

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

scrutiny. He decided that she was a 'rum-looking' creature, not the least like anybody else's sister, and on the whole his raw impression was that she was plain.

'How'll I know yo'll not cheat?' she said at last, getting up and surveying him with her arms akimbo.

'Can't tell, I'm sure,' was all David vouchsafed. 'Yo mun find out.'

Louie studied him threateningly.

'Weel, I'd be even wi yo soomhow,' was her final conclusion; and disappearing through the ruined doorway, she ran down the slope to where one of the great mill-stones lay hidden in the heather, and diving into its central hole, produced the book, keenly watched the while by David, who took mental note of the hiding-place.

'Naw then,' she said, walking up to him with her hands behind her and the book in them, 'tell me yor secret.'

David first forcibly abstracted the book and made believe to box her ears, then went back to his seat and his boat.

'Go on, can't yo!' exclaimed Louie, after a minute, stamping at him.

David laid down his boat deliberately.

'Well, yo won't like it,' he said; 'I know that. But—I'm off to Manchester, that's aw—as soon as I can goo; as soon as iver I can hear of onything. An I'm gooin if I don't hear of onything. I'm gooin onyways; I'm tired o' this. So now yo know.'

Louie stared at him.

'Yo ain't!' she said, passionately, as though she were choking.

David instinctively put up his hands to keep her off. He thought she would have fallen upon him there and then and beaten him for his 'secret.'

But, instead, she flung away out of the smithy, and David was left alone and in amazement. Then he got up and went to look, stirred with the sudden fear that she might have run off to the farm with the news of what he had been saying, which would have precipitated matters unpleasantly.

No one was to be seen from outside, either on the moor path or in the fields beyond, and she could not possibly have got out of sight so soon. So he searched among the heather and the bilberry hummocks, till he caught sight of a bit of print cotton in a hollow just below the quaint stone shooting-hut, built some sixty years ago on the side of the Scout for the convenience of sportsmen. David stalked the cotton, and found her lying prone and with her hat, as usual, firmly held down over her ears. At sight of her something told him very plainly he had been a brute to tell her his news so. There was a strong moral shock which for the moment transformed him.

He went and lifted her up in spite of her struggles. Her face was crimson with tears, but she hit out at him wildly to prevent his seeing them. 'Now, Louie, look here,' he said, holding her

hands, 'I didna mean to tell yo short and sharp like that, but yo do put a body's back up so, there's no bearin it. Den't take on, Louie. I'll coom back when I've found soomthin, an take yo away, too, niver fear. Theer's lots o' things gells can do in Manchester—tailorin, or machinin, or dress-makin, or soomthin like that. But yo must get a bit older, an I must find a place for us to live in, so theer's naw use fratchin, like a spiteful hen. Yo must bide and I must bide. But I'll coom back for yo, I swear I will, an we'll get shut on Aunt Hannah, an live in a little place by ourselves, as merry as larks.'

He looked at her appealingly. Her head was turned sullenly away from him, her thin chest still heaved with sobs. But when he stopped speaking she jerked round upon him.

'Leave me behint, an I'll murder her!'

The child's look was demoniacal. 'No, yo won't,' said David, laughing. 'I th' fust place, Aunt Hannah could settle a midge like yo wi yan finger. I th' second, hangin isn't a coomfortable way o' deecin. Yo wait till I coom for yo, an when we'st ha got reet away, an can just laugh in her face if she riles us,—that 'll spite her mich moor nor murderin.'

The black eyes gleamed uncannily for a moment and the sobbing ceased. But the gleam passed away, and the child sat staring at the moorland distance, seeing nothing. There was such an unconscious animal pain in the attitude, the pain of the creature that feels itself alone and deserted, that David watched her in a puzzled silence. Louie was always mysterious, whether in her rages or her griefs, but he had never seen her sob quite like this before. He felt a sort of strangeness in her fixed gaze, and with a certain timidity he put out his arm and laid it round her shoulder. Still she did not move. Then he slid up closer in the heather, and kissed her. His heart, which had seemed all frostbound for months, melted, and that hunger for love—home-love, mother-love—which was, perhaps, at the very bottom of his moody complex youth, found a voice.

'Louie, couldn't yo be nice to me soomtimes—couldn't yo just take an interest, like, yo know—as if yo cared a bit—couldn't yo? Other gells do. I'm a brute to yo, I know, often, but yo keep aggin an teasin, an theer's niver a bit o' peace. Look here, Loo, yo give up, an I'st give up. Theer's nobbut us two—nawbody else cares a ha'porth about the yan or the tother—coom along! yo give up, an I'st give up.'

He looked at her anxiously. There was a new manliness in his tone, answering to his growing manliness of stature. Two slow tears rolled down her cheeks, but she said nothing. She couldn't for the life of her. She blinked, furiously fighting with her tears, and at last she put up an impatient hand which left a long brown streak across her miserable little face.

'Yo havn't got no trade,' she said. 'Yo'll be clemmed.'

David withdrew his arm, and gulped down his rebuff. 'No, I sha'n't,' he said. 'Now you just listen here.' And he described

how, the day before, he had been to see Mr. Ancrum, to consult him about leaving Kinder, and what had come of it.

He had been just in time. Mr. Ancrum, worn, ill, and harassed to death, had been cheered a little during his last days at Clough End by the appearance of David, very red and monosyllabic, on his doorstep. The lad's return, as he soon perceived, was due simply to the stress of his own affairs, and not to any knowledge of or sympathy with the minister's miseries. But, none the less, there was a certain balm in it for Mr. Ancrum, and they had sat long discussing matters. Yes, the minister was going—would look out at Manchester for an opening for David, in the bookselling trade by preference, and would write at once. But Davy must not leave a quarrel behind him. He must, if possible, get his uncle's consent, which Mr. Ancrum thought would be given.

'I'm willing to lend you a hand, Davy,' he had said, 'for you're on the way to no trade but loafing as you are now; but square it with Grieve. You can, if you don't shirk the trouble of it.'

Whereupon Davy had made a wry face and said nothing. But to Louie he expressed himself plainly enough.

