

CHAPTER I

'TAK your hat, Louie! Yo're allus leavin summat behind yer.'

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

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

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

Then she turned and went back into the house. It was a smallish house of grey stone, three windows above, two and a door below. Dashes of white on the stone gave, as it were, eyebrows to the windows, and over the door there was a meagre trellised porch, up which grew some now leafless roses and honeysuckles. To the left of the door a scanty bit of garden was squeezed in between the hill, against which the house was set edgeways, and the rest of the flat space, occupied by the uneven farmyard, the cart-shed and stable, the cow-houses and duck-pond. This garden contained two shabby apple trees, as yet hardly touched by the spring; some currant and gooseberry bushes, already fairly green; and a clump or two of scattered daffodils and wallflowers. The hedge round it was broken through in various places, and it had a casual neglected air.

The children went their way through the yard. In front of them a flock of some forty sheep and lambs pushed along, guarded by two black short-haired collies. The boy, brandishing a long stick, opened a gate deplorably in want of mending, and the sheep crowded through, keenly looked after by the dogs, who waited meanwhile on their flanks with heads up, ears cocked, and that air of self-restrained energy which often makes a sheep-dog more human than his master. The field beyond led to a little larch plantation, where a few primroses showed among the tufts of long, rich grass, and the drifts of last year's leaves. Here the flock scattered a little, but David and the dogs were after them in a twinkling, and the plantation gate was soon closed on the last bleating mother. Then there was nothing more for the boy to do than to go up to the top of the green rising ground on which the farm stood and see if the gate leading to the moor was safely shut.

For the sheep he had been driving were not meant for the open moorland. Their feeding grounds lay in the stone-walled fields round the homestead, and had they strayed on to the mountain beyond, which was reserved for a hardier Scotch breed, David would have been answerable. So he strode, whistling, up the hill to have a look at that top gate, while Louie sauntered down to the stream which ran round the lower pastures to wait for him.

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

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

Some distance away in front of him, beyond the undulating heather ground at his feet, rose a magnificent curving front of moor, the steep sides of it crowned with black edges and cliffs of grit, the outline of the south-western end sweeping finely up on the right to a purple peak, the king of all the moorland round. No such colour as clothed that bronzed and reddish wall of rock, heather, and bilberry is known to Westmoreland, hardly to Scotland; it seems to be the peculiar property of that lonely and inaccessible district which marks the mountainous centre of mid-England—the district of Kinder Scout and the High Peak. Before the boy's ranging eye spread the whole western rampart of the Peak—to the right, the highest point, of Kinder Low, to the left, 'edge' behind 'edge,' till the central rocky mass sank and faded towards the north into milder forms of green and undulating hills. In the very centre of the great curve a white and surging mass of water cleft the mountain from top to bottom, falling straight over the edge, here some two thousand feet above the sea, and roaring downward along an almost precipitous bed into the stream—the Kinder—which swept round the hill on which the boy was standing, and through the valley behind him. In ordinary times the 'Downfall,' as the natives call it, only makes itself visible on the mountain-side as a black ravine of tossed and tumbled rocks. But there had been a late snowfall on the high plateau beyond, followed by heavy rain, and the swollen stream was to-day worthy of its grand setting of cliff and moor. On such occasions it becomes a landmark for all the country round, for the cotton-spinning centres of New Mills and Stockport, as well as for the grey and scattered farms which climb the long backs of moorland lying between the Peak and the Cheshire border.

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

The keen air, the sun after the rain, sent life and exhilaration

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

The little wheel, shaped from a block of firwood, was turning merrily under a jet of water carefully conducted to it from a neighbouring fall. David went down on hands and knees to examine it. He made some little alteration in the primitive machinery of it, his fingers touching it lightly and neatly, and then, delighted with the success of it, he called Louie to come and look.

