in your huge carcass I'm glad to hear," said the lawyer. "Come, since you've found reason I'll reward you by a glass of old port, of a quality your throttle is not familiar with."

He produced a bottle of his valued liquid and poured some out for Ben's consumption saying:—

"Every glassful you swallow is a nail in your coffin."

"Is it for sure?" says Ben, drinking the wine and unconcernedly holding up his glass to be re-filled. "Knock another in, then, whol th' hommer's in yor bond."

Scholefield laughed and humoured him.

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"Thank yo, Scwofilt," Ben said. "Yor dhrink's good an' yor credit's gooin' up, for it's no faurt o' yors Stephen isn't among us to-day. Done yo recollect that t'other big duel, when Moses o' Dobber's were shot?"

"No, I don't."

"Sam Blackburn an' him fell eaut summat o'er music. Moses played a double-bass in th' chapel band, so he fancied his knowledge a bit an' took th' huff at some joke Sam made abeaut it. 'It'll be cake-brade an' pistils between us this time,' Moses splutther't. 'Aw'll be hobshackl't' wi thee no longer!'

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"So they sattl't for a meetin' next mornin' at five, an' faced one another when th' time coome, howdin' a brid-gun apiece, as pistils werenot hony to come by. Moses' fayther were on th' greaund wi a square clock undher his arm.

"'It'll nobbut goo deawn-side up, but it sthrikes reet enough,' th' owd mon towd Sam. 'It's getten stopped wi shiftin' an' aw don't justly know heaw th' mornin' stons, so aw'll put it on to five an' yo mun fire when it's done sthrikin'.'

"'That'll do,' Sam says. 'Three shots apiece, an' iv there's nobbut one kil't th' wick un helps to carry him worn.'

"'Agreed on,' says Moses, thremblin'.

"They blazed off when t' clock had sthriken, an' Sam's bullet knocked Moses' cap off. Dobber set his clock on to six an' they fired again. Sam's bullet took Moses between th' feet that time, makin' him jump, but what Moses did wi his own bullets nobry never could tell.

"'He's shot o'er me an' undher me, fayther,' says Moses; 'it'll be domino for me neaw!'

"'Turn edgeways an' make thisel as little as tha con,' Dobber said.

"He shoved his clock on to seven, an' they banged away at one another, Moses dhroppin' flat wi a hole through his ribs.

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"He's short o' nowt nobbut buryin'!" Dobber says, turnin' him o'er. "There'll be a good bass fiddle to sell chep neaw, Sam, iv tha happens to know onybody 'at's wantin' one."

"An' that's o th' mournin' ever onybody made o'er Moses."

Scholefield limped away from Ben in disgust. "Do you think my time is to be wasted hearkening your impudent lies?"

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The faintest suspicion of a twinkle crossed Ben's stolid countenance.

"You never told me about your bargain with Moss," I said, as the lawyer sat down at his table again.

"What bargain?"

"Oh, come, all this mystery is useless! I know all about your negotiations."

"Then you need no information from me," Scholefield returned drily. "Experience has taught me two things, Holt. One is that a babbling solicitor soon talks his trade away, and t'other is that fewest words are best in cases of importance."

"I can't gainsay your wisdom. Still there is no harm in chattering now the matter is disposed of. I am curious to hear how much you paid for Ferret's evidence."

"Twenty pounds."

"Who fixed the amount?"

"Are you putting me under cross-examination, young fellow?" Scholefield asked, laughing. "We had better request our bulky friend to retire if secrets are to be exposed."

"Let him alone and speak freely."

Well, there's no harm in telling. Ferret expected to realise a fortune for his information, and mind you we were bound to buy him at any cost. I had settled on a hundred pounds as his price, but if the villain had stuck out for more we should have been compelled to pay. However, Moss altered the look of things by blabbing the whole story, and you may bless him for sparing your pocket. The fellow must have been afflicted with nightmare or something, for he came whining about his conscience and a

lot more such infernal rubbish, as if that sort of twaddle could cheat me. What the ruffians aimed at was getting their cash beforehand, and then making terms with the other side."

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"I think Moss meant honestly by us."

"Pooh! Tell me black's white."

"Your suspicion over-reaches itself for once, surely. Moss would never have been fool enough to blab if swindling had been his purpose."

"Don't tell me such stuff! You green youngsters are too easily imposed upon by half. I wormed the secret out of him, man, before he knew where his wits had rambled to."

"Don't lay that flattering opinion to your soul Ephraim is no chicken to flutter into any man's hand. Has Butterworth paid his debts yet?"

"Like a man! I'll say this much for the squire—he's a straightforward chap where money is concerned, for all his bluster and brag. He's a passable judge of wine, too, considering."

"And a bold rider."

"Why yes, he's bold enough if his judgment only ran abreast of his courage. It's all or nothing with the squire, and his horses get no mercy when his blood's up. Some of these fine mornings he'll be carried home with a broken neck."

"And you will puzzle your brains to discover an underhand motive in it."

"You be hanged, master critic, and clap a halter round that biting tongue of yours! If you annoy me I'll charge it in the bill."

"Then, as another man provides the money, I must be mum. Will Masham be indicted for perjury?"

"Bless you, no! Why should he?"

"That question is too profound for my limited knowledge. Will he lose his commission?"

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"Hardly, unless some busybody interferes. Your lamented friend's standing was not sufficient for military recognition."

"Will he sleep at fleets?" Ben demanded.

"Soundly enough, I should say," the attorney sneered, "But you should apply to more conscientious men than solicitors for an answer to that. Try Moss, for instance."

"Done yo see this hond?" said Ben, poising his huge fist. "Whenever aw come across yon swaggerin' captain aw'll hommer him whol he's fain to sheaut 'Barley!' so tak that fro me."

"You keep yourself quiet, rascal, and don't stick your nose into other folks' affairs without occasion."

