

I'd better come and tell you. He'll be pretty mad if he thinks I've let out; but I don't care.'

She was leaning against the wall of the passage, and David could just see the defiance and agitation on her face by the light of the gas-lamp outside.

He himself gave a low whistle.

'Well, that's rather strong, isn't it, Miss Purcell?'

'It's mean—it's abominable,' she cried. 'I vowed I'd stop it. But I don't know what he'll do to me—kill me, most likely.'

'Nobody shall do anything to you,' said David, decidedly. 'You're a brick. But look here—can you tell me anything more?'

She commanded herself with great difficulty, and told all she knew. David leant against the wall beside her, twisting a meditative lip. The situation was ominous, certainly. He had always known that his tenure was precarious, but from various indications he had supposed that it would be some years yet before his side of the street was much meddled with. That old fox! He must go and see Mr. Ancrum.

A passion of hate and energy rose within him. Somehow or other he would pull through.

When Lucy had finished the tale of her eavesdroppings, the young fellow shook himself and stood erect.

'Well, I *am* obliged to you, Miss Purcell. And now I'll just go straight off and talk to somebody that I think 'll help me. But I'll see you to Market Street first.'

'Oh!—somebody will see us!' she cried in a fever, 'and tell father.'

'Not they; I'll keep a look out.'

Then suddenly, as they walked along together, a great shyness fell upon them both. Why had she done this thing, and run the risk of her father's wrath? As David walked beside her, he felt for an instant, through all his gratitude, as though some one had thrown a lasso round him, and the cord were tightening. He could not have explained the feeling, but it made him curt and restive, absorbed, apparently, in his own thoughts. Meanwhile Lucy's heart swelled and swelled. She *did* think he would have taken her news differently—have made more of it and her. She wished she had never come—she wished she had brought Dora. The familiar consciousness of failure, of insignificance, returned, and the hot tears rose in her eyes.

At Market Street she stopped him hurriedly.

'Don't come any farther. I can get home.'

David, meanwhile, was saying to himself that he was a churlish brute; but for the life of him he could not get out any pretty speeches worthy of the occasion.

'I'm sure I take it most kind of you, Miss Purcell. There's nothing could have saved me if you hadn't told. And I don't know whether I can get out of it now. But if ever I can do anything for you, you know—'

'Oh, never mind!—never mind!' she said, incoherently, stabbed by his constraint. 'Good night.'

And she ran away into the darkness, choked by the sorest tears she had ever shed.

David, meanwhile, went on his way to Ancrum, scourging himself. If ever there was an ungrateful cur, it was he! Why could he find nothing nice to say to that girl in return for all her pluck? Of course she would get into trouble. Coming to see him at that time of night, too! Why, it was splendid!

Yet, all the same, he knew perfectly well that if she had been there beside him again, he would have been just as tongue-tied as before.

CHAPTER VII

On the following night David walked into the Parlour about eight o'clock, hung up his hat with the air of an emperor, and looked round for Daddy.

'Look here, Daddy! I've got something to say to you, but not down here: you'll be letting out my private affairs, and I can't stand that.'

'Well, come upstairs, then, you varmint! You're a poor sort of fellow, always suspecting your friends. Come up—come up with you! I'll humour you!'

And Daddy, bursting with curiosity, led the way upstairs to Dora's sitting-room. Dora was moving about amid a mass of silks, which lay carefully spread out on the table, shade melting into shade, awaiting their transference to a new silk case she had been busy upon.

As the door opened she look up, and when she saw David her face flushed all over.

Daddy pushed the lad in.

'Dora, he's got some news. Out with it, sir!'

And he stood opposite the young fellow, on tiptoe, quivering with impatience.

David put both hands in his pockets, and looked out upon them, radiant.

'I think,' he said slowly, 'I've scotched old Purcell this time. But perhaps you don't know what he's been after?'

'Lucy was in here last night,' said Dora, hesitating; 'she told me about it.'

'Lucy!' cried Daddy, exasperated. 'What have you been making secrets about? I'll have no secrets from me in this house, Dora. Why, when Lucy tells you something important, is it all hidden up from me? Nasty close ways!'