'I'll not say owt to oather on 'em,' he said, pointing to the chimneys of the farm, 'till the day I bid 'em good-bye. Uncle Reuben, mebbe, ud be for givin me somethin to start wi, an Aunt Hannah ud be for cloutin him over the head for thinkin of it. No, I'll not be beholden to yan o' them. I've got a shillin or two for my fare, an I'll keep mysel.'

'What wages ull yo get?' inquired Louie sharply.

'Nothin very fat, that's sure,' laughed David. 'If Mr. Ancrum can do as he says, an find me a place in a book-shop, they'll, mebbe, gie me six shillin to begin wi.'

'An what ull yo do wi 'at?'

'Live on't,' replied David briefly.

'Yo conno, I tell yo! Yo'll ha food an firin, cloos, an lodgin to pay out o't. Yo conno do 't—soa theer.'

Louie looked him up and down defiantly. David was oddly struck with the practical knowledge her remark showed. How did such a wild imp know anything about the cost of lodging and firing?

'I tell yo I'll live on't,' he replied with energy; 'I'll get a room for half a crown—two shillin, p'r'aps—an I'll live on sixpence a day, see if I don't.'

'See if yo do!' retorted Louie, 'clemm on it more like.'

'That's all yo know about it, miss,' said David, in a tone, however, of high good humour; and, stretching one of his hands down a little further into his trousers pocket, he drew out a paper-covered book, so that just the top of it appeared. 'Yo're allus naggin about books. Well; I tell yo, I've got an idea out o' thissen ull be worth shillins a week to me. It's about Benjamin Franklin. Never yo mind who Benjamin Franklin wor; but he

wor a varra cute soart of a felly; an when he wor yoong, an had nobbut a few shillins a week, he made shift to save soom o' them shillins, becos he found he could do without eatin *flesh meat*, an that wi bread an meal an green stuff, a mon could do very well, an save soom brass every week. When I go to Manchester,' continued David emphatically, 'I shall niver touch meat. I shall buy a bag o' oatmeal like Grandfeyther Grieve lived on, boil it for mysel, wi a sup o' milk, perhaps, an soom salt or treacle to gi it a taste. An I'll buy apples an pears an oranges cheap soomwhere, an store 'em. Yo mun ha a deal o' fruit when yo doan't ha meat. Fourpence!' cried Davy, his enthusiasm rising, 'I'll live on *thruppence* a day, as sure as yo're sittin theer! Seven thruppences is one an nine; lodgin, two shillin—three an nine. Two an three left over, for cloos, firin, an pocket money. Why, I'll be rich before yo can look roun! An then, o' coorse, they'll not keep me long on six shillins a week. In the book-trade I'll soon be wuth ten, an moor!'

And, springing up, he began to dance a sort of cut and shuffle before her out of sheer spirits. Louie surveyed him with a flushed and sparkling face. The nimbleness of David's wits had never come home to her till now.

'What ull I earn when I coom?' she demanded abruptly.

David stopped his cut and shuffle, and took critical stock of his sister for a moment.

'Now, look here, Louie, yo're goin to stop where yo are, a good bit yet,' he replied decidedly. 'Yo'll have to wait two year or so—moor 'n one, onyways,' he went on hastily, warned by her start and fierce expression. 'Yo know, they can ha th' law on yo,' and he jerked his thumb over his shoulder towards the farm. 'Boys is all reet, but gells can't do nothink till they're sixteen. They mun stay wi th' foak as browt 'em up, an if they run away afore their sixteenth birthday—they gets put in prison.'

David poured out his legal fictions hastily, three parts convinced of them at any rate, and watched eagerly for their effect on Louie.

She tossed her head scornfully. 'Doan't b'lieve it. Yo're jest tellin lees to get shut o' me. Nex summer if yo doan't send for me, I'll run away, whatever yo may say. So yo know.'

'Yo're a tormentin thing!' exclaimed David, exasperated, and began savagely to kick stones down the hill. Then, recovering himself, he came and sat down beside her again.

'I doan't want to get shut on yo, Louie. But yo won't understand nothin.'

He stopped, and began to bite at a stalk of heather, by way of helping himself. His mind was full of vague and yet urgent thoughts as to what became of girls in large towns with no one to look after them, things he had heard said at the public-house, things he had read. He had never dreamt of leaving Louie to Aunt Hannah's tender mercies. Of course he must take her away when he could. She was his charge, his belonging. But all the

same she was a 'limb'; in his opinion she always would be a 'limb.' How could he be sure of her getting work, and who on earth was to look after her when he was away?

Suddenly Louie broke in on his perplexities.

'I'll go tailorin,' she cried triumphantly. 'Now I know—it wor t' Wigsons' cousin Em'ly went to Manchester; an she earned nine shillin a week—nine shillin I tell yo, an found her own thread. Yo'll be takin ten shillin, yo say, nex year? an I'll be takin nine. That's nineteen shillin fur th' two on us. *Isn't* it nineteen shillin?' she said peremptorily, seizing his arm with her long fingers.

'Well, I dessay it is,' said David, reluctantly. 'An precious tired yo'll be o' settin stitchin mornin, noon, an neet. Like to see yo do 't.'

'I'd do it fur nine shillin,' she said doggedly, and sat looking straight before her, with wide glittering eyes. She understood from David's talk that, what with meal, apples, and greenstuff, your 'eatin' need cost you nothing. There would be shillings and shillings to buy things with. The child who never had a copper but what Uncle Reuben gave her, who passed her whole existence in greedily coveting the unattainable and in chafing under the rule of an iron and miserly thrift, felt suddenly intoxicated by this golden prospect of illimitable 'buying.' And what could possibly prevent its coming true? Any fool—such as 'Wigson's Em'ly'—could earn nine shillings a week at tailoring; and to make money at your stomach's expense seemed suddenly to put you in possession of a bank on which the largest drawings were possible. It all looked so ingenious, so feasible, so wholly within the grip of that indomitable will the child felt tense within her.