"This affair's as mich mine as onybody's," Ben said, vengeful light glimmering in his eyes. "He con murdher as fine a lad as ever stepped, an' breighk as tendher a heart as ever warmed wi love, an' yor law cawn't touch him! We'll see whether he chets me or not!"

"Don't meddle, Ben," I said. "We have had trouble enough already."

"Aw'll ne'er goo a-seechin' him, my lad; but let him come within arm-length an' aw'll hommer him iv he's o th' British army at his back, horse and foot!"

"You intend making some more business for me, I hear," Scholefield remarked, and with that he set to work on the matters for which he required my attendance, giving his clerk, Jim, the usual restless flights up and down stairs. I found all the lawyers arrangements satisfactory, and left him feeling a good deal of respect for his capacity, now that it appeared stripped of his habitual mask of sleepy indifference.

"I hope my connection with the law has now ceased,"

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I said. "My contempt for its workings increases with knowledge."

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

"Give us a chance to live, man!" says Scholefield, fingering his straggling whisker. "Glass of wine before you go? No? Well, don't forget to give my compliments to your sister. She is a girl to be proud of."

XXII

I was returning home from Bamford late one night, wheeling myself leisurely along under the stars. The night was clear and calm, a breath of awakening spring arose from the meadows bordering the highroad, and my wits were rambling afar in dim regions of fancy until a sound of horse's hoofs behind me brought them suddenly to earth again. I drew off to the road side, not desiring to be run down in the dim light, and the horseman speedily came up.

"Is that you, Holt, crawling along in the ditch?" he called to me in a voice easily recognisable.

"Spur on, captain," I said, "for captain you still remain, I suppose, honourably serving the king. My instincts are not gregarious to-night."

"Pish! What a spiteful little mannikin it is! I bear you no malice myself, although you have given me sufficient reason for doing so. It was an unlucky day for me when I became acquainted with you and your friends, and I have narrowly escaped permanent disgrace by forming connections so far beneath me."

"Then you are not disgraced yet?"

"Fortunately not, thanks to a little tact in handling my colonel. He had received some exaggerated accounts of what passed at Lancaster, and I found difficulty in dispelling them."

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"In plain English you have lied your way out of the trouble?"

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"You contemptible little viper "Mashain snarled, showing his white teeth in the starlight. "I could crush you at a blow and finish your impertinence, but that your prejudiced opinions are now harmless to injure my reputation."

"Put your horse to his speed," I said; "we need travel no further in company. Hasten to your expectant lady-love and be happy. I prefer not to have a military escort, however unblemished its reputation may be. You have done to death my dearest friend, and laid up long years of misery for my sister. Go and be happy."

"The chief mistake you persons fall into is that of overrating your importance," Masham coolly returned. "I am sorry the lad was killed, but what then? A soldier thinks nothing of a life more or less, and you must admit that your friend was favoured by getting a chance to shoot me, a man of ten times his consideration. You view this unlucky accident from one side only, and naturally reach a disproportionate conclusion."

"I have been charged before with lacking a true sense of proportion. Possibly a close study of etiquette would remove my defect, and endow me with impartial judgment"

"Undoubtedly that would enlarge your ideas. But in any case it would be hopeless to expect clear understanding from a weakling home-ridden mortal like you. How could you possibly gain experience of the stern issues of serious events, or comprehend the masculine vigour that impels men to strive together for life or death? You never did anything but perch in unseen corners, sneering at a world you scarcely belong to, concocting secret estimates of people gifted with brains and capacity far above your own. Stick to your

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paltry scribbling and fiddling, and don't presume to judge the conduct of grown men. As for your sister, she has only herself to blame for any misery she may experience. If she had accepted my suit all would have gone well."

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"Ride on," I said, pulling up. "If I had the frame and vigour of a man you should bitterly rue those words. Relieve me of your detestable society at least."

He lingered a minute, regarding me with smiling contempt as if meditating more insolent remarks, then putting his horse to a trot he disappeared round a bend in the highway. As I prepared to follow slowly after him the measured hoof-beats suddenly ceased, there was a distant mutter of voices, a sound as of heavy blows, and all was still.

My coward heart chained me to the spot for a moment, then I sent my carriage nervously forward, keeping well under the hedgerow where darkness lay deepest. Masham's horse stood riderless in the road, and beside it was David Grindrod leaning on a weighty cudgel, spurning with his foot a dark mass lying upon the ground. Too well I guessed that Masham lay there, overtaken at last by the vengeance he had himself raised up. My whole body quivered with horror, but I hesitated no longer to approach the dreadful group. David recognised me with a wild laugh, making no motion towards flight.

"Is it thee, Laurence? Come an' look at this bowd sodier—he's quiet enough neaw."

"What have you done, madman? Heaven grant you have not killed the man!"

"There's an end on him neaw," David cried, striking another savage blow at the motionless body. "Stephen's reeted—aw swore he should be, an' neaw it's done I"

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"Oh, for God's sake hold your hand! Are you cowardly enough to strike a helpless man?"

I forced my carriage in between the frenzied weaver and his victim, and tried to snatch the deadly staff, but David was too quick for me.

"Get back!" he said fiercely. "Meddle noane wi' this job whol aw've made sure on him! His life mun onswer for my lad's."

I stooped down to examine Masham's condition. His head was fearfully battered, and no motion of the heart was perceptible.

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"He is dead or dying," I said, beside myself with excitement and horror. "Come here, you maniac, and raise him, unless you want a gallows rope round your neck."

"Aw'm carless abeaut that," said David, stirring no finger to help the insensible soldier. "Stephen's reeted, an' this scamp's getten what he weel desarved. Aw think no moore o' killin' him nor aw should o' slettin' a badger!"

"You mount that horse and fetch the nearest doctor," I said. "Don't sham craziness with me—you know well enough what you are doing. If this man dies I will bear witness against you, by all my hopes of heaven! But all is too late—he is surely dead—he neither moves nor breathes—see! his arm falls stiff and lifeless! He must be dead!"

"Sarve him reet!" David muttered in callous tones. "Tak thisel off wom an' let him lie."