And he looked at her threateningly.

Nothing piqued the old Bohemian so much as the constant assumption of the people about him that he was a grown-up baby,

of no discretion at all. That the assumption was true made no difference whatever to the irritating quality of it.

Dora dropped her head a little, but said nothing. David interposed:

'Well, now I'll tell you all about it.'

His tone was triumph itself, and he plunged into his story. He described what Purcell had meant to do, and how nearly he had done it. In a month, if the bookseller had had his way, his young rival would have been in the street, with all his connection to make over again. At the moment there was not another corner to be had, within David's means, anywhere near the centre of the town. It would have meant a completely fresh beginning, and temporary ruin.

But he had gone to Ancrum. And Ancrum and he had bethought them of the rich Unitarian gentleman who had been David's sponsor when he signed his agreement.

There and then, at nine o'clock at night, Ancrum had gone off to Higher Broughton, where the good man lived, and laid the case before him. Mr. Doyle had taken the night to think it over, and the following morning he had paid a visit to his lawyer.

'He and his wife thought it a burning shame, he told Mr. Ancrum; and, besides, he's been buying up house property in Manchester for some time past, only we couldn't know that—that was just luck. He looked upon it as a good chance both for him and for me. He told his lawyer it must be all settled in three hours, and he didn't mind the price. The lawyer found out that Purcell was haggling, went in to win, put the cash down, and here in my pocket I've got the fresh agreement between me and Mr. Doyle—three months' notice on either side, and no likelihood of my being turned out, if I want to stay, for the next three or four years. Hurrah!'

And the lad, quite beside himself with jubilation, raised the blue cap he held in his hand, and flung it round his head. Dora stood and looked at him, leaning lightly against the table, her arms behind her. His triumph carried her away; her lips parted in a joyous smile; her whole soft, rounded figure trembled with animation and sympathy.

As for Daddy, he could not contain himself. He ran to the top of the stairs, and sent a kitchen-boy flying for a bottle of champagne.

'Drink, you varmint, drink!' he said, when the liquor came, 'or I'll be the death of you! Hold your tongue, Dora! Do you think a man can put up with temperance drinks when his enemy's smitten hip and thigh? Oh, you jewel, David, but you'll bring him low, lad—you'll bring him low before you've done—promise me that. I shall see him a beggar yet, lad, shan't I? Oh, nectar!'

And Daddy poured down his champagne, apostrophising it and David's vengeance together.

Dora looked distressed.

'Father—Lucy! How can you say such things?'

'Lucy—eh?—Lucy? She won't be a beggar. She'll marry; she's got a bit of good looks of her own. But, David, my lad, what was it you were saying? How was it you got wind of this precious business?'

David hesitated.

'Well, it was Miss Purcell told me,' he said. 'She came to see me at my place last evening.'

He drew himself together with a little nervous dignity, as though foreseeing that Daddy would make remarks.

'Miss Purcell!—what, Lucy?—Lucy? Upon my word, Davy! Why, her father'll wring her neck when he finds it out. And she came to warn you?'

Daddy stood a moment taking in the situation, then, with a queer grin, he walked up to David and poked him in the ribs.

'So there were passages—eh, young man—when you were up there?'

The young fellow straightened himself, with a look of annoyance.

'Nothing of the sort, Daddy; there were no passages. But Miss Lucy's done me a real friendly act, and I'd do the same for her any day.'

Dora had sat down to her silks again. As David spoke she bent closely over them, as though the lamp-light puzzled her usually quick perception of shade and quality.

As for Daddy, he eyed the lad doubtfully.

'She's got a pretty waist and a brown eye, Davy, and she's seventeen.'

'She may be for me,' said David, throwing his head back and speaking with a certain emphasis and animation. 'But she's a little brick to have given me notice of this thing.'

The warmth of these last words produced more effect on Daddy than his previous denials.

'Dora,' he said, looking round—'Dora, do you believe the varmint? All the same, you know, he'll be for marrying soon. Look at him!' and he pointed a thin theatrical finger at David from across the room. 'When I was his make I was in love with half the girls in the place. Blue eyes here—brown eyes there—nothing came amiss to me.'

