

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

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

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

'Now, look here,' he cried, with a sob in his throat. 'I know we're beggar's brats. I know yo hate th' seet on us. But I wor t' worst. I'm t' biggest. Tak Louie in, and bully-rag me as mich as yo like. Louie—*Louie!*' and he hung over her in a frenzy, 'wake up, Louie!'

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

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

And she moved out of the way.

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

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

'Yo're a hard woman, Hannah—a hard woman,' he said to her under his breath, in a low, shaken voice. 'An yo coed 'em beggar's brats—oh Lord—Lord!'

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI

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

Up till now, in spite of the perennial pressure of Hannah's tyrannies, which, however, weighed much less upon him than upon Louie, he had been—as he had let Reuben see—happy enough. The open-air life, the animals, his books, out of all of them he managed to extract a very fair daily sum of enjoyment.

And he had been content enough with his daily tasks—herding the sheep, doing the rough work of the stable and cow-house, running Aunt Hannah's errands with the donkey-cart to Clough End, helping in the haymaking and the sheep-shearing, or the driving of stock to and from the various markets Reuben frequented. All these things he had done with a curious placidity, a detachment and yet readiness of mind, as one who lends himself, without reluctance, to a life not his own. It was this temper mainly, helped, no doubt, by his unusual tastes and his share of foreign blood and looks, which had set him apart from the other lads of his own class in the neighbourhood. He had few friends of his own age, yet he was not unpopular, except, perhaps, with an overbearing animal like Jim Wigson, who instinctively looked upon other people's brains as an offence to his own muscular pretensions.

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

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

Reuben's qualms returned upon him. On the 15th of May, he and David went to Woodhead, some sixteen or seventeen miles off, to receive the young stock from the Yorkshire breeders, which were to be grazed on the farm during the summer. In general, David had taken the liveliest interest in the animals, in the number and quality of them, in the tariff to be paid for them, and the long road there and back had been cheered for the farmer by the lad's chatter, and by the athletic antics he was always playing with any handy gate or tree which crossed their path.

'Them heifers ull want a deal o' grass puttin into 'em afoor they'll be wuth onybody's buyin, Davy,' said Reuben, inspecting

his mixed herd with a critical eye from a roadside bank, as they climbed the first hill on their return journey.

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

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

To this remark David had nothing at all to say, though in general he had a keen neighbourly relish for the misdeeds of the Wigsons. Reuben did not know what to make of him. However, a mile further on he made another attempt:

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

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

Inside the house there was a constant, though in general a silent, struggle going on between the boy and Hannah on the subject of Louie. Louie, after the escapade of Easter Eve, was visited with a sharp attack of inflammatory rheumatism, ohly just stopping short of rheumatic fever. Hannah got a doctor, and tended her sufficiently while the worst lasted, partly because she was, after all, no monster, but only a commonly sordid and hard-natured woman, and partly because for a day or two Louie's state set her pondering, perforce, what might be the effect on Mr. Gurney's remittances if the child incontinently died. This thought undoubtedly quickened whatever natural instincts might be left in Hannah Grieve; and the child had her doctor, and the doctor's orders were more or less followed.

But when she came downstairs again—a lanky, ghostly creature, much grown, her fierce black eyes more noticeable than ever in her pinched face—Hannah's appetite for 'snipin'—to use the expressive Derbyshire word—returned upon her. The child was almost bullied into her bed again—or would have been if David had not found ways of preventing it. He realised for the first time that, as the young and active male of the household, he was extremely necessary to Hannah's convenience, and now whenever Hannah ill-treated Louie her convenience suffered. David disappeared. Her errands were undone, the wood uncut, and coals and water had to be carried as they best could. As to reprisals, with a strong boy of fourteen, grown very nearly

to a man's height, Hannah found herself a good deal at a loss. 'Bully-raggin' he took no more account of than of a shower of rain; blows she instinctively felt it would have been dangerous to attempt; and as to deprivation of food, the lad seemed to thrive on hunger, and never whistled so loudly as when, according to Hannah's calculations, he must have been as 'keen-bitten as a hawk.' For the first time in her life Hannah was to some extent tamed. When there was business about she generally felt it expedient to let Louie alone.