Masham's whip lay in the road. In default of better expedients I picked it up and slashed at the horse, which galloped clattering off towards Rochdale, hoping that the riderless runaway would arouse attention and inquiry. There was nothing else to be done, for by this time I felt certain that the captain was stone dead, and that no weak efforts of

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mine could avail him. Remorse was already gnawing at my heart, for if in my childish irritation I had not refused to accompany the captain Grindrod would hardly have ventured to attack him there, and the crime might have been avoided. Impotence, regret, and dread forced me into womanish tears.

"Yeawlin's no use," David said sullenly, drawing nearer to me. "He's past fotchin' back an' onybody may fret for him 'at will. Aw've finished what aw set misel to do an' neaw aw'm satisfied."

"Stand aside, murderer! Don't come near me!"

"What makes thee so bittther again me, o ov a sudden? It's nobbut reet aw should tak punishment on this wasthrel. There's no law con touch him. Aw've olez reckon't thee as a friend, an' expected tha'd be fain for this to happen."

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"Reckon upon my friendship no longer. Oh, what blind fools we were not to understand your motive sooner—and yet your supposed madness might well deceive us! Who could have imagined that a man like you would commit murder? Nothing but hanging can be your portion."

"Aw'm ready to face it neaw mi wark's done. Aw'll 'liver misel up to-neet."

"Raise the man's head and see if it is still possible to save him. Be sensible, now, and put away your bloodthirsty feelings. You are wronging Stephen instead of righting him."

Say what I would the obstinate fellow would not be persuaded to touch his victim, but his manner became less wild and his speech more cational.

"Summat's bin wrong wi my brains," he muttered, putting a hand to his forehead, as I bent over the body with a last vain hope of detecting a flutter of animation. "Aw feel moore like misel to-neet, but aw've olez known what were

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set for me to do, an' neaw it's done. Aw ne'er expected tha'd turn again me afther what we'n gwone through together. Well, it matthers little for what tuthri days aw mun pass alive! It looked to me this were nobbut a reet thing to do, for this sodier's kil't my lad an' ruin't o mi hard-fowten plans, an' as th' law wouldn't pay him back there were nobry nobbut me to take revenge for his nowty wark. An' yet there's a summat—aw feel different some road—tha's good insect into things—aw'm gettin moidher't o'er it. Reet or wrong aw'll dar it eaut," he continued with sudden fierceness. "Didn't aw know weel afore startin' what mi wage mut be! Use me as they will there's no bringin' this hecthorin' reskil back!"

"Listen to me," I said, mastering the disgust rising within me against this man whom lately I had been proud to call my friend. "It is enough that Stephen should die without your life being forfeited too. This much I am willing to risk for you—get into secure hiding somewhere until we learn the upshot of this crime, and if you escape suspicion I will provide money to ship you out of the country. But understand plainly

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that if suspicion falls upon any innocent man I shall not hesitate to declare the truth. So much I will venture, well knowing that my course cannot be justified—so much and no more."

"Aw care nowt abeaut it, lad," David replied. "It's nobbut reet aw should 'liver misel up an' onswer for what aw've done. Aw've nowt no moore to live for, an' iv aw chet th' hangman aw could ne'er saddle deawn here again. Aw'll 'liver misel up."

"We must get away from this place at any rate, for somebody will be sure to come before long. Go to your cousin Adam's for a few days until some fixed course can be

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decided upon, and if you are wanted I shall know where to find you."

"Ony road," David said indifferently. "Aw'll tarry theree whol tha sends word."

He made off down a cross lane, without so much as looking at the dead man, and I struck into another by-path myself to avoid meeting any search party which might be coming along the highway. I shudder now to remember that I turned away, my hot fit of terror being past, feeling no more compunction than would have been aroused in me by the sight of a dead dog.

XXIII

David's respite was brief. I had not been out of bed an hour next morning before news was brought that Masham's murderer had been taken, and was lying in the lockup awaiting justice. This intelligence sent me off to Butterworth's house in a hurry, anxious to discover whether Grindrod had surrendered himself or some other unfortunate had been pitched upon as the guilty person. Butterworth was in a great state of fuss, making the room ring with his boisterous exclamations, and pouring out dogmatical assertions by the yard.

"Here's shocking work, Laurence! Dang me if decent folks are safe in their beds these times, with gangs of robbers and cut-throats infesting all the parish! They'd best be

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minding themselves, dal 'em, for their chances will be very small once I undertake the job of weeding 'em out. They little know what I am when fairly roused, or it's certain not a chap among 'em durst have defied the law as it's been defied lately. Here's Miss Seaford in hysterics and Masham's relations gone clean off their minds, all the wedding arrange-

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ments upset, and everything tumbling about in ruin. I've got the murderer, dal him! He shall swing at a rope's end, and we shall be plagued by one villain less then!"

"Are you sure he's the right man?"

"Certain, lad, certain! My instinct never deceives me."

"Well, but you can hardly hang a man by instinct. What is the evidence against him?"

"Why, dal it, lad, tha never saw such a blood-thirsty looking ruffian! His very face condemns him with anybody capable of reading countenances as I am! I can scent these villains a mile off."

"Where was he taken?"

"Why, fumbling about the body, man, not another soul near him! He was caught red-handed in a manner, and all the paltry excuse the scoundrel could invent was that he saw the body while passing by, and stopped, trying to give what help he could. Brash all such liars!"

"Does anybody know him?"

"I've seen him myself somewhere—yes, I've seen him before! I never forget a face—I've rather a natural turn that way, dal it! I shall be finding him out in a bit—it's sure to come back—my memory never fails. Smash it, no!"

"He is not a townsman, then?"

"No, no! We've rubbish enough and to spare without that."

"Well, sir, you may release this poor fellow as soon as you please, for he is perfectly innocent of the crime. There is no evidence at all against him that I can see."