So the two sat gazing out over the moorland. It was the first summer day, fresh and timid yet, as though the world and the sun were still ill-acquainted. Down below, over the sparkling brook, an old thorn was quivering in the warm breeze, its bright thin green shining against the brown heather. The larches alone had as yet any richness of leaf, but the sycamore-buds glittered in the sun, and the hedges in the lower valley made wavy green lines delightful to the eye. A warm soft air laden with moist scents of earth and plant bathed the whole mountain-side, and played with Louie's hair. Nature wooed them with her best, and neither had a thought or a look for her.

Suddenly Louie sprang up.

'Theer's Aunt Hannah shoutin. I mun geo an get t' coos.'

David ran down the hill with her.

'What'll yo do if I tell?' she inquired maliciously at the bottom.

'If yo do I shall cut at yance, an yo'll ha all the longer time to be by yoursen.'

A darkness fell over the girl's hard shining gaze. She turned away abruptly, then, when she had gone a few steps, turned and

came back to where David stood whistling and calling for the dogs. She caught him suddenly from behind round the neck. Naturally he thought she was up to some mischief, and struggled away from her with an angry exclamation. But she held him tight and thrust something hard and sweet against his lips. Involuntarily his mouth opened and admitted an enticing cake of butter-scotch. She rammed it in with her wiry little hand so that he almost choked, and then with a shrill laugh she turned and fled, leaping down the heather between the boulders, across the brook, over the wall, and out of sight.

David was left behind, sucking. The sweetness he was conscious of was not all in the mouth. Never that he could remember had Louie shown him any such mark of favour.

Next day David was sent down with the donkey-cart to Clough End to bring up some weekly stores for the family, Hannah specially charging him to call at the post-office and inquire for letters. He started about nine o'clock, and the twelve o'clock dinner passed by without his reappearance.

When she had finished her supply of meat and suet-pudding, after a meal during which no one of the three persons at table had uttered a word, Louie abruptly pushed her plate back again towards Hannah.

'David!' was all she said.

'Mind your manners, miss,' said Hannah, angrily. 'Them as cooms late gets nowt.' And, getting up, she cleared the table and put the food away with even greater rapidity than usual. The kitchen was no sooner quite clear than the donkey-cart was heard outside, and David appeared, crimsoned with heat, and panting from the long tug uphill, through which he had just dragged the donkey.

He carried a letter, which he put down on the table. Then he looked round the kitchen.

'Aunt's put t' dinner away,' said Louie, shortly, 'cos yo came late.'

David's expression changed. 'Then nex time she wants owt, she can fetch it fro Clough End hersel,' he said violently, and went out.

Hannah came forward and laid eager hands on the letter, which was from London, addressed in a clerk's hand.

'Louie!' she called imperatively, 'tak un out soom bread-an-drippin.'

Louie put some on a plate, and went out with it to the cow-house, where David sat on a stool, occupying himself in cutting the pages of a number of the *Vegetarian News*, lent him in Clough End, with trembling hands, while a fierce red spot burnt in either cheek.

'Tak it away!' he said, almost knocking the plate out of Louie's hands; 'it chokes me to eat a crumb o' hers.'

As Louie was bearing the plate back through the yard, Uncle

Reuben came by. 'What's—what's 'at?' he said, peering short-sightedly at what she held. Every month of late Reuben's back had seemed to grow rounder, his sight less, and his wits of less practical use.

'Summat for David,' said Louie, shortly, 'cos Aunt Hannah woan't gie him no dinner. But he woan't ha it.'

Reuben's sudden look of trouble was unmistakable. 'Whar is he?'

'I th' coo-house.'

Reuben went his way, and found the dinnerless boy deep, or apparently deep, in recipes for vegetable soups.

'What made yo late, Davy?' he asked him, as he stood over him.

David had more than half a mind not to answer, but at last he jerked out fiercely, 'Waitin for th' second post, fust; then t' donkey fell down half a mile out o' t' town, an th' things were spilt. There was nobody about, an' I had a job to get 'un up at a'.'

Reuben nervously thrust his hands far into his coat-pockets.

'Coom wi me, Davy, an I'st mak yor aunt gie yer yor dinner.'

'I wouldn't eat a morsel if she went down on her bended knees to me,' the lad broke out, and, springing up, he strode sombrely through the yard and into the fields.

Reuben went slowly back into the house. Hannah was in the parlour—so he saw through the half-opened door. He went into the room, which smelt musty and close from disuse. Hannah was standing over the open drawer of an old-fashioned corner cupboard, carefully scanning a letter and enclosure before she locked them up.

'Is 't Mr. Gurney's money?' Reuben said to her, in a queer voice.

She was startled, not having heard him come in, but she put what she held into the drawer all the more deliberately, and turned the key.

'Ay, 't is.'

Reuben sat himself down on one of the hard chairs beside the table in the middle of the room. The light streaming through the shutters Hannah had just opened streamed in on his grizzling head and face working with emotion.

'It's stolen money,' he said hoarsely. 'Yo're stealin it fro Davy.'

Hannah smiled grimly, and withdrew the key.

'I'm paying missel an yo, Reuben Grieve, for t' keep o' two wuthless brats as cost moor nor they pays,' she said, with an accent which somehow sent a shiver through Reuben. 'I don't keep udder foaks' childer fur nothin.'

'Yo've had moor nor they cost for seven year,' said Reuben, with the same thick tense utterance. 'Yo should let Davy ha it, an gie him a trade.'

Hannah walked up to the door and shut it,

'I should, should I? An who'll pay for Louie—for your luvly limb of a niece? It 'ud tak about that,' and she pointed grimly to the drawer, 'to coover what she wastes an spiles i' t' year.'

'Yo get her work, Hannah. Her bit and sup cost yo most nothin. I cud wark a bit moor—soa cud yo. Yo're hurtin me i' mi conscience, Hannah—yo're coomin atwixt me an th' Lord!'

He brought a shaking hand down on the damask table-cloth among the wool mats and the chapel hymn-books which adorned it. His long, loose frame had drawn itself up with a certain dignity.

'Ha done wi your cantin!' said Hannah under her breath, laying her two hands on the table, and stooping down so as to face him with more effect. The phrase startled Reuben with a kind of horror. Whatever words might have passed between them, never yet that he could remember had his wife allowed herself a sneer at his religion. It seemed to him suddenly as though he and she were going fast downhill—slipping to perdition, because of Sandy's six hundred pounds.