Louie was sitting a few yards further up the stream, crooning to herself as she swung to and fro, and snatching every now and then at some tufts of primroses growing near her, which she wrenched away with a hasty, wasteful hand, careless, apparently, whether they reached her lap or merely strewed the turf about her with their torn blossoms. When David called her she gathered up the flowers anyhow in her apron, and dawdled towards him, leaving a trail of them behind her. As she reached him, however, she was struck by a book sticking out of his pocket, and, stooping over him, with a sudden hawk-like gesture, as he sprawled head downwards, she tried to get hold of it.

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

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

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

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

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

The girl's mouth curled contemptuously, and she began to gather her primroses into a bunch with an air of the utmost serenity. She was a thin, agile, lightly made creature, apparently about eleven. Her piercing black eyes, when they lifted, seemed

to overweight the face, whereof the other features were at present small and pinched. The mouth had a trick of remaining slightly open, showing a line of small pearly teeth; the chin was a little sharp and shrewish. As for the hair, it promised to be splendid; at present it was an unkempt, tangled mass, which Hannah Grieve, the children's aunt, for her own credit's sake at chapel, or in the public street, made occasional violent attempts to reduce to order—to very little purpose, so strong and stubborn was the curl of it. The whole figure was out of keeping with the English moorside, with the sheep, and the primroses.

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

Having finished his inspection of his water-mill, he scrambled across to the other side of the stream so as to be well out of his sister's way, and, taking out the volume which was stretching his pocket, he began to read it. It was a brown calf-bound book, much worn, and on its title-page it bore the title of 'The Wars of Jerusalem,' of Flavius Josephus, translated by S. Calmet, and a date somewhere in the middle of the eighteenth century. To this antique fare the boy settled himself down. The two collies lay couched beside him; a stone-chat perched on one or other of the great blocks which lay scattered over the heath gave out his clinking note; while every now and then the loud peevish cluck of the grouse came from the distant sides of the Scout.

Titus was now making his final assault on the Temple. The Zealots were gathered in the innermost court, frantically beseeching Heaven for a sign; the walls, the outer approaches of the Sanctuary were choked with the dying and the dead. David sat absorbed, elbows on knees, his face framed in his hands. Suddenly the descent of something cold and clammy on his bent neck roused him with a most unpleasant shock.

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

flight, 'It's greened aw yur neck and yur collar—lively! Doan't be nassty for nothink next time!'

And off she ran.

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

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

Louie established herself some way up the further slope, in a steep stony nook, under two black boulders, which protected her rear in case of reprisals from David. Time passed away. David, on the other side of the brook, revelling in the joys of battle, and all the more alive to them perhaps because of the watch kept on Louie by one section of his brain, was conscious of no length in the minutes. But Louie's mood gradually became one of extreme flatness. All her resources were for the moment at an end. She could think of no fresh torment for David; besides, she knew that she was observed. She had destroyed all the scanty store of primroses along the brook; gathered rushes, begun to plait them, and thrown them away; she had found a grouse's nest among the dead fern, and, contrary to the most solemn injunctions of uncle and keeper, enforced by the direst threats, had purloined and broken an egg; and still dinner-time delayed. Perhaps, too, the cold blighting wind, which soon made her look blue and pinched, tamed her insensibly. At any rate, she got up after about an hour, and coolly walked across to David.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

David looked round in a fury, but his fury was, apparently, instantly damped by the inward conviction, born of long experience, that he could do nothing to help himself. He sprang up, and thrust his book into his pocket.