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The justice exploded like a bombshell, scattering heated language on every side of him. The evidence was complete—his instinct was sufficient to convince him of the man's

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guilt—I was always rambling about after fanciful notions—an example must be made, and so forth.

"All this bluster is thrown away," I said. "You are not justified in detaining your prisoner five minutes longer. I alone know who is guilty of the captain's murder, and before this day has gone I undertake to put him within your grasp."

Gabriel fumed and spluttered. "Dang it, man, as a magistrate I can't recognise any such proceedings as that! Give me the man's whereabouts, so that I may send a couple of constables to fetch him in a proper manner."

"That won't answer at all. The man would not submit to be dragged handcuffed through the streets. He would laugh at any two men you could send after him; indeed I question if your whole force, watchmen included, could drive him in a direction contrary to his liking."

"Dal it, am I to send a regiment of cavalry to apprehend the fellow?"

"If you trust the matter in my hands I will hold myself responsible for his appearance. He shall be at the lockup by four o'clock this afternoon."

"Well, I'll venture to give thee so much grace, and never press thee for the villain's name neither. Tha seldom talks without meaning, dash thee, and there's hardly another man living could influence me so far against my naturally strong resolution. Keep strictly to thy time, lad, for I warn thee that any failure will be visited on thy head. I shall be at the lockup myself. Dal it, yes! This investigation must have my personal superintendence, and even then we undergo a risk in altering legitimate precedents. After all tha'll find my prisoner is the guilty man, crash him! He's the very picture of it!"

I had no fear of failing to keep my promise. A word '7

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would be enough for David, I knew, and the result proved my confidence in him to be justified. Ben served as messenger, finding no difficulty in persuading David to accompany him, although the old man must have clearly seen whither his steps were tending. I sent for Mrs. Grindrod also, supposing it probable that husband and wife might have no other opportunity of meeting in this world, and when the appointed hour came we all met in the turnkey's room of the little prison.

David had lost all traces of insanity, appearing again with his old quiet manner and thoughtful expression, but humbled, downcast, and greatly aged. His wife had altered in nothing perceptible; she sidled into the room and found a seat for herself, paying no attention to anybody, pulled out a large handkerchief and awaited events. David cast a glance upon her when she entered, saying nothing, however, for the moment.

Butterworth arrived as the clock struck, bringing Dr. Drake with him, and the turnkey made a passing fuss by setting chairs for the two magistrates. The vicar was not personally acquainted with either the Grindrods or myself, and he asked a few questions concerning our identity in a slightly supercilious tone, remarking finally that the room ought to be cleared of all persons not immediately interested. Taking this as a hint that Ben's presence was not desired I sent away my faithful guardian.

"Don't tell me this is the man, Laurence," said Butterworth, pointing to David as the door closed. "Dal it, my belief in human nature will be lost entirely very soon!"

"David," I said, "there is a stranger imprisoned here for murdering Captain Masham. He was found beside the dead body and can give no satisfactory account of himself.

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Suspicion is strong against him, men have been hanged many a time on evidence no more convincing, and if no extenuating facts transpire the unfortunate man will most likely be brought to the gallows."

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"Nay, he munnot" said David quietly. "Where is this chap?—aw could like to see him."

Butterworth and the vicar eyed each other for a moment. "Quite irregular," said one. "It matters nought, dal it!" the other blurted out. "Adams, fetch the prisoner. He's but a poor sickly rogue—we need no constables to hold him."

The prisoner was set before us, quivering with abject fear, and I recognised him at a glance as the Ashton weaver who had once accosted Butterworth for alms, and after being frightened out of his wits had been sent rejoicing on his way by that worthy upholder of the peace.

"They tell me tha's bin takken for murdher," David began, addressing the trembling wanderer, "but that's o a mistake, so keep thi mind yezzy abeaut it." He turned to the magistrates. "Yo mun turn this mon base an' lock me up astid on him."

"We cannot possibly accept your unsupported statement, my good man," said the vicar.

"Laurence con back eaut everything aw say," David replied, waving a hand towards me. "Nobry mun be punished for th' captain nobbut me. Aw kil't him, an' aw'm ready to onswer for it."

Mrs. Grindrod burst into a noisy fit of weeping, Butterworth stared with open eyes and mouth, the vicar's plump features assumed a look of horror.

"There! Yo'll believe me now, maister," the prisoner whined, addressing Butterworth and almost grovelling before

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the magistrates. "I'm nobbut a poor wayver fro Ashton as never thowt for t' harm nobody, leeast of all to kill a mon. I couldna do it! Dunno yo recollect givin' me a shillin' once, when I were aimin' for t' reeach mi relations i' Yokshire? This young gentleman in t' wheeled cheer were talkin' to yo at th' very time—I recollect him well. I've bin wayvin at Halifax ever sin,' an' now I'm makin' mi rooad back to mi own family. That's gospel thruth, gentlemen, iv aw were to dee this minute."

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"Dal it, I felt sure of having seen thy hangdog countenance before," Butterworth began, when the vicar whispered in his ear:—

"Moderate your language, my friend, if you will be so good. We should ever observe courtesy even in dealing with the lowest of our fellow-creatures."

"Dang it, vicar, that's not my way! I believe in telling 'em what I think and finishing with 'em. Hark ye, vagrant! If tha reckoned to be making towards Ashton what took thee along the Bamford road?"

"I'd lost mi rooad in t' dark, maister."

"We're not believing any such nonsense as that, my man! Blange me, no! We're hardly such green goslings as that comes to! Dang it, in the way of an excuse I've seldom met with poorer invention nor thine!"

"Let us be reasonable, if you please," Dr. Drake interposed. "If Grindrod committed the crime, as he avers, this poor fellow must be innocent. Mr. Holt, to which side does your belief incline?"

"The prisoner is speaking absolute truth," I said. "You are not justified in detaining him longer."

"Can you confirm Grindrod's statement by your own positive knowledge?"

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"I can, sir."