But she cowed him—she always did. She stayed a moment in the same bent and threatening position, coercing him with angry eyes. Then she straightened herself, and moved away.

'Let t' lad tak hisself off if he wants to,' she said, an iron resolution in her voice. 'I told yo so afore—I woan't ery for 'im. But as long as Louie's here, an I ha to keep her, I'll want that money, an every penny on't. If it bean't paid, she may go too!'

'Yo'd not turn her out, Hannah?' cried Reuben, instinctively putting out an arm to feel that the door was closed.

'She'd not want for a livin,' replied Hannah, with a bitter sneer; 'she's her mither's child.'

Reuben rose slowly, shaking all over. He opened the door with difficulty, groped his way out of the front passage, then went heavily through the yard and into the fields. There he wandered by himself for a couple of hours, altogether forgetting some newly dropped lambs to which he had been anxiously attending. For months past, ever since his conscience had been roused on the subject of his brother's children, the dull, incapable man had been slowly reconceiving the woman with whom he had lived some five-and-twenty years, and of late the process had been attended with a kind of agony. The Hannah Martin he had married had been a hard body indeed, but respectable, upright, with the same moral instincts as himself. She had kept the farm together—he knew that; he could not have lived without her, and in all practical respects she had been a good and industrious wife. He had coveted her industry and her strong will; and, having got the use of them, he had learnt to put up with her contempt for him, and to fit his softer nature to hers. Yet it seemed to him that there had always been certain conditions implied in this subjection of his, and that she was breaking them. He could not have been fetching and carrying all these years for a woman who could

go on wilfully appropriating money that did not belong to her,—who could even speak with callous indifference of the prospect of turning out her niece to a life of sin.

He thought of Sandy's money with loathing. It was like the cursed stuff that Achan had brought into the camp—an evil leaven fermenting in their common life, and raising monstrous growths.

Reuben Grieve did not demand much of himself; a richer and more spiritual nature would have thought his ideals lamentably poor. But, such as they were, the past year had proved that he could not fall below them without a dumb anguish, without a sense of shutting himself out from grace. He felt himself—by his fear of his wife—made a partner in Hannah's covetousness, in Hannah's cruelty towards Sandy's children. Already, it seemed to him, the face of Christ was darkened, the fountain of grace dried up. All those appalling texts of judgment and reprobation he had listened to so often in chapel, protected against them by that warm inward certainty of 'election,' seemed to be now pressing against a bared and jeopardised soul.

But if he wrote to Mr. Gurney, Hannah would never forgive him till her dying day; and the thought of making her his enemy for good put him in a cold sweat.

After much pacing of the upper meadows he came heavily down at last to see to his lambs. Davy was just jumping the wall on to his uncle's land, having apparently come down the Frimley path. When he saw his uncle he thrust his hands into his pockets, began to whistle, and came on with a devil-may-care swing of the figure. They met in a gateway between two fields.

'Whar yo been, Davy?' asked Reuben, looking at him askance, and holding the gate so as to keep him.

'To Dawson's,' said the boy, sharply.

Reuben's face brightened. Then the lad's empty stomach must have been filled; for he knew that 'Dawsons' were kind to him. He ventured to look at him more directly, and, as he did so, something in the attitude of the proud handsome stripling reminded him of Sandy—Sandy, in the days of his youth, coming down to show his prosperous self at the farm. He put his large soil-stained hand on David's shoulder.

'Goo yor ways in, Davy. I'll see yo ha your reets.'

David opened his eyes at him, astounded. There is nothing more startling in human relations than the strong emotion of weak people.

Reuben would have liked to say something else, but his lips opened and shut in vain. The boy, too, was hopelessly embarrassed. At last, Reuben let the gate fall and walked off, with downcast head, to where, in the sheep-pen, he had a few hours before bound an orphan lamb to a refractory foster-mother. The foster-mother's resistance had broken down, she was lying patiently and gently while the thin long-legged creature sucked; when it was frightened away by Reuben's approach she trotted

bleating after it. In his disturbed state of feeling the parallel, or rather the contrast, between the dumb animal and the woman struck home.

## CHAPTER IX

BUT the crisis which had looked so near delayed!

Poor Reuben! The morning after his sudden show of spirit to David he felt himself, to his own miserable surprise, no more courageous than he had been before it. Yet the impression made had gone too deep to end in nothingness. He contracted a habit of getting by himself in the fields and puzzling his brain with figures—an occupation so unfamiliar and exhausting that it wore him a good deal; and Hannah, when he came in at night, would wonder, with a start, whether he were beginning 'to break up.' But it possessed him more and more. Hannah would not give up the money, but David must have his rights. How could it be done? For the first time Reuben fell to calculation over his money matters, which he did not ask Hannah to revise. But meanwhile he lived in a state of perpetual inward excitement which did not escape his wife. She could get no clue to it, however, and became all the more forbidding in the household the more she was invaded by this wholly novel sense of difficulty in managing her husband.

Yet she was not without a sense that if she could but contrive to alter her ways with the children it would be well for her. Mr. Gurney's cheque was safely put away in the Clough End bank, and clearly her best policy would have been to make things tolerable for the two persons on whose proceedings—if they did but know it!—the arrival of future cheques in some measure depended. But Hannah had not the cleverness which makes the successful hypocrite. And for some time past there had been a strange unmanageable change in her feelings towards Sandy's orphans. Since Reuben had made her conscious that she was robbing them, she had gone nearer to an active hatred than ever before. And, indeed, hatred in such a case is the most natural outcome; for it is little else than the soul's perverse attempt to justify to itself its own evil desire.

David, however, when once his rage over Hannah's latest offence had cooled, behaved to his aunt much as he had done before it. He was made placable by his secret hopes, and touched by Reuben's advances—though of these last he took no practical account whatever; and he must wait for his letter. So he went back ungraciously to his daily tasks. Meanwhile he and Louie, on the strength of the great *coup* in prospect, were better friends than they had ever been, and his consideration for her went up as he noticed that, when she pleased, the reckless creature could keep a secret 'as close as wax.'