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

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

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

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

'Doan't let yor aunt hear nothin, Louie. She thinks I'm gone out to th' calves. But, Louie, that merchant I towd yo on came yesterday, an he wor a hard un, he wor—as tough as nails, a sight worse nor owd Croker to deal wi, ony day in th' week. I

could mak nout on him—an he gan me sich a poor price, I darn't tak a penny on 't from your aunt—noa, I darn't, Louie,—not if it wor iver so. She'll be reet down mad when she knaws—an I'm real sorry about that bit dress o' yourn, Louie.'

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

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

'Louie!' he said—'Louie!'

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

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

The boy knew that his uncle watched him—anxiously, as one watches something explosive and incalculable—and felt a sort of contempt for himself that nothing practical came of his own revolt and discontent. But he was torn with indecision. How to leave Louie—what to do with himself without a farthing in the world—whom to go to for advice? He thought often of Mr. Ancrum, but a fierce distaste for chapels and ministers had been growing on him, and he had gradually seen less and less of the man who had been the kind comrade and teacher of his early childhood. His only real companions during this year of moody adolescence were his books. From the forgotten deposit in the old meal-ark upstairs, which had yielded 'Paradise Lost,' he drew other treasures by degrees. He found there, in all, some tattered leaves—three or four books altogether—of Pope's 'Iliad,' about half of Foxe's 'Martyrs'—the rest having been used apparently by the casual nurses, who came to tend Reuben's poor mother in her last days, to light the fire—a complete copy of Locke 'On the Human Understanding,' and various volumes of old Calvinist sermons, which he read, partly because his reading appetite was insatiable, partly from a half-contemptuous desire to find out what it might be that Uncle Reuben was always troubling his head about.

As to 'Lias Dawson, David saw nothing of him for many long weeks after the scene which had led to the adventure of the Pool. He heard only that 'Lias was,' 'bad,' and mostly in his bed, and

feeling a little guilty, he hardly knew why, the lad kept away from his old friend.

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

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

The lad stammered out some sheepish excuses, and soon made his way over to Frimley Moor. But the visits were not so much pleasure as usual. 'Lias was very feeble, and David had a constant temptation to struggle with. He understood that to excite 'Lias, to throw him again into the frenzy which had begotten the vision of the Pool, would be a cruel act. But all the same he found it more and more difficult to restrain himself, to keep back the questions which burnt on his tongue.

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

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

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

But the old man was growing much weaker; his inventions had less felicity, less range than of old; and the watchful Margaret, at her loom in the corner, kept an eye on any signs of an undue excitement, and turned out David or any other visitor, neck and crop, without scruple, as soon as it seemed to her that her crippled seer was doing himself a mischief. Poor soul! she had lived in this tumult of 'Lias's fancies year after year, till the solid world often turned about her. And she, all the while, so simple, so sane—the ordinary good woman, with the ordinary woman's hunger for the common blessings of life—a little love, a little chat, a little prosaic well-being! She had had two sons—they were gone. She had been the proud wife 'o' t' cleverest mon atwixt Sheffield an Manchester,' as Frimley and the adjacent villages had once expressed it, when every mother that respected herself sent her children to 'Lias Dawson's school. And the mysterious chances of a summer night had sent home upon her hands a poor incapable, ruined in mind and body, who was to live henceforward upon her charity, wandering amid the chaotic wreck and débris of his former self.

Well, she took up her burden!