"It needs no confirmin'," David said. "Aw'm onswerable for this job, an' aw'm willin' to bide th' warst judgment onybody con spend o'er it. Set this thremblin' fellah loose afore he's freeten't eaut ov his wakely wits; he doesn't favvour a chap 'at con ston mich. Ne'er think aw'm likely to go back fro mi word; mi wark's finished i' this world."

"Eh dear! Eh dear!" Mrs. Grindrod wailed. "At ever aw should ha lived to see this day! Aw've put up, an' put up, an' put up wi thee, David, thinkin' tha'd surelee mend sometime, an' neaw tha mun disgrace me this road, shamin' me afore o th' neighbours an' everybody else 'at knows us. Heaw con aw ever howd mi yead up again! Whatever mun become on me neaw there's nobry to addle mi livin'? Aw knew what thi inventin'

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mut end in, but there were no hindherin' thee, for nowt aw could say were ony use. Eh dear! Eh dear!"

Mrs. Grindrod subsided behind her handkerchief, nobody heeding her plaintive cries. The magistrates conferred together in whispers for some minutes, deciding upon the proper course of action.

"Be off, dal thee!" Gabriel said to the prisoner when the brief conference was over. "I'm certain tha's had some finger or another in this business; my instinct can't be so far wrong, brash it! Tha'd not escape so easily if I'd my way. Be off, since David offers to stand i' thy place—we don't want two criminals. Turn him out, Adams, and let's be rid of the fellow, blange him for a meddling good-for-nought, giving us all this trouble for nothing! Stick to thy lawful calling, tramper, and try to lift thyself into a respectable position. Take example from me, a man

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made his fortune by determined labour and brains. Thy wandering tactics would fetch any man to ruin."

"I thank yo, sir, an' gentlemen both," the stranger humbly replied. Sturdy Adams, jingling his keys, was leading the man away, when Dr. Drake quietly remarked to Butterworth:—

"Perhaps a little money would be useful to the poor man. Shall we make him a grant from the poor box?"

"I'd liefer pay him now and finish with him," Gabriel spluttered, fumbling in all his fobs and pockets. "We can give him a trifle apiece. Dal it, I've come out without brass again in my blundering way! Can you help me out, parson?"

The vicar shook his head, smiling.

"Has any brass, Laurence?" Butterworth called to me. "Lend me a crown piece, lad—I'll think on to pay thee back some day. Dang my buttons if I might be worth any property, for my pockets are oftener empty than not!"

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

"Here is a guinea," I said, producing one and saying nothing about certain stray shillings that happened to be in my purse.

"Nay, dal it, that's too much! The rogue will be setting up a coach and pair if he gets all that!"

"He deserves so much and more. You ought to compensate him for unjust detention and fright."

"Hark ye, Laurence; the bench of magistrates won't be dictated to by thee or any witness or hanger-on! Tha'll be getting locked up thyself directly, dash thee!"

"Mr. Holt is right," the vicar interposed, laughing at his friend's bluster. "I will divide the guinea with you and assist in sending this poor fellow upon his way.

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Doubtless the *res angusta domi* trouble him, and he will consider our present acceptable."

"Well, I don't mind," Butterworth said, "only don't neglect to repay your half. Parsons' promises oft come to nought. Give him the coin, Adams, and turn him out."

The turnkey obeyed these instructions, banging the door upon some feeble words of gratitude which the Ashton man was striving to utter.

"As for thee, Grindrod, I'm fairly at my wit's end how to reckon up thy behaviour," Butterworth continued, addressing David, who had remained standing without speech or motion. "After all I've done for thee and thy lad some better return was due to me than the heartless murder of one of my friends. If tha's aught to say in defence or excuse let's be hearing it."

"There's nought to be said," David returned in a low voice. "It looked to me aw were justified i' killin' th' captain becose he'd kil't Stephen; aw could find no rest nor sattlement noather for brains nor body whol he were swaggerin' abeaut alive; aw could noather eight nor sleep, a sthrong cravin' for his blood so maisther't me. Then aw'd sworn solemn an' deep, once when my lad were shot an' again o'er his grave, to tak revenge on Masham for o he'd made us suffer, an' aw were bund to keep mi word let th'

The Salamanca Corpus: *David's Loom* (1894)

consequences be what they would. Aw'm ready to dee, but iv aw desarve hangin', heaw mich moore did yon captain desarve it? Yet for o his nowty wark yor law wouldn't be bother't wi him—nay, liar an' reskil as we made him eaut, his mates thinken no wur on him for it! What makes o this sthrange difference between him an' me, 'at one should be thought fit to live an' t'other not? Aw'm fast misel to undherstond it."

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"I am deeply grieved to find you so little disposed to repentance," the vicar interposed. "The committal of this horrible crime has apparently left no remorse in your mind, but I trust that in Lancaster gaol, to which we must send you, under the ministration of some properly ordained and qualified clergyman, a true conception of your guilt may be formed, and that you will humbly seek in what may be your last remaining days on earth to make your peace with God."

"Yo're mista'en abeaut mi feelins otogether, for aw've repented as it is, an' could wish this murdher undone iv wishin' were ony use. Wheere aw looked for comfort aw've fund nowt nobbut torment. There's summat aboon 'at ordhers these things, sthrikin' folk blint whol they'n gotten into danger, an' givin' their seet back when it's too lat for mendin'. That seaunds quare, but it's throe."

"Dare you blaspheme against the ordinations of Providence!" cried the vicar, his broad plump face assuming a horrified expression. "Are you an infidel?"

"Nowe, nowe! Far fro that, sir! Aw could hardly insense yo into what mi feelins are—a rich college-bred gentleman like yo, little used to mixin' wi poverty-sthricken folk."

"Perhaps I am more familiar with poverty than you suspect. I have closely studied our lower classes here, as also in Suffolk and other places where equal distress exists, combined perhaps with less rudeness and disrespect than we find in this town; consequently there is no reason why your feelings should be outside my sphere of comprehension."