The weeks, however, passed away, and still no letter came for

David. The shepherds' meetings—first at Clough End for the Cheshire side of the Scout, and then at the 'Snake Inn' for the Sheffield side—when the strayed sheep of the year were restored to their owners, came and went in due course; sheep-washing and sheep-shearing were over; the summer was halfway through; and still no word from Mr. Ancrum.

David, full of annoyance and disappointment, was seething with fresh plans—he and Louie spent hours discussing them at the smithy—when suddenly an experience overtook him, which for the moment effaced all his nascent ambitions, and entirely did away with Louie's new respect for him.

It was on this wise.

Mr. Ancrum had left Clough End towards the end of June. The congregation to which he ministered, and to which Reuben Grieve belonged, represented one of those curious and independent developments of the religious spirit which are to be found scattered through the teeming towns and districts of northern England. They had no connection with any recognised religious community, but the members of it had belonged to many—to the Church, the Baptists, the Independents, the Methodists. They were mostly mill-hands or small tradesmen, penetrated on the one side with the fervour, the yearnings, the strong formless poetry of English evangelical faith, and repelled on the other by various features in the different sects from which they came—by the hierarchical strictness of the Wesleyan organisation, or the looseness of the Congregationalists, or the coldness of the Church. They had come together to seek the Lord in some way more intimate, more moving, more effectual than any they had yet found; and in this pathetic search for the 'rainbow gold' of faith they were perpetually brought up against the old stumbling-blocks of the unregenerate man,—the smallest egotisms, and the meanest vanities. Mr. Ancrum, for instance, had come to the Clough End 'Brethren' full of an indescribable missionary zeal. He had laboured for them night and day, taxing his sickly frame far beyond its powers. But the most sordid conspiracy imaginable, led by two or three of the prominent members who thought he did not allow them enough share in the evening meetings, had finally overthrown him, and he had gone back to Manchester a bitterer and a sadder man.

After he left there was an interregnum, during which one or two of the elder 'Brethren' taught Sunday school and led the Sunday services. But at last, in August, it became known in Clough End that a new minister for the 'Christian Brethren' had come down, and public curiosity in the Dissenting circles was keen about him. After a few weeks there began to be a buzz in the little town on the subject of Mr. Dyson. The 'Christian Brethren' meeting-room, a long low upper chamber formerly occupied by half a dozen hand-loomers, was crowded on Sundays, morning and evening, not only by the Brethren, but by migrants from other denominations, and the Sunday school, which was held in a little

rickety garret off the main room, also received a large increase of members. It was rumoured that Mr. Dyson was specially successful with boys, and that there was an 'awakening' among some of the lowest and roughest of the Clough End lads.

'He ha sich a way wi un,' said a much-stirred mother to Reuben Grieve, meeting him one day in the street, 'he do seem to melt your varra marrow.'

Reuben went to hear the new man, was much moved, and came home talking about him with a stammering unction, and many furtive looks at David. He had tried to remonstrate several times on the lad's desertion of chapel and Sunday school, but to no purpose. There was something in David's half contemptuous, half obstinate silence on these occasions which for a man like Reuben made argument impossible. To his morbid inner sense the boy seemed to have entered irrevocably on the broad path which leadeth to destruction. Perhaps in another year he would be drinking and thieving. With a curious fatalism Reuben felt that for the present, and till he had made some tangible amends to Sandy and the Unseen Powers for Hannah's sin, he himself could do nothing. His hands were unclean. But some tremulous passing hopes he allowed himself to build on this new prophet.

Meanwhile, David heard the town-talk, and took small account of it. He supposed he should see the new comer at Jerry's in time. Then if folk spoke true there would be a shindy worth joining in. Meanwhile, the pressure of his own affairs made the excitement of the neighbourhood seem to him one more of those storms in the Dissenting tea-cup, of which, boy as he was, he had known a good many already.

One September evening he was walking down to Clough End, bound to the reading-room. He had quite ceased to attend the 'Crooked Cow.' His pennies were precious to him now, and he saved them jealously, wondering scornfully sometimes how he could ever have demeaned himself so far as to find excitement in the liquor or the company of the 'Cow.' Half-way down to the town, as he was passing the foundry, whence he had drawn the pan which had for so long made the smithy enchanted ground to him, the big slouching apprentice who had been his quondam friend and ally there, came out of the foundry yard just in front of him. David quickened up a little.

'Tom, whar are yo goin?'

The other looked round at him uneasily.

'Niver yo mind.'

The youth's uncouth clothes were carefully brushed, and his fat face, which wore an incongruous expression of anxiety and dejection, shone with washing. David studied him a moment in silence, then he said abruptly—

'Yo're goin prayer-meetin, that's what yo are.'

'An if I am, it's noa consarn o' yourn. Yo're yan o' th' unregenerate; an I'll ask yo, Davy, if happen yo're goin town

way, not to talk ony o' your carnal talk to me. I've got hindrances enough, t' Lord knows.'

And the lad went his way, morosely hanging his head, and stepping more rapidly as though to get rid of his companion.

'Well, I niver!' exclaimed David, in his astonishment. 'What's wrong wi yo, Tom? Yo've got no more spunk nor a moultin hen. What's gotten hold o' yo?'

Tom hesitated a moment. 'Th' Lord!' he burst out at last, looking at Davy with that sudden unconscious dignity which strong feeling can bestow for the moment on the meanest of mortals. 'He's a harryin' me! I haven't slep this three neets for shoutin an cryin! It's th' conviction o' sin, Davy. Th' devil seems a howdin me, an I conno pull away, not whatever. T' new minister says, "Dunnot yo pull. Let Jesus do 't all. He's strang, He is. Yo're nobbut a worm." But I've naw assurance, Davy, theer's whar it is—I've naw assurance!' he repeated, forgetting in his pain the unregenerate mind of his companion.

David walked on beside him wondering. When he had last seen Tom he was lounging in a half-drunken condition outside the door of the 'Crooked Cow,' cracking tipsy jokes with the passers-by.