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

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

'T' owd smithy' had been the enchanted ground of David's childhood. It was a ruined building standing deep in heather, half-way up the mountain-side, and ringed by scattered blocks and tabular slabs of grit. Here in times far remote—beyond the memory of even the oldest inhabitant—the millstones of the district, which gave their name to the 'millstone grit' formation of the Peak, were fashioned. High up on the dark moorside stood what remained of the primitive workshop. The fire-marked stones of the hearth were plainly visible; deep in the heather near lay the broken jambs of the window; a stone doorway with its lintel was still standing; and on the slope beneath it, hardly to be distinguished now from the great primæval blocks out of which they had sprung and to which they were fast returning, reposed two or three huge millstones. Perhaps they bordered some ancient track, climbed by the millers of the past when they came to this remote spot to give their orders; but, if so, the track had long since sunk out of sight in the heather, and no visible link remained to connect the history of this high and lonely place with that of those teeming valleys hidden to west and north among the moors, the dwellers wherein must once have known it well. From the old threshold the eye commanded a wilderness of moors, rising wave-like one after another, from the green swell just below whereon stood Reuben Grieve's farm, to the far-distant Alderley Edge. In the hollows between, dim tall chimneys veiled in mist and smoke showed the places of the cotton towns—of Hayfield, New Mills, Staleybridge, Stockport; while in the far north-west, any gazer to whom the country-side spoke familiarly might, in any ordinary clearness of weather, look for and find the eternal smoke-cloud of Manchester.

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

oddity of the name *Suveret*, which tormented the Derbyshire mouth.

In a corner of the walls stood something more puzzling still—a large iron pan, filled to the brim with water, and firmly bedded on a foundation of earth and stones. So still in general was the shining sheltered round, that the branches of the mountain ash which leant against the crumbling wall, the tufts of hard fern growing among the stones, the clouds which sailed overhead, were all delicately mirrored in it. That pan was David Grieve's dearest possession, and those reflections, so magical, and so alive, had contrived for him many a half-hour of almost breathless pleasure. He had carried it off from the refuse-yard of a foundry in the valley, where he had a friend in one of the apprentices. The farm donkey and himself had dragged it thither on a certain never-to-be-forgotten day, when Uncle Reuben had been on the other side of the mountain at a shepherds' meeting in the Woodlands, while Aunt Hannah was safely up to her elbows in the washtub. Boy's back and donkey's back had nearly broken under the task, but there the pan stood at last, the delight of David's heart. In a crevice of the wall beside it, hidden jealously from the passer-by, lay the other half of that perpetual entertainment it provided—a store of tiny boats fashioned by David, and another friend, the lame minister of the 'Christian Brethren' congregation at Clough End, the small factory town just below Kinder, who was a sea-captain's son, and with a knife and a bit of deal could fashion you any craft you pleased. These boats David only brought out on rare occasions, very seldom admitting Louie to the show. But when he pleased they became fleets, and sailed for new continents. Here were the ships of Captain Cook, there the ships of Columbus. On one side of the pan lay the Spanish main, on the other the islands of the South Seas. A certain tattered copy of the 'Royal Magazine,' with pictures, which lay in Uncle Reuben's cupboard at home, provided all that for David was to be known of these names and places. But fancy played pilot and led the way; she conjured up storms and islands and adventures; and as he hung over his pan high on the Derbyshire moor, the boy, like Sidney of old, 'sailed the seas where there was never sand'—the vast and viewless oceans of romance.

CHAPTER II

ONCE safe in the smithy, David recovered his temper. If Louie followed him, which was probable, he would know better how to deal with her here, with a wall at his back and a definite area to defend, than he did in the treacherous openness of the heath. However, just as he was settling himself down, with a sigh of relief, between the pan and the wall, he caught sight of something through one of the gaps of the old ruin which made him fling down his book and run to the doorway. There, putting his fingers to his mouth, he blew a shrill whistle along the side of

the Scout. A bent figure on a distant path stopped at the sound. It was an old man, with a plaid hanging from his shoulders. He raised the stiek he held, and shook it in recognition of David's signal. Then resuming his bowed walk, he came slowly on, followed by an old hound, whose gait seemed as feeble as his master's.

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

'What d' yo want 'im for?' she asked contemptuously, as the new-comer approached: 'he'd owt to be in th' sylum. Aunt Hannah says he's gone that silly, he owt to be took up.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Wal, Davy, yo're in luck. He's noan so onwillin, we'st ha him here in a twinklin. Yo may coe him many things, but yo conno coe him proud. Noa, as I've fund him, Charles Stuart has no soart o' pride about him. Aye, theer yo are! Sir, your Majesty's obleegeed an humble servant!'