"Well, it may be so; but there's no 'casion to bother yo neaw, for aw deaubt we could never agree. Iv aw'd mi

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meauth full o' cantin' talk an' thried to sham religious yo'd think betther on me happen. That's noane my road—this business lies between me an' God, for nobry else con sattle it, an' so there's an end!"

"A hardened offender!" the vicar said, shaking his head sadly.

"Lock him up, Adams!" Butterworth exploded. "Dal it, he'll be telling me I don't understand him next! I'm sorry for thee, Grindrod—both sorry and vexed. But for thy own confession I'd never have believed thee capable of so black a crime, and it's certain tha must have been an accomplished hypocrite to deceive my keen insight all these years. Tha'll be committed to Lancaster in due form, and as I understand that a special session has been called to try some other disaffected subjects, the chances are thy case will soon be disposed of."

"That'll be reet for me," David returned. "Buttheroth, aw couldn't like yo to think yor kindness had bin wasted on us. Yo mun alleaw for me bein' thried too far bi years o' throuble an' th' terrible loss o' mi bonny lad. Iv he'd nobbut bin spared heaw different everything would ha turn't eaut! We'd soon ha shown yo then whether we respected yo or not, for yo're a rare good mon, though happen rayther yeadstbrong at odd times. Iv yo're gooin' forrad wi that weighvin' job Laurence here mun give yo th' first chance o' my loom, an' iv it onswers as it should do yo'il make a fortin eaut on't."

"Dal thee and thy loom together! Be thinking about thy latter end, man!"

"Tha'll see to it, Laurence?" David said to me. I nodded in assent, and he turned to his wife, speaking to her for the first time.

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"Neaw, woman, what con aw say to thee afore we're parted for ever? Aw con hardly bide to look on that deceivin' face o' thine, for this weary throuble's thy makin' fro beginnin' to end. But for thee Stephen met ha bin wi us yet, th' owd nippin' days met ha bin ended, an' every one on us set hee aboon want or danger. A reet-minded woman

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follows her husband an' finds a pride i' helpin' him through, but tha's takken a different road—one o' thi own—londin' us i' misery. Mi talk's idle aw'm weel aware, becose thi little mind con ne'er rise to a level aboon itsel, an' thoughts ov owd times when we lived happy together hindher mi tongue fro tellin' what it should. Look thi last on me neaw, an' never forget tha's brought to th' gallows a chap fit for a betther endin' to his life;"

"Tha's disgraced me low enough beaut flytin' so," Mrs. Grindrod sobbed. "Iv tha'd nobbut hearken't to me this could ne'er have happen't, an' th' neighbours wouldn't ha looked deawn on me as a lost woman. Ever sin' tha took to this inventin' aw've known we should be ruin't, but tha would be maistherful. Whatever mun become on me neaw, wi bwoth thee an' Stephen gwone an' nobry left to keep me? Thy troubles are nowt to mine."

"Happen not," David said calmly. "Throuble's heavy or leet as a mind con bide it, an' thine's upset wi very little. But flytin's no use, as tha says; aw'd rayther mi last thoughts on thee were as th' pratty warm-hearted lass aw once loved so weel. Let thi mind rest abeaut thi livin' for tha'll ne'er come to want whol Adam con hindher it, an' aw'm expectin' tha'll soon be set aboon poverty. Here's mi hond. Aw've done mi duty by thee as far as thi conthrary humour's letten me, an' aw. wish tha may live long i' comfort an' content."

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The poor woman took her husband's hand, real tears shining in her eyes for once, and so they parted.

"There's just one thing moore, Laurence," David said, crossing the room to my side. "Aw misdeaubt plenty o' folk, knowin' nowt what aw've had to wrostle again nor what's dhriven me to this bad end, may reckon me a wur villain nor aw am. Iv it could o be written deawn, plain an' thru, beaut favvour or bias, aw should dee betther satisfied."

"I promise that it shall be done. The story of your life shall be written and printed for all to read who will."

"Aw thank thee, Laurence. Wilta shake honds wi a lost mon?"

The Salamanca Corpus: David's Loom (1894)

I hesitated to grasp the hand stretched out to me, feeling that on my side that sacred pledge of friendship would now be mere outward show. David's arm dropped to his side; he turned slowly away.

"Dang thy narrow soul, Holt!" Butterworth cried. "Wouldst torment a man without need! Here's my fist, Grindrod, with a hearty good wish for thee both here and hereafter! There's no holding with thy wickedness, whatever drove thee to it; but tha'rt an old neighbour, and, dal it, tha carries thyself like a man!"

I sat rebuked. Warmed by the glow of Gabriel's larger sympathy I hastily thrust out my puny hand also. David's fingers closed upon it mechanically, lacking their usual cordial pressure, and he passed from my sight for ever. I had succeeded by my selfish sensibility in dealing one more bitter wound upon a heart already torn with anguish, in adding to the grief of a once dearly regarded friend's closing days on earth, and in laying up for myself by one despicable act o irresolution an endless store of unavailing sorrow.

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XXIV

EIGHT years have passed since David was executed at Lancaster, after a brief formal trial. Ben, who saw him on the scaffold, assured me that the old weaver's resigned fortitude sustained him to the last.

In these eight years many great events have occurred, shaking our empire to its lowest foundations; yet now brighter days begin to cheer us, proving as of old that among the ruins of war and disaster seeds of prosperity may be nourished, as from the mould-encrusted bones of jungle-hidden beasts of prey rich mosses and gay flowers arise to nourish a host of living creatures. So, following the thunder-shock of Waterloo, when England swung wavering in Fate's balance for one tremendous day, clearer airs have breathed around us, and in our own county the late barbarous onslaught at Peterloo has vastly advanced projects of reform it was intended to crush. Public opinion has been rudely and suddenly aroused by that miserable business, and revolutionary plans are now publicly discussed where very few months ago the law would have promptly

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suppressed any such demonstrations. Certainly authorities like our friend Gabriel continue to fume and fulminate, prophesying destruction to their country from the gathering power of our operative classes; nevertheless their wordy arguments and appeals to historical precedent no more delay the steady march of progress than gabbling geese can check a flowing river. Upon our long-despised toilers also gleams of coming happiness are shining. Power machinery, once held by them to be a rank invention of Satan, already dazzles their half-understanding vision with flashes of celestial brightness; even Big George, type of unreasoning strength and prejudice, not only labours in a steam-driven

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factory himself, but compels his youngest children to pass some fourteen hours a day there also, selfishly oblivious of their health and mental development in the blind pursuit of his own welfare. Perhaps on this account one must admit the large man's energies to have been less harmfully expended in futile smashing of metal frames, lamenting meanwhile the absence of legal protection for babes unable to protect themselves.