The straggling village on Frimley Moor was mainly inhabited by a colony of silk hand-loom weavers—the descendants of French prisoners in the great war, and employed for the most part by a firm at Leek. Very dainty work was done at Frimley,

and very beautiful stuffs made. The craft went from father to son. All Margaret's belongings had been weavers; but 'Lias, in the pride of his schoolmaster's position, would never allow his wife to use the trade of her youth. When he became dependent on her, Margaret bought a disused loom from a cousin, had it mended and repaired, and set to work. Her fingers had not forgotten their old cunning; and when she was paid for her first 'cut,' she hurried home to 'Lias with a reviving joy in her crushed heart. Thenceforward, she lived at her loom; she became a skilled and favoured worker, and the work grew dear to her—first, because 'Lias lived on it, and, next, because the bright roses and ribbon-patterns she wove into her costly stuffs were a perpetual cheer to her. The moors might frown outside, the snow might drift against the cottage walls: Margaret had always something gay under her fingers, and threw her shuttle with the more zest the darker and colder grew the Derbyshire world without.

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

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

On a certain November day David was sitting opposite to 'Lias. The fire burnt between them, and on the fire was a griddle, whereon Margaret had just deposited some oatcakes for tea. The old man was sitting drooped in his chair, his chin on his breast, his black eyes staring beyond David at the wall. David was seized with curiosity—what was he thinking about?—what did he see? There was a mystery, a weirdness about the figure, about that hungry gaze, which tormented him. His temptation returned upon him irresistibly.

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

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

tion, in the midst of which the cakes caught, and old 'Lias moved from the fender, saying fretfully,

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

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

And so unexpected was the lightning from her usually mild blue eyes that David sat dumbfounded, and presently sulkily got up to go. Margaret followed him out and down the bit of garden.

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

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

Margaret exclaimed. So it was he that got 'Lias talking about the Pool in the spring! Some one had been 'cankin wi him about things they didn't owt'—that she knew—and she might ha thowt it wor 'Davy. For that one day's 'worritin ov him' she had had him on her hands for weeks—off his sleep, and off his feed, and like a blighted thing. 'Aye, it's aw play to yo,' she said, trembling all through in her passion, as she held the boy—'it's aw play to yo and your minx of a sister. An if it means deen to the old man hissel, yo don't care! "Margaret," says the doctor to me last week, "if you can keep his mind quiet he may hang on a bit. But you munna let him excite hissel about owt—he mun tak things varra easy. He's like a wilted leaf—nobbut t' least thing will bring it down. He's worn varra thin like, heart an lungs, and aw t' rest of him." An d' yo think I'st sit still an see yo murder him—the poor lamb—hfore my eyes—me as ha got nowt else but him i' t' wide world? No—yo yoong varlet—goo an ast soom one else about Jenny Crum if yo're just set on meddlin wi divil's wark—but yo'll no trouble my 'Lias.'

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

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

'Uncle Reuben towd me summat.'

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

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

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

One night he and the Castleton medium fell talking about Jenny Crum, the witch of Kinder Scout, and her Easter Eve performances. The medium bet 'Lias a handsome sum that he would not dare face her. 'Lias, piqued and wrathful, and 'wi moor yell on board nor he could reetly stan,' took the bet. Margaret heard nothing of it. He announced on Easter Eve that he was going to a brother in Edale for the Sunday, and gave her the slip. She saw no more of him till the carrier brought home to her, on the Sunday morning, a starved and pallid object—'gone clean silly, an hatched thegither like an owd man o' seventy—he bein fifty-six by his reet years.' With woe and terror she helped him to his bed, and in that bed he stayed for more than a year, while everything went from them—school and savings, and all the joys of life.

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

The wife's voice paused abruptly on this word of imprecation,

or appeal, as though her own passion choked her. David stood beside her awkwardly, his eyes fixed on the gravel, wherewith one foot was playing. There was no more sullenness in his expression.

Margaret's hand still played restlessly with the handkerchief. Her eyes were far away, her mind absorbed by the story of her own fate. Round the moorside, on which the cottage was built, there bent a circling edge of wood, now aflame with all the colour of late autumn. Against its deep reds and browns, Margaret's small profile was thrown out—the profile already of the old woman, with the meeting nose and chin, the hollow cheek, the maze of wrinkles round the eyes. Into that face, worn by the labour and the grief of the poor—into that bending figure, with the peasant shawl folded round the head and shoulders—there had passed all the tragic dignity which belongs to the simple and heartfelt things of human life, to the pain of helpless affection, to the yearning of irremediable loss.