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

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

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

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

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

'What's 'at yo're sayin?' he asked hastily; 'at yo couldno help it, not *whativer*—that i' truth yo had nothin to do wi 't, no moor than mysel—that yo wor *foreit* to it—willy-nilly—by them devils o' Parliament foak—by Mr. Pym and his loike, wi whom, if God-amighty ha' not reckoned since, theer's no moor justice i' His Kingdom than yo found i' yours?'

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

'Twinna do, man—'twinna do,' he said at last, with an air of fine reproof. 'He wor your *friend*, wor that poor sinner Strafford—your awn familiar friend, as t' Psalm says. I'm not takin up a brief for him, t' Lord knows! He wor but meetin his deserts, to *my* thinkin, when his yed went loupin. But yo put a black mark agen *yore* name when yo signed that bit paper for your awn skin's

sake. Naw, naw, man, yo should ha lost your awn yed a bit sooner fust. Eh, it wor base—it wor cooardly!’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘It’s aw lees!’ she said scornfully.

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

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

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

‘Davy, what’s your opinion o’ that?’ or, ‘Davy, my lad, did yo iver hear sich clit-clat i’ your life?’ or again, ‘Davy, yo’ll not be misled, surely, by sich a piece o’ speshul-pleadin as that?’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Tell us what about her,' she said imperiously.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Mermaids is just faddle an nonsense,' interrupted David, tersely.

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

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

'Faddle?' repeated 'Lias, interrogatively.

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

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

'That bit watter?' repeated 'Lias, eyeing it. A sort of vague trouble came into his face, and his wrinkled hands lying on his stick began to twitch nervously.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Are yo quite *sure* it wor her, Passon?' he went on, appealingly. 'She's nobbut owd, an it's a far cry fro her bit cottage to owd Needham's Farm. An th' chilt might ha deed, and t' cattle might ha strayed, and t' geyats might ha opened o' theirsels! Yo'll not dare to speak agen *that*. They *might*? Ay, ay, we aw know t' devil's strong; but she's eighty-one year coom Christmas—an—an—. Doan't, *doan't* let t' childer see, nor t' yoong gells! If yo let em see sich seets they'll breed yo wolves, not babes! Ah!'

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

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

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

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

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

While holly sticks be green,
While stone on Kinder Scoot be seen.

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

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

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

'What's t' matter, 'Lias? Are yo bad?'

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

''Lias!' shouted David.

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

'Are yo bad, 'Lias?'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

David brushed his clothes, took a stroll with the dogs, and

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

CHAPTER III

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

But Louie this evening was in a state of nerves. The afternoon had seen one of those periodical struggles between her and Hannah, which did so much to keep life at Needham Farm from stagnating into anything like comfort. The two combatants, however, must have taken a certain joy in them, since they recurred with so much regularity. Hannah had won, of course, as the grim self-importance of her bearing amply showed. Louie had been forced to patch the house-linen as usual, mainly by the temporary confiscation of her Sunday hat, the one piece of decent clothing she possessed, and to which she clung with a feverish attachment—generally, indeed, sleeping with it beside her pillow. But, though she was beaten, she was still seething with rebellion. Her eyes were red, but her shaggy head was thrown back defiantly, and there was hysterical battle in the expression of her sharply-tilted nose and chin.

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

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

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

Davy glanced up at his sister under his eyebrows. Hannah scanned her niece all over with a slow, observant scrutiny, as though she were a dangerous animal that must be watched.

Otherwise Louie might have spoken to the wall for all the effect she produced. Reuben, however, was more vulnerable.