David's loom has far exceeded any possible hopes its inventor could have formed of its success, for since his death power-weaving has been developed to an extent quite unforeseen. David's idea of introducing steel-eyed healds has so far been found impracticable, but in all other points Hawkins turns out the loom precisely as David planned and Stephen shaped it. Pratt's buildings have twice been enlarged to enable sudden demands to be met, and now Hawkins talks of extending further, as his mechanics are working night and day. Moss travels about the country superintending the setting of the new frames and teaching weavers how to use them; by regular employment and wages, thoroughly cured of rebellious ailments, happily restored to his original character as a diligent and harmless citizen.

Butterworth bought the first hundred looms completed, and was very soon blustering impatiently for more. He has over a thousand running to-day, the profits

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David foretold for him rolling in so fast that the old difficulty of not knowing what to do with his riches troubles him more than ever.

"Dal it, Laurence," he often says to me, "that law-brass was well invested after all! Kindness can never be wasted, lad; look how I've always thriven myself because my nature is generous, and never hesitate to cast thy bread upon the waters, blange thee!"

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Gabriel will not allow that I have any generosity of disposition, yet he cannot deny that I am financially thriving also, sadly as it weakens his argument to admit so much. Both Hawkins and myself were unwilling to finger a penny of the shares David had allotted to us, but Adam silenced every objection or proposal we could make, insisting that his late cousin's wishes should be carried out to the letter.

Mrs. Grindrod took a different view. Considering ourselves as trustees appointed to secure her welfare, we at once made her acquainted with David's settlement of his affairs, whereupon she raised a great outcry that we were robbing her, and threatened to compel us by power of attorney to disgorge every "bodle" received.

"Nowe, nowe!" Adam said with his usual abrupt directness. "Tha's done thi best to hindher this loom fro bein' made, an' tha mun be content neaw to let moore sensible folk have th' ordherin' o' things. Tha'll get thi full reets—never be freeten't o' that!"

"Yo're noane on yo to be thrusted," said the poor creature, reading us by her own inner lights, her black eyes twinkling with mean suspicion. "Aw'll see a 'turney, an' yo'll find aw'm noane beaun to be rogued eaut o' mi fortin quietly. Aw'm a woman o' quality neaw, same as aw've olez looked forrad to bein', an' yo'll be made to tak notice on me whether. Yo wanten or not!"

"There's no brass comin' yet, mother" says Hawkins.. "We'll allow yo two pound a week for th' present an' make a gradely sattletnent in a bit, when we con tell betther how things are shappin'."

"It's noane enough!" Mrs. Grindrod returned peevishly. "Yo're keepin' summat back! Aw'll see a 'turney!"

She put her resolution into effect, evidently, for two days

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later Scholefield limped up into my room, top-booted and spurred, carrying a riding crop in his hand.

"How are you, Holt? Here's Grindrod's widow been pestering me with a rambling declaration that you are one of three thieves determined to swindle her out of a fabulous amount of money. I am ordered to proceed against you, but hang me if I know where to begin!"

I expounded the problem, while his purple cheeks shook with laughter.

"That Grindrod was a shrewd chap! Whatever comes of his invention you three innocents are bound to keep his widow."

"Adopting your ordinary methods of reasoning I might answer that she has no documents to prove it."

"Pooh! David knew the morbid scrupulosity of his trustees as well as I do—at any rate I can answer for two of them. What is this Adam's character?"

"He is honest, anxious to be just, truthful, free from covetousness."

"There you go, then, all in a gang! Look you, it is impossible to persuade Mrs. Grindrod that you purpose dealing fairly by her. I must begin an imaginary endless law-suit against you three blackguards, and Jim shall send her occasional incomprehensible letters on the subject. She will be satisfied with that for a year or two if you keep her supplied with cash. Upon my conscience—"

"Your what?"

"Well, upon my word if you prefer it, David made tolerably secure provision for his wife by confiding her to you fellows."

"Is that opinion from your legal mind, or are you speaking unprofessionally?"

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"Why, you have induced me to forget my office talk for a moment, I believe. Good-bye, lad! The meet is at Wardle this morning."

"Don't break your neck over that rugged country."

"What with a tit like mine? Never fear, Holt; never fear!"

Two months later Hawkins told Mrs. Grindrod to spend any amount of money she liked, holding him responsible; and saying nothing about her legal proceedings she took him at his word without delay. Her first purchase included ten new gowns and bonnets, which she displayed on ten consecutive Sundays at the parish church. This bold move decisively established her position as a woman of fashion in the estimation of her neighbours, but unfortunately it exhausted her ambition too, for after that nine of the diverse garments were carefully laid in lavender-scented drawers, the tenth seldom travelling far from her rocking chair. She rented a larger house, filled it with handsome furniture, engaged a servant, and for some months lived in her front parlour, frequently entertaining groups of friends with "rum-an'-tay baggins," doing her best in fact to "be a lady" as she called it.