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

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

The boy shook his head.

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

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

'An I thowt if I cud ha got 'em home an buried 'em, Davy, I could ha borne it better. But they wor aw crushed, an cut about, an riddlet to bits—they wudna let me ha em. And so we kep it fro 'Lias. Soomtimes I think he knows t' boys are dead—an then soomtimes he frets 'at they doan't coom an see him. Fourteen year ago! An I goo on tellin him they'll coom soon. An last week, when I towd him it, I thowt to mysel it wor just th' naked truth!'

David leant over the gate, pulling at some withered hollyhocks beside it. But when, after a minute of choking silence, Margaret

caught his look, she saw, though he tried to hide it, that his black eyes were swimming. Her full heart melted altogether.

'Oh, Davy, I meant naw offence!' she said, catching him by the arm again. 'Yo're a good lad, an yo're allus a welcome seet to that poor creetur. But yo'll not say owt to trouble him again, laddie—will yo? If he'd yeerd yo just now—but, by t' Lord's blessin, he did na—he'd ha worked himsel up fearfu'! I'd ha had naw sleep wi him for neets—like it wor i' th' spring. Yo munna—yo munna! He's all I ha—his livin's my livin, Davy—an when he's took away—why, I'll mak shift soomhow to dee too!'

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

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

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

David went down the lane homewards, whistling hard. But once, as he climbed a stile and sat dangling his legs a moment on the top, he felt his eyes wet again. He dashed his hand impatiently across them. At this stage of youth he was constantly falling out with and resenting his own faculty of pity, of emotion. The attitude of mind had in it a sort of secret half-conscious terror of what feeling might do with him did he but give it head. He did not want to feel—feeling only hurt and stabbed—he wanted to enjoy, to take in, to discover—to fling the wild energies of mind and body into some action worthy of them. And because he had no knowledge to show him how, and a wavering will, he suffered and deteriorated.

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

But certainly, to most observers, he seemed to deteriorate. Mr. Ancrum could make nothing of him. David held the minister at arm's-length, and meanwhile rumours reached him that 'Reuben Grieve's nevy' was beginning to be much seen in the public-houses; he had ceased entirely to go to chapel or Sunday school; and the local gossips, starting perhaps from a natural prejudice against the sons of unknown and probably disreputable mothers, prophesied freely that the tall, queer-looking lad would go to the bad.

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

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

There was an ominous silence. Hannah's knife flashed, and the potato-peelings fell with a rapidity which fairly paralysed Reuben. In his nervousness, he let fall the name of Mr. Ancrum. Then Hannah broke out. 'Some foo', she knew, had been meddling, and she might have guessed that fool was Mr. Ancrum. Instead of defending her own position, she fell upon Reuben and his supporter with a rhetoric whereof the moral flavour was positively astounding. Standing with the potato-bowl on one hip and a hand holding the knife on the other, she delivered her views as to David's laziness, temper, and general good-for-nothingness. If Reuben chose to incur the risks of throwing such a young lout into town-wickedness, with no one to look after him, let him; she'd be glad enough to be shut on him. But, as to writing to Mr. Gurney and that sort of talk, she wasn't going to bandy words—not she; but nobody had ever meddled with Hannah Grieve's affairs yet and found they had done well for themselves.

'An I wouldna advise yo, Reuben Grieve, to begin now—no, I wouldna. I gie yo fair noatice. Soa theer's not enough for t' lad to do, Mr. Ancrum, he thinks? Perhaps he'll tak th' place an try? I'd not gie him as mich wage as ud fill his stomach i' th' week—noa, I'd not, not if yo wor to ask me—a bletherin windy chap as iver I saw. I'd as soou hear a bird-clapper preach as him—theer'd be more sense an less noise! An they're findin it out down theer—we'st see th' back on him soon.'