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

'They've got scones and rhubarb jam for tea!' cried the child, tumbling the news out as though she were bursting with it. 'Mrs. Wigson, she's allus makin em nice things. She's kind, she is—she's nice—she wouldn't make em eat stuff like this—she'd give it to the pigs—at she would!'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But he rummaged out an old paper-covered guide to the Peak, which he remembered to have been left at the farm one summer's day by a passing tourist, who paid Hannah handsomely for some

bread and cheese. Turning to the part which concerned Clough End, Hayfield, and the Scout, he found:—

'In speaking of the Mermaid's Pool, it may be remarked that the natives of several little hamlets surrounding Kinder Scout have long had a tradition that there is a beautiful woman—an English Hamadryad—lives in the side of the Scout; that she comes to bathe every day in the Mermaid's Well, and that the man who has the good luck to behold her bathing will become immortal and never die.'

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

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

Nothing but the impatience and indifference of childhood, however, could have grudged Reuben Grieve the half-hour which followed. During that one half-hour in the day, the mild, effaced man, whose absent-minded ways and complete lack of business faculty were the perpetual torment of his wife, was master of his house. While he was rolling out the psalm, expounding the chapter, or 'wrestling' in prayer, he was a personality and an influence even for the wife who, in spite of a dumb congruity of habit, regarded him generally as incompetent and in the way. Reuben's religious sense was strong and deep, but some very natural and pathetically human instincts entered also into his constant pleasure in this daily function. Hannah, with her strong and harsh features settled into repose, with her large hands, reddened by the day's work, lying idle in her lap, sat opposite to him in silence; for once she listened to him, whereas all day he had listened to her; and the moment made a daily oasis in the life of a man who, in his own dull, peasant way, knew that he was a failure, and knew also that no one was so well aware of it as his wife.

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

An hour passed away. Reuben was dozing peacefully in the chimney-corner; Aunt Hannah had just finished putting a patch

on a pair of Reuben's trousers, was folding up her work and preparing to rouse her slumbering companion, when a sound overhead caught her ear.

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

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

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

Uncle Reuben, startled from his snooze by this apparition, looked at it with a sleepy bewilderment, and fumbled for his spectacles. 'Ay, yo'd better luke at her close,' said Hannah, grimly, giving her niece a violent shake as she spoke; 'I wor set yo should just see her fur yance at her antics. Yo say soomtimes I'm hard on her. Well, I'd ask ony pusson aloive if they'd put up wi this soart o' thing—dressin up like a bad hizzy that waaks t' streets, wi three candles—*three*, I tell yo, Reuben—flarin away, and the curtains close to, an nothink but the Lord's mussy keepin 'em from catchin. An she peacockin an gallivantin away enough to mak a cat laugh!'

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

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

And with the bitterness of a smouldering grievance, expressed in every feature, Hannah looked peremptorily at her husband. He, poor man, was much perplexed. The hour of devotion was past, and outside it he was not accustomed to be placed in important situations.

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

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

Hannah Grieve was exasperated by the child's expression.

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

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

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

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

'Go 'long wi yo,' she said grimly, in a white heat, while she opened the door—'an the less yo coom into *my* way for t' future, the better.'

She pushed the child out and shut the door.

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

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

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

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

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

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

'What's t' matter, Louie?' he asked in a loud whisper through

the door she shut in his face; 'what's th' owd crosspatch been slangin about?'

But he got no answer, and he was afraid of being caught by Aunt Hannah if he forced his way in. So he went back to his own room, and closed, without latching, his door. He had had an inch of dip to go to bed with, and had spent that on reading. His book was a battered copy of 'Anson's Voyages,' which also came from 'Lias's store, and he had been straining his eyes over it with enchantment. Then had come the sudden noise upstairs and down, and his candle and his pleasure had gone out together. The heavy footsteps of his uncle and aunt ascending warned him to keep quiet. They turned into their room, and locked their door as their habit was. David noiselessly opened his window and looked out.