These recreations, delightful in anticipation, quickly lost their charm with use. Before long the parlour was locked up, the lonely woman returning to her old occupations of rocking dolefully beside the kitchen fire and sipping gin, varied a little by the novel excitement of badgering her servant until that unfortunate girl's life became an endless round of misery. So, after all the long craving for comfort and competence, Mrs. Grindrod's last state was literally worse than the first. Nothing more was heard of the lawsuit except by her friends, who were all treated to intermin-

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able narratives of the wrongs she had suffered from dishonest trustees, of David's foolishness in not putting into her own hands the necessary "writins" to support her claim, of Adam's wickedness in making a gentleman of himself out of her brass, of

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young Holt's villainy in concealing or burning the writings aforesaid, of the general selfishness, ingratitude, and folly discoverable in mankind as a mass, and so on to infinity. She died in the autumn of 1817, very few mourners indeed following her body to the grave. In her bedroom Adam found a silk stocking three parts full of guineas, as if she had some vague dread of coming want; or perhaps the coins were hoarded merely for some pleasure derived from handling and adding to them.

Years are telling upon Phelim's physical powers, leaving still unimpaired his shrewd intellect and cheerful humour. This last faculty can surely never desert the good man, as the spectacle of Phelim despondent is beyond all imagination. I could as easily fancy him divested of the peculiar brogue—mixture of Irish and Lancashire—in which he expresses himself, happily unconscious that his accent diverges in any way from pure English traditions.

Phelim no longer deals in "geomethry and ancient potes" for his sustenance. Hawkins has transformed him into a book-keeper, giving all the accounts of our wonderful loom into his capable hands, building a new office to accommodate him and several clerks, making his life more comfortable and his livelihood more secure than ever before.

"But it's past my wit to make him respectable," says Hawkins. "Th' old brid's gotten a new hat after a deal o' persuadin', but he'll part none wi yon two-inch clay pipe—not he! He srnookes in th' office or out—it's o one whether his gaffers are there or not—nowt troubles him. He's a

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fine old customer, too, in his way—a rare good reckoner-up, beside, and writes th' prattiest hond of any chap on th' ground."

In fact change of circumstances or occupation cannot alter Phelim; his philosophic temper bears him undisturbed through all the chances of our mortal life, his supreme contempt for worldly advantages makes him equal with all men.

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"Bedad, Larry," he will say in our frequent discourses, "but for Norah's timely warning 'tis colloquing wid gentility I might be now, in place of lading a contented and free existence here. 'Tis a good turn the colleen did me unbeknowing—more by token her husband ended wid disgrace, bad luck to the quarrelsome divvle inside him! Faith, I might have ruined myself by gathering property; for I do be always noticing how a man puts out his sowl at intherest, when to his thinking 'tis but money he lays by. Praise the saints, I've escaped that danger anyhow! 'Tis a poor calling maybe for a Maynooth scholar to be squaring ledgers and practising the four simple rules of arithmetic; yet 'tis all in the look, me boy. Betther a humble thrade wid happiness than the fetters and frets of ambitious learning; and bedad there's a sentiment for ye worthy of Cicero himself!"

My father married Mrs. Seaford, removing himself and his effects to her cottage, leaving Ben to manage the saddlery trade. Much as Mr. Holt's plan of using the widow's credit to obtain funds for his wedding expenses disgusted me at the time, no evil results appear to have arisen from it. Under Ben's unwearying care the business has prospered exceedingly, and as my father has ceased to borrow from me his income is presumably sufficient. He has never repaid the sums I lent him; perhaps his affluent leisure is occupied with more important affairs now that he sits in

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commission of the peace. For all his lofty elevation he still recognises his children, seldom failing to pass an hour with us when quarter days or other urgent occasions bring him to the shop. Certainly we have never been asked to set foot inside his own house, nor have we found opportunity of seeing his wife since the wedding, at which of course etiquette prescribed our attendance.

Margaret easily swallowed her grief for Masham, and made a determined attempt to capture Edmund Butterworth. Luckily for herself she failed, because a year later her beauty smote a young lordling, who became her unquestioning slave. She led him to the altar, securing title, position, wealth, at one stroke. Surely her bliss at least may be deemed certain, since these ingredients compound all that she ever understood

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happiness to be. Doubtless under her coronet she often shivers at the remembrance of her deplorable infatuation for Stephen, thanking her aristocratic stars that the low-bred young man resisted her blandishments. Mrs. Holt went to London for her daughter's wedding; Mr. Holt remaining at home, chained by multifarious engagements.

Edmund is no callow gosling to be tempted by beauty's shallow glitter, even if his sterling affection were not already bestowed. His frequent presence in my room shows me plainly where his manly heart lies. Do I believe his transparent pleas of love for my society? I laugh openly when he advances them until they have become a jest between us. It is love for Ellen that brings him—honest love, springing green through many years. They are middle-aged people now and understand one another. Edmund will marry no other woman, he asserts. What says Ellen—that chastened beauty, angel of my life, un-

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failing consoler of all my cares? While I live she will marry no man. What says Ben, intrepid and faithful guardian, oracle, brother, when I urge him to begin business for himself? "Bless thee, lad, aw couldn't think to lev thee bi thisel!"

While I live.

I have seen robust men shudder at the thought of death, while for me the grisly tyrant has no terrors. How comes that? Is it because my feeble grasp of life can more easily be loosed? Assuredly strong men discover no greater happiness in life than I have done; I would not exchange my infirmity, tolerably quiet conscience and reflective habit for the paltry hopes, gross ideals, earthbound visions, petty anxieties of many active fellow-creatures within my range of acquaintance. Thirty years of life have been granted to me. I am thankful, recognising well that I have really lived longer than some who attain twice my age; yet I could not desire that weary length of days to be repeated.

Of late my fragile powers have waned. Carefully as my dear ones endeavour to conceal their knowledge, I am satisfied that palpable symptoms of decay are apparent in my frame. The acute perception of which I have so often boasted cannot entirely delude me. In very few years at most, possibly within a period to be measured only by months,

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this transient body must fulfil its term on earth. It may be—nay, it will be!—my beloved sister, that happiness shall gild thy future paths; that surely, if somewhat late, thy unassuming sacrifice of self shall bring thee recompense that smaller natures cannot know.

THE END