'Where is the prayer-meetin?' he inquired presently.

'In owd Simes's shed—an it's late too—I mun hurry.'

'Why, theer'll be plenty o' room in old Simes's shed. It's a fearfu big place.'

'An lasst time theer was na stannin ground for a corn-boggart; an I wudna miss ony o' Mr. Dyson's prayin, not for nothin. Good neet to yo, Davy.'

And Tom broke into a run; David, however, kept up with him.

'P'raps I'll coom too,' he said, with a kind of bravado, when they had passed the bridge and the Kinder printing works, and Clough End was in sight.

Tom said nothing till they had breasted a hill, at the top of which he paused panting, and confronted David.

'Noo yo'll not mak a rumpus, Davy,' he said mistrustfully.

'An if I do, can't a hunderd or two o' yo kick me out?' asked David, mockingly. 'I'll mak no rumpus. P'raps yor Mr. Dyson 'll convert me.'

And he walked on laughing.

Tom looked darkly at him; then, as he recovered his wind, his countenance suddenly cleared. Satan laid a new snare for him—poor Tom!—and into his tortured heart there fell a poisonous drop of spiritual pride. Public reprobation applied to a certain order of offences makes a very marketable kind of fame, as the author of *Manfred* knew very well. David in his small obscure way was supplying another illustration of the principle. For the past year he had been something of a personage in Clough End—having always his wits, his book-learning, his looks, and his singular parentage to advert from.

Tom—the shambling butt of his comrades—began to like the notion of going into prayer-meeting with David Grieve in tow; and even that bitter and very real cloud of spiritual misery lifted a little.

So they marched in together, Tom in front, with his head much higher than before; and till the minister began there were many curious glances thrown at David. It was a prayer-meeting for boys only, and the place was crammed with them, of all ages up to eighteen.

It was a carpenter's workshop. Tools and timber had been as far as possible pushed to the side, and at the end a rough platform of loose planks had been laid across some logs so as to raise the preacher a little.

Soon there was a stir, and Mr. Dyson appeared. He was tall and loosely built, with the stoop of the neck and the sallow skin which the position of the cotton-spinner at work and the close fluffy atmosphere in which he lives tend to develop. Up to six months ago, he had been a mill-hand and a Wesleyan class-leader. Now, in consequence partly of some inward crisis, partly of revolt against an 'unspiritual' superintendent, he had thrown up mill and Methodism together, and come to live on the doles of the Christian Brethren at Clough End. He had been preaching on the moors already during the day, and was tired out; but the pallor of the harsh face only made the bright, commanding eyes more noticeable. It ran over the room, took note first of the numbers, then of individuals, marked who had been there before, who was a new-comer. The audience fell into order and quiet before it as though a general had taken command.

He put his hands on his hips and began to speak without any preface, somewhat to the boys' surprise, who had expected a prayer. The voice, as generally happens with a successful revivalist preacher, was of fine quality, and rich in good South Lancashire intonations, and his manner was simplicity itself.

'Suppose we put off our prayer a little bit,' he said, in a colloquial tone, his fixed look studying the crowded benches all the while. 'Perhaps we'll have more to pray about by-and-by.'

Well, now, I haven't been long in Clough End, to be sure, but I think I've been long enough to get some notion of how you boys here live—whether you work on the land, or whether you work in the mills or in shops—I've been watching you a bit, perhaps you didn't think it; and what I'm going to do to-night is to take your lives to pieces—take them to pieces, an look close into them, as you've seen them do at the mill, perhaps, with a machine that wants cleaning. I want to find out what's wrong wi them, what they're good for, whose work they do—*God's or the devil's*. . . . First let me take the mill-hands. Perhaps I know most about their life, for I went to work in a cotton-mill when I was eight years old, and I only left it six months ago. I have seen men and women saved in that mill, so that their whole life afterwards was a kind of ecstasy: I have seen others lost there, so



that they became true children of the devil, and made those about them as vile and wretched as themselves. I have seen men grow rich there, and I have seen men die there; so if there is anything I know in this world it is how factory workers spend their time—at least, I think I know. But judge for yourselves—shout to me if I'm wrong. Isn't it somehow like this?

And he fell into a description of the mill-hand's working day. It was done with knowledge, sometimes with humour, and through it all ran a curious undercurrent of half-ironical passion. The audience enjoyed it, took the points, broke in now and then with comments as the speaker touched on such burning matters as the tyranny of overlookers, the temper of masters, the rubs between the different classes of 'hands,' the behaviour of 'minders' to the 'piecers' employed by them, and so on. The sermon at one time was more like a dialogue between preacher and congregation. David found himself joining in it involuntarily once or twice, so stimulating was the whole atmosphere, and Mr. Dyson's eye was caught perforce by the tall dark fellow with the defiant carriage of the head who sat next to Tom Mullins, and whom he did not remember to have seen before.

But suddenly the preacher stopped, and the room fell dead silent, startled by the darkening of his look. 'Ay,' he said, with stern sharpness. 'Ay, that's how you live—their's the things you spend your time and your minds on. You laugh, and I laugh—not a bad sort of life, you think—a good deal of pleasure, after all, to be got out of it. If a man must work he might do worse. *O you poor souls!*'

The speaker stopped, as though mastering himself. His face worked with emotion; his last words had been almost a cry of pain. After the easy give and take of the opening, this change was electrical. David felt his hand tremble on his knee.