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

The boy's heart grew heavy. After the noises in the Grieves' room ceased he listened for something which he knew must be in the air, and caught it—the sound of a child's long, smothered sobs. On most nights they would not have made much impression on him. Louie's ways with her brother were no more engaging than with the rest of the world; and she was not a creature who invited consolation from anybody. David, too, with his power of escape at any time into a world of books and dreams or simply into the wild shepherd life of the moors, was often inclined to a vague irritation with Louie's state of perpetual revolt. The food *was* nasty, their clothes *were* ugly and scanty, Aunt Hannah *was* as hard as nails—at the same time Louie was enough to put anybody's back up. What did she get by it?—that was his feeling; though, perhaps, he never shaped it. He had never felt much pity for her. She had a way of putting herself out of court, and he was, of course, too young to see her life or his own as a whole. What their relationship might mean to him was still vague—to be decided by the future. Whatever softness there was in the boy was at this moment called out by other people—by old 'Lias and his wife; by Mr. Ancrum, the lame minister at Clough End; by the dogs; hardly ever by Louie. He had grown used, moreover, to her perpetual explosions, and took them generally with a boy's natural callousness.

But to-night her woes affected him as they had never done before. The sound of her sobbing, as he stood listening, gradually roused in him an unbearable restlessness. An unaccountable depression stole upon him—the reaction, perhaps,

from a good deal of mental exertion and excitement in the day. A sort of sick distaste awoke in him for most of the incidents of existence—for Aunt Hannah, for Uncle Reuben's incomprehensible prayers, for the thought of the long Puritanical Sunday just coming. And, in addition, the low vibrations of that distant sobbing stirred in him again, by association, certain memories which were like a clutch of physical pain, and which the healthy young animal instinctively and passionately avoided whenever it could. But to-night, in the dark and in solitude, there were no distractions, and as the boy put his head down on his arms, rolling it from side to side as though to shake them off, the same old images pursued him—the lodging-house room, and the curtainless iron bed in which he slept with his father; reminiscences of some long, inexplicable anguish through which that father had passed; then of his death, and his own lonely crying. He seemed still to *feel* the strange sheets in that bed upstairs, where a compassionate fellow-lodger had put him the night after his father died; he sat up again bewildered in the cold dawn, filled with a home-sickness too benumbing for words. He resented these memories, tried to banish them; but the nature on which they were impressed was deep and rich, and, once shaken, vibrated long. The boy trembled through and through. The more he was ordinarily shed abroad, diffused in the life of sensation and boundless mental curiosity, the blacker were these rare moments of self-consciousness, when all the world seemed pain, an iron vice which pinched and tortured him.

At last he went to his door, pulled it gently open, and with bare feet went across to Louie's room, which he entered with infinite caution. The moonlight was streaming in on the poor gauds, which lay wildly scattered over the floor. David looked at them with amazement. Amongst them he saw something glittering. He picked it up, saw it was a gold necklace which had been his mother's, and carefully put it on the little toilet table.

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

CHAPTER IV

It was Sunday afternoon, still cold, nipping, and sunny. Reuben Grieve sat at the door of the farmhouse, his pipe in his hand, a 'good book' on his knee. Beyond the wall which bounded the farmyard he could hear occasional voices. The children were sitting there, he supposed. It gave him a sensation of pleasure once to hear a shrill laugh, which he knew was Louie's. For all this morning, through the long services in the 'Christian Brethren' chapel at Clough End, and on the walk home, he had been once more pricked in his conscience. Hannah and Louie were not on speaking terms. At meals the aunt assigned the child her coarse food without a word, and on the way to chapel and back there had been a stony silence between them. It was evident, even to his dull mind, that the girl was white and thin, and that between her wild temper and mischief and the mirth of other children there was a great difference. Moreover, certain passages in the chapel prayers that morning had come home sharply to a mind whereof the only definite gift was a true religious sensitiveness. The text of the sermon especially—'Whoso loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how shall he love God, whom he hath not seen?'—vibrated like an accusing voice within him. As he sat in the doorway, with the sun stealing in upon him, the clock ticking loudly at his back, and the hens scratching round the steps, he began to think with much discomfort about his dead brother and his brother's children.

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