And to Reuben, looking across the little scullery at his wife, at the harsh face shaken with the rage which these new and intolerable attempts of her husband to dislodge the yoke of years excited in her, it was as though like Christian and Hopeful he

were trying to get back into the Way, and found that the floods had risen over it.

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

As for Mr. Ancrum, his own affairs, poor soul, soon became so absorbing that he had no thoughts left for David. There were dissensions growing between him and the 'Christian Brethren.' He spoke often at the Sunday meetings—too often, by a great deal, for the other shining lights of the congregation. But his much speaking seemed to come rather of restlessness than of a full 'experience,' so torn, subtle, and difficult were the things he said. Grave doubts of his doctrine were rising among some of the 'Brethren'; a mean intrigue against him was just starting among others, and he himself was tempest-tossed, not knowing from week to week whether to go or stay.

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

So the little web of motives and cross-motives, for the most part of the commonest earthiest hue, yet shot every here and there by a thread or two of heavenlier stuff, went spinning itself the winter through round the unknowing children. The reports which had reached Mr. Ancrum were true enough. David was, in his measure, endeavouring to 'see life.' On a good many winter evenings the lad, now nearly fifteen, and shooting up fast to man's stature, might have been seen among the toppers at the 'Crooked Cow,' nay, even lending an excited ear to the Secularist speakers, who did their best to keep things lively at a certain low public kept by one Jerry Timmins, a Radical wag, who had often measured himself both in the meeting-houses and in the streets against the local preachers, and, according to his own following, with no small success. There was a covered skittle-ground attached to this house in which, to the horrid scandal of church and chapel, Sunday dances were sometimes held. A certain fastidious pride, and no doubt a certain conscience towards Reuben, kept David from experimenting in these performances, which were made as demonstratively offensive to the pious as they well could be without attracting the attention of the police.

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

Neither here, however, nor at the 'Crooked Cow' did the company feel the moody growing youth to be one of themselves. He would sit with his pint before him, silent, his great black eyes roving round the persons present. His tongue was sharp on occasion, and his fists ready, so that after various attempts to make a butt of him he was generally let alone. He got what he wanted—he learnt to know what smoking and drinking might be like, and the jokes of the taproom. And all by the help of a few shillings dealt out to him this winter for the first time by Reuben, who gave them to him with a queer deprecating look and an injunction to keep the matter secret from Hannah. As to the use the lad made of them, Reuben was as ignorant as he was of all other practical affairs outside his own few acres.

CHAPTER VII

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

About the middle of June David and his uncle went, as usual, to Kettlewell and Masholme, in Yorkshire, for the purpose of bringing home from thence some of that hardier breed of sheep which was required for the moorland, a Scotch breed brought down yearly to the Yorkshire markets by the Lowland farmers beyond the border. This expedition was an annual matter, and most of the farmers in the Kinder Valley and thereabouts joined in it. They went together by train to Masholme, made their purchases, and then drove their sheep over the moors home, filling the wide ferny stretches and the rough upland road with a patriarchal wealth of flocks, and putting up at night at the village inns, while their charges strayed at will over the hills. These yearly journeys had always been in former years a joy to David. The wild freedom of the walk, the change of scene which every mile and every village brought with it, the resistance of the moorland wind, the spring of the moorland turf, every little incident of the road, whether of hardship or of rough excess, added fuel to the flame of youth, and went to build up the growing creature.

This year, however, that troubling of the waters which was going on in the boy was especially active during the Masholme expedition. He kept to himself and his animals, and showed such a gruff unneighbourly aspect to the rest of the world that the other drivers first teased and then persecuted him. He fought one or two pitched battles on the way home, showed himself a more respectable antagonist, on the whole, than his assailants had bargained for, and was thenceforward contemptuously sent to Coventry. 'Yoong man,' said an old farmer to him once reprovingly, after one of these 'rumpuses,' 'yor temper woan't mouldy wi keepin.' Reuben coming by at the moment threw an unhappy glance at the lad, whose bruised face and torn clothes showed he had been fighting. To the uncle's mind there was a wanton, nay, a ruffianly look about him, which was wholly new. Instead of rebuking the culprit, Reuben slouched away and put as much road as possible between himself and Davy.