'Answer me this!' cried the preacher, his nervous cotton-spinner's hand outstretched. 'Is there any soul here among you factory lads who, when he wakes in the morning, *ever thinks of saying a prayer?* Not one of you, I'll be bound! What with shovelling on one's clothes, and gulping down one's breakfast, and walking half a mile to the mill, who's got time to think about prayers? God must wait. He's always there above, you think, sitting in glory. He can listen any time. Well, as you stand at your work—all those hours!—is there ever a moment *then* for putting up a word in Jesus' ear—Jesus, Who died for sinners? Why, no, how should there be indeed? If you don't keep a sharp eye on your work the overlooker 'ull know the reason why in double-quick time! . . . But there comes a break, perhaps, for one reason or another. Does the Lord get it? What a thing to ask, to be sure! Why, there are other spinners close by, waiting for rovings, or leaving off for "baggin," and a bit of talk and a bad word or two are a deal more fun, and come easier than praying. Half-past five o'clock at last—knocking-off time. Then you begin to think of amusing yourselves. There's loafing

about the streets, which never comes amiss, and there's smoking and the public for you bigger ones, and there's betting on Manchester races, and there's a bout of swearing every now and then to keep up your spirits, and there are other thoughts, and perhaps actions, for some of you, of which the less said in any decent Christian gathering the better! And so bedtime comes round again; still not a moment to think of God in—of the Judgment which has come a day closer—of your sins which have grown a day heavier—of your soul which has sunk a day further from heaven, a day nearer to hell? Not one. You are dead tired, and mill-work begins so early. Tumble in—God can wait. He has waited fourteen, or eighteen, or twenty years already!

'But you're not all factory hands here. I see a good many lads I know come from the country—from the farms up Kinder or Edale way. Well, I don't know so much about your ways as I do about mills; but I know some, and I can guess some. *You* are not shut up all day with the roar of the machines in your ears, and the cotton-fluff choking your lungs. You have to live harder, perhaps. You've less chances of getting on in the world; but I declare to you, if you're bad and godless—as some of you are—I think there's a precious sight less excuse for you than there is for the mill-hands!'

And with a startling vehemence, greater by far than he had shown in the case of the mill-workers, he threw himself on the vices and the callousness of the field-labourers. For were they not, day by day, and hour by hour, face to face with the Almighty in His marvellous world—with the rising of His sun, with the flash of His lightning, with His clouds which dropped fatness, and with the heavens which declare His glory? Nothing between them and the Most High, if they would open their dull eyes and see! And more than that. Not a bit of their life, but had been dear to the Lord Jesus—but He had spoken of it, taught from it, made it sacred. The shepherd herding the sheep—how could he, of all men, forget and blaspheme the Good Shepherd? The sower scattering the seed—how could he, of all men, forget and blaspheme the Heavenly Sower? Oh, the crookedness of sin! Oh, the hardness of men's hearts!

The secret of the denunciations which followed lay hidden deep in the speaker's personal history. They were the utterances of a man who had stood for years at the 'mules,' catching, when he could, through the coarse panes of factory glass, the dim blue outlines of distant moors. *Here* were noise, crowd, coarse jesting, mean tyrannies, uncongenial company—everything which a nervous, excitable nature, tuned to poetry in the English way through religion, most loathed; *there* was beauty, peace, leisure for thought, for holiness, for emotion.

Meanwhile the mind of David Grieve rose once or twice in angry protest. It was not fair—it was unjust—and why did Mr. Dyson always seem to be looking at him?—flinging at him all these scathing words about farming people's sins and follies? He

was shaken and excited. Oratory, of any sort, never failed to stir him extraordinarily. Once even he would have jumped up to speak, but Tom Mullins's watchful hand closed on his arm. Davy shook it off angrily, but was perforce reminded of his promise. And Mr. Dyson was swift in all things. The pitiless sentences dropped; the speaker, exhausted, wiped his brow and pondered a moment; and the lads from the farms about, most of whom David knew by sight, were left staring at the floor, some inclined to laugh by reaction, others crimson and miserable.

Well; so God was everywhere forgotten—in the fields and in the mill. The greedy, vicious hours went by, and God still waited—waited. Would he wait for ever?

'Nay!'

The intense, low-spoken word sent a shiver through the room. The revivalist passion had been mounting rapidly amongst the listeners, and the revivalist sense divined what was coming. To his dying day David, at least, never forgot the picture of a sinner's death agony, a sinner's doom, which followed. As to the first, it was very quiet and colloquial. The preacher dwelt on the tortured body, the choking breath, the failing sight, the talk of relations and friends round the bed.

"Ay, poor fellow, he'll not lasst mich longer; t' doctor's gien him up—and a good thing too, for his sufferins are terr'ble to see."

'And your poor dying ears will catch what they say. Then will your fear come upon you as a storm, and your calamity as a whirlwind. Such a fear!'

'Once, my lads—long ago—I saw a poor girl caught by her hair in one of the roving machines in the mill I used to work at. Three minutes afterwards they tore away her body from the iron teeth which had destroyed her. But I, a lad of twelve, had seen her face just as the thing caught her, and if I live to be a hundred I shall never forget that face—that horrible, horrible fear convulsing it.'

'But that fear, my boys, was as *nothing* to the sinner's fear at death! Only a few more hours—a few more minutes, perhaps—and then *judgment*! All the pleasant loafing and lounging, all the eating and drinking, the betting and swearing, the warm sun, the kind light, the indulgent parents and friends left behind; nothing for ever and ever but the torments which belong to sin, and which even the living God can no more spare you and me if we die in sin than the mill-engine, once set going, can spare the poor creature that meddles with it.'

'Well; but perhaps in that awful last hour you try to pray—to call on the Saviour. But, alas! alas! prayer and faith have to be learnt, like cotton-spinning. Let no man count on learning that lesson for the asking. While your body has been enjoying itself in sin, your soul has been dying—dying; and when at the last you bid it rise and go to the Father, you will find it just as helpless as your poor paralysed limbs. It cannot rise, it has no

strength; it cannot go, for it knows not the way. No hope; no hope. Down it sinks, and the black waters of hell close upon it for ever!'

Then followed a sort of vision of the lost—delivered in short abrupt sentences—the form of the speaker drawn rigidly up meanwhile to its full height, the long arm outstretched. The utterance had very little of the lurid materialism, the grotesque horror of the ordinary ranter's hell. But it stole upon the imagination little by little, and possessed it at last with an all-pervading terror. Into it, to begin with, had gone the whole life-blood and passion of an agonised soul. The man speaking had himself graven the terrors of it on his inmost nature through many a week of demoniacal possession. But since that original experience of fire which gave it birth, there had come to its elaboration a strange artistic instinct. Day after day the preacher had repeated it to hushed congregations, and with every repetition, almost, there had come a greater sharpening of the light and shade, a keener sense of what would tell and move. He had given it on the moors that afternoon, but he gave it better to-night, for on the wild walk across the plateau of the Peak some fresh illustrations, drawn from its black and fissured solitude, had suggested themselves, and he worked them out as he went, with a kind of joy, watching their effect. Yet the man was, in his way, a saint, and altogether sincere—so subtle a thing is the life of the spirit.

In the middle, Tom Mullins, David's apprentice-friend, suddenly broke out into loud groans, rocking himself to and fro on the form. A little later, a small fair-haired boy of twelve sprang up from the form where he had been sitting trembling, and rushed into the space between the benches and the preacher, quite unconscious of what he was doing.

'Sir!' he said; 'oh, sir!—please—I didn't want to say them bad words this mornin; I didn't, sir; it wor t' big uns made me; they said they'd duck me—an it do hurt that bad. Oh, sir, please!'

And the little fellow stood wringing his hands, the tears coursing down his cheeks.

The minister stopped, frowning, and looked at him. Then a smile broke on the set face, he stepped up to the lad, threw his arm round him, and drew him up to his side fronting the room.

'My boy,' he said, looking down at him tenderly, 'you and I, thank God, are still in the land of the *living*; there is still time to-night—this very minute—to be saved! Ay, saved, for ever and ever, by the blood of the Lamb. Look away from yourselves—away from sin—away from hell—to the blessed Lord, that suffered and died and rose again; just for what? For this only—that He might, with His own pierced hands, draw every soul here to-night, and every soul in the wide world that will but hear His voice, out of the clutches of the devil, and out of the pains of hell, and gather it close and safe into His everlasting arms!'

There was a great sob from the whole room. Rough lads from the upland farms, shop-boys, mill-hands, strained forward, listening, thirsting, responding to every word.

*Redemption—Salvation*—the deliverance of the soul from itself—thither all religion comes at last, whether for the ranter or the philosopher. To the enriching of that conception, to the gradual hewing it out in historical shape, have gone the noblest poetry, the purest passion, the intensest spiritual vision of the highest races, since the human mind began to work. And the historical shape may crumble; but the need will last and the travail will go on; for man's quest of redemption is but the eternal yielding of the clay in the hands of the potter, the eternal answer of the creature to the urging indwelling Creator.

#### CHAPTER X

HALF an hour later, after the stormy praying and singing which had succeeded Mr. Dyson's address, David found himself tramping up the rough and lonely road leading to the high Kinder valley. The lights of Clough End had disappeared; against the night sky the dark woody side of Mardale Moor was still visible; beneath it sang the river; a few stars were to be seen; and every now and then the windows of a farm shone out to guide the wayfarer. But David stumbled on, noticing nothing. At the foot of the steep hill leading to the farm he stopped a moment, and leant over the gate. The little lad's cry was in his ears.

Presently he leapt the gate impatiently, and ran up whistling. Supper was over, but Hannah ungraciously brought him out some cold bacon and bread. Louie hung about him while he ate, studying him with quick furtive eyes.

'Whar yo bin?' she said abruptly, when Hannah had gone to the back kitchen for a moment. Reuben was dozing by the fire over the local paper.

'Nowhere as concerns yo,' said David, shortly. He finished his supper and went and sat on the steps. The dogs came and put their noses on his knees. He pulled absently at their coats, looking straight before him at the dark point of Kinder Low.

'Whar yo bin?' said Louie's voice again in his ear. She had squatted down on the step behind him.

'Be off wi yer,' said David, angrily, getting up in order to escape her.

But she pursued him across the farmyard.

'Have yo got a letter?'

'No, I haven't.'

'Did yo ask at t' post-office?'

'No, I didn't.'

'An why didn't yo?'

'Because I didn't want—soa there—get away.' And he

stalked off. Louie, left behind, chewed the cud of reflection in the darkness.

Presently, to his great disgust, as he was sitting under a wall of one of the pasture-fields, hidden, as he conceived, from all the world by the night, he heard the rustle of a dress, the click of a stone, and there was Louie dangling her legs above him, having attacked him in the rear.

'Uncle Reuben's talkin 'is stuff about Mr. Dyson. I sead 'im gooin passt Wigsons' this afternoon. He's nowt—he's common, he is.'

The thin scornful voice out of the dark grated on him intolerably. He bent forward and shut his ears tight with both his hands. To judge from the muffled sounds he heard, Louie went on talking for a while; but at last there had been silence for so long, that he took his hands away, thinking she must have gone.

'Yo've been at t' prayer-meetin, I tell yo, an yo're a great stupid muffin-yed, soa theer.'

And a peremptory little kick on his shoulder from a substantial shoe gave the words point.

He sprang up in a rage, ran down the hill, jumped over a wall or two, and got rid of her. But he seemed to hear her elfish laugh for some time after. As for himself, he could not analyse what had come over him. But not even the attraction of an unopened parcel of books he had carried home that afternoon from Clough End—a loan from a young stationer he had lately made acquaintance with—could draw him back to the farm. He sat on and on in the dark. And when at last, roused by the distant sounds of shutting up the house, he slunk in and up to bed, he tossed about for a long time, and woke up often in the night. The tyrannous power of another man's faith was upon him. He could not get Mr. Dyson out of his head. How on earth could anybody be so *certain*? It was monstrous that any one should be. It was canting stuff.

Still, next day, hearing by chance that the new comer was going to preach at a hamlet the other side of Clough End, he went, found a large mixed meeting mostly of mill-hands, and the tide of Revivalism rolling high. This time Mr. Dyson picked him out at once—the face and head indeed were easily remembered. After the sermon, when the congregation were fling out, leaving behind those more particularly distressed in mind to be dealt with more intimately in a small prayer-meeting by Mr. Dyson and a prayer-leader, the minister suddenly stepped aside from a group of people he was talking with, and touched David on the arm as he was making for the door.

'Won't you stay?' he said peremptorily. 'Don't trifle with the Lord.'

And his feverish divining eyes seemed to look the boy through and through. David flushed, and pushed past him with some inarticulate answer. When he found himself in the open air he was half angry, half shaken with emotion. And afterwards a