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

'Yoong mester, yo've coom fro a distance, hannot yo?'

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

'Fro Masholme,' he said, looking at her full, so that she

could see all the dark, richly coloured face she had had a curiosity to see; then he added abruptly, 'We're bound Kinder way wi t' sheep—reet t'other side o' t' Scout.'

The woman nodded. 'Aye, I know a good mony o' your Kinder foak. They've coom by here a mony year passt. But I doan't know as I've seen yo afoor. Yo're nobbut a yoong 'un. Eh, but we get sich a sight of strangers here now, the yan fairly drives the tother out of a body's mind.'

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

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

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

'You niver heerd on our Miss Brontë?' said the woman, mildly. 'Well, I spose not. She was just a bit quiet body. Nobboddy hereabouts saw mich in her. But she wrote bukes—tales, yo know—tales about t' foak roun here; an they do say, them as has read 'em, 'at they're terr'ble good. Mr. Watson, at t' Post Office, he's read 'em, and he's allus promised to lend 'em me. But soomhow I doan't get th' time. An in general I've naw moor use for a book nor a coo has for clogs. But she's terr'ble famous, is Miss Brontë, now—an her sisters too, pore young women. Yo should see t' visitors' book in th' church. Aw t' grand foak as iver wor. They cooms fro Lunnon a purpose, soom ov 'em, an they just takes a look roun t' place, an writes their names, an goos away. Would yo like to see th' church?' said the good-natured creature—looking at the tall lad beside her with an admiring scrutiny such as every woman knows she may apply to any male. 'I'm goin that way, an it's my brother 'at has th' keys.'

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

'Noa, it's not a beauty, isn't our church. They do say our parson ud like to have it pulled clean down an a new one built. Onyways, they're goin to clear th' Brontës' pew away, an sich a rumpus as soom o' t' Bradford papers have bin makin, and a gradely few o' t' people here too! I doan't know t' reets on t' missel, but I st be sorry when yo conno see ony moor where Miss Charlotte an Miss Emily used to sit o' Sundays—An theer's th' owd house. Yo used to be 'lowed to see Miss Charlotte's room,

where she did her writin, but they tell me yo can't be let in now. Seems strange, doan't it, 'at onybody should be real fond o' that place? When yo go by it i' winter, soomtimes, it lukes that lonesome, with t' churchyard coomin up close roun it, it's enoof to gie a body th' shivers. But I do bleeve, Miss Charlotte she could ha kissed ivery stone in 't; an they do say, when she came back fro furrin parts, she 'd sit an cry for joy, she wor that partial to Haworth. It's a place yo do get to favour soomhow,' said the good woman, apologetically, as though feeling that no stranger could justly be expected to sympathise with the excesses of local patriotism.

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

'Bless yo, yes. An theer's mony foak 'at think Miss Emily wor a deol cliverer even nor Miss Charlotte. Not but what yo get a bad noshun o' Yorkshire folk fro Miss Emily's bukes—soa I'm tow'd. Bit there's rough doins on t' moors soomtimes, I'll uphowsd yo! An Miss Emily had eyes like gimlets—they seed reet through a body. Deary me,' she cried, the fountain of gossip opening more and more, 'to think I should ha known 'em in pinafores, Mr. Patrick an aw!'

And under the stress of what was really a wonder at the small beginnings of fame—a wonder which much repetition of her story had only developed in her—she poured out upon her companion the history of the Brontës; of that awful winter in which three of that weird band—Emily, Patrick, Anne—fell away from Charlotte's side, met the death which belonged to each, and left Charlotte alone to reap the harvest of their common life through a few burning years; of the publication of the books; how the men of the Mechanics' Institute (the roof of which she pointed out to him) went crazy over 'Shirley'; how everybody about 'thowt Miss Brontë had bin puttin ov 'em into prent,' and didn't know whether to be pleased or piqued; how, as the noise made by 'Jane Eyre' and 'Shirley' grew, a wave of excitement passed through the whole countryside, and people came from Halifax, and Bradford, and Huddersfield—'aye, an Lunnon soomtoimes'—to Haworth church on a Sunday, to see the quiet body at her prayers who had made all the stir; how Mr. Nicholls, the curate, bided his time and pressed his wooing; how he won her as Rachel was won; and how love did but open the gate of death, and the fiery little creature—exhausted by such an energy of living as had possessed her from her cradle—sank and died on the threshold of her new life. All this Charlotte Brontë's townsoman told simply and garrulously, but she told it well because she had felt and seen.

'She wor so sma' and nesh; nowt but a midge. There was no lasst in her. Aye, when I heerd the bell tolling for Miss Charlotte that Saturday mornin,' said the speaker, shaking her head as she

moved away towards the church, 'I cud ha sat down an cried my eyes out. But if she'd ha seen me she'd ha nobbut said, "Martha, get your house straight, an doan't fret for me!"' She had sich a sperrit, had Miss Charlotte. Well, now, after aw, I needn't go for t' keys, for th' church door's open. It's Bradford early closin day, yo see, an I dessay soom Bradford foak's goin over.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And beginning to be alarmed lest she should be raising up fresh trouble for William in the person of this strange, foreign-looking lad, with his eyes like 'live birds,' she hurried him on to the vestry, where the visitors' books were being displayed. Here the Byronic young man was attempting to pick a fresh quarrel

with the sexton, by way of recovering himself with his party. But he took little by it; the sexton was a tough customer. When the local press was shaken in his face, the vicar's hireling, a canny, weather-beaten Yorkshireman, merely replied with a twist of the mouth,

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

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

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

EMILY, aged 29.

ANNE, aged 27.

CHARLOTTE, in the 39th year of her age.

The church had grown suddenly quite still. The sexton was outside, engaged in turning back a group of Americans, on the plea that visiting hours were over for the day. Through the wide-open door the fading yellow light streamed in, and with it a cool wind which chased little eddies of dust about the pavement. In the dusk the three names—black on the white—stood out with a stern and yet piteous distinctness. The boy stood there feeling the silence—the tomb near by—the wonder and pathos of fame, and all that thrill of undefined emotion to which youth yields itself so hungrily.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

David ran off hugging them, and thenceforward he bore patiently enough with the days of driving and tramping which remained, for the sake of the long evenings when in some lonely corner of moor and wood he lay full length on the grass revelling in one or other of his new possessions. He had a voracious way of tearing out the heart of a book first of all, and then beginning it again with a different and a tamer curiosity, lingering, tasting, and digesting. By the time he and Reuben reached home he had rushed through all three books, and his mind was full of them.

'Shirley' and 'Nicholas Nickleby' were the first novels of modern life he had ever laid hands on, and before he had finished them he felt them in his veins like new wine. The real world had been to him for months something sickeningly narrow and empty, from which at times he had escaped with passion into a distant dream-life of poetry and history. Now the walls of this real world were suddenly pushed back as it were on all sides, and there was an inrush of crowd, excitement, and delight. Human beings like those he heard of or talked with every day—factory hands and mill-owners, parsons, squires, lads and lasses—the Yorkes, and Robert Moore, Squeers, Smike, Kate Nickleby and Newman Noggs, came by, looked him in the eyes, made him take sides, compare himself with them, join in their fights and hatreds, pity and exult with them. Here was something more disturbing, personal, and

stimulating than that mere imaginative relief he had been getting out of 'Paradise Lost,' or the scenes of the 'Jewish Wars'!

By a natural transition the mental tumult thus roused led to a more intense self-consciousness than any he had yet known. In measuring himself with the world of 'Shirley' or of Dickens, he began to realise the problem of his own life with a singular keenness and clearness. Then—last of all—the record of Franklin's life,—of the steady rise of the ill-treated printer's devil to knowledge and power—filled him with an urging and concentrating ambition, and set his thoughts, endowed with a new heat and nimbleness, to the practical unravelling of a practical case.

They reached home again early on a May day. As he and Reuben, driving their new sheep, mounted the last edge of the moor which separated them from home, the Kinder Valley lay before them, sparkling in a double radiance of morning and of spring. David lingered a minute or two behind his uncle. What a glory of light and freshness in the air—what soaring larks—what dipping swallows! And the scents from the dew-steeped heather—and the murmur of the blue and glancing stream!

The boy's heart went out to the valley—and in the same instant he put it from him. An indescribable energy and exultation took possession of him. The tide of will for which he had been waiting all these months had risen; and for the first time he felt swelling within him the power to break with habit, to cut his way.

But what first step to take? Whom to consult? Suddenly he remembered Mr. Ancrum, first with shame, then with hope. Had he thrown away his friend? Rumour said that things were getting worse and worse at chapel, and that Mr. Ancrum was going to Manchester at once.

He ran down the slopes of heather towards home as though he would catch and question Mr. Ancrum there and then. And Louie? Patience! He would settle everything. Meanwhile, he was regretfully persuaded that if you had asked Miss Brontë what could be done with a creature like Louie she would have had a notion or two.

CHAPTER VIII

'REACH me that book, Louie,' said David peremptorily; 'it ull be worse for yo if yo don't.'

The brother and sister were in the smithy. Louie was squatting on the ground with her hands behind her, her lips sharply shut as though nothing should drag a word out of them, and her eyes blazing defiance at David, who had her by the shoulder, and looked to the full as fierce as she looked provoking.

'Find it!' was all she said. He had been absent for a few minutes after a sheep that had got into difficulties in the Red

Brook, and when he returned, his volume of Rollin's 'Ancient History'—Lias's latest loan—which he had imprudently forgotten to take with him, had disappeared.

David gave her an angry shake, on which she toppled over among the fallen stones with an exasperating limpness, and lay there laughing.

'Oh, very well,' said David, suddenly recovering himself; 'yo keep yor secret. I st keep mine, that's aw.'

Louie lay quiet a minute or two, laughing artificially at intervals, while David searched the corners of the smithy, turning every now and then to give a stealthy look at his sister.

The bait took. Louie stopped laughing, sat up, put herself straight, and looked about her.

'Yo hain't got a secret,' she said coolly; 'I'm not to be took in wi snuff that way.'

'Very well,' said David indifferently, 'then I haven't.'

And sitting down near the pan, he took out one of the little boats from the hole near, and began to trim its keel here and there with his knife. The occupation seemed to be absorbing.

Louie sat for a while, sucking at a lump of sugar she had swept that morning into the *omnium gatherum* of her pocket. At last she took up a little stone and threw it across at David.

'What's yor silly old secret about, then?'

'Where's my book, then?' replied David, holding up the boat and looking with one eye shut along the keel.

'Iv I gie it yer, an yor secret ain't wo'th it, I'll put soom o' that watter down yor neckhole,' said Louie, nodding towards the place.

'If yo don't happen to find yorsel in th' pan fust,' remarked David unmoved.

Louie sucked at her sugar a little longer, with her hands round her knees. She had thrown off her hat, and the May sun struck full on her hair, on the glossy brilliance of it, and the natural curls round the temples which disguised a high and narrow brow. She no longer wore her hair loose. In passionate emulation of Annie Wigson, she had it plaited behind, and had begged an end of blue ribbon of Mrs. Wigson to tie it with, so that the beautiful arch of the head showed more plainly than before, while the black eyes and brows seemed to have gained in splendour and effectiveness, from their simpler and severer setting. One could see, too, the length of the small neck and of the thin falling shoulders. It was a face now which made many a stranger in the Clough End streets stop and look backward after meeting it. Not so much because of its beauty, for it was still too thin and starved-looking for beauty, as because of a singular daring and brilliance, a sense of wild and yet conscious power it left behind it. The child had grown a great piece in the last year, so that her knees were hardly decently covered by the last year's cotton frock she wore, and her brown sticks of arms were far beyond her sleeves. David had looked at her once or twice lately with a new kind of