'Marrying!' said David, with an impatient shrug of the shoulders, but flushing all over. 'You might wait, I think, till I've got enough to keep one on, let alone two. If you talk such stuff, Daddy, I'll not tell you my secrets when there are any to tell.'

He tried to laugh it off; but Dora's grey eye, glancing timidly round at him, saw that he was in some discomfort. There was a bright colour in her cheek too, and her hand touched her silks uncertainly.

'Thank you for nothing, sir,' said Daddy, unabashed. 'Trust an old hound like me for scenting out what he wants. But, go

along with you! I'm disappointed in you. The young men nowadays have got no *blood*! They're made of sawdust and brown paper. The world was our orange, and we sucked it. Bedad, we did! But *you*—cold-blooded cubs—go to the devil, I tell you, and read your Byron!

And, striking an attitude which was a boisterous reminiscence of Macready, the old wanderer flung out the lines:

'Alas! when mingling souls forget to blend,
Death hath but little left him to destroy.
Ah! happy years! Once more, who would not be a boy?'

David laughed out. Daddy turned petulantly away, and looked out of window. The night was dreary, dark, and wet.

'Dora!'

'Yes, father.'

'Manchester's a damned dull hole. I'm about tired of it.'

Dora started, and her colour disappeared in an instant. She got up and went to the window.

'Father, you know they'll be waiting for you downstairs,' she said, putting her hand on his shoulder. 'They always say they can't get on without you on debating nights.'

'Stuff and nonsense!' said Daddy, throwing off the hand. But he looked mollified. The new reading-room was at present his pet hobby; his interest in the restaurant proper had dropped a good deal of late, or so Dora's anxiety persuaded her.

'It's quite true,' said David. 'Go and start 'em, Daddy, and I'll come down soon and cut in. I feel as if I could speak the roof off to-night, and I don't care a hang about what! But first I've got something to say to Miss Dora. I want to ask her a favour.'

He came forward smiling. She gave him a startled look, but her eyes—poor Dora!—could not light on him now without taking a new brightness. How well his triumph sat on him! How crisply and handsomely his black hair curled above his open brow!

'More secrets,' growled Daddy.

'Nothing of any interest, Daddy. Miss Dora can tell you all about it, if she cares. Now go along! Start 'em on the Bishop of Peterborough and the Secularists. I've got a lot to say about that.'

He pushed Daddy laughingly to the door, and came back again to where Dora was once more grappling with her silks. Her expression had changed again. Oh! she had so many things to open to him, if only she could find the courage.

He sat down and looked at a bit of her embroidery, which lay uncovered beside her on the frame.

'I say, that is fine work!' he said, wondering. 'I hope you get well paid for it, Miss Dora. You ought. Well, now, I do want to ask your advice. This business of the house has set me thinking about a lot of things.'

He lay back in his chair, with his hands in his pockets, and threw one leg over the other. He was in such a state of nervous excitement, Dora could see, that he could hardly keep himself still.

'Did I ever tell you about my sister? No, I know I haven't. I've kept it dark. But now I'm settled I want to have her to live with me. There's no one but us two, except the old uncle and aunt that brought us up. I must stick to her—and I mean to. But she's not like other girls. She's a queer one.'

He stopped, frowning a little as the recollections of Louie rushed across him, seeking for words in which to draw her. And directly he paused, Dora, who had dropped her silks again in her sudden astonishment, burst into questions. How old was his sister? Was she in Manchester? Had she a trade? Her soul was full of a warm, unexpected joy, her manner was eager—receptive. He took up his parable and told the story of his childhood and Louie's at the farm. His black eye kindled as he looked past Dora into the past—into the bosom of the Scout. Owing partly to an imaginative gift, partly to his reading habit, when he was stimulated—when he was, as it were, talking at large, trying to present a subject as a whole, to make a picture of it—he rose into ways of speech quite different from those of his class, and different from his own dialect of every day. This latent capacity for fine expression was mostly drawn out at this time by his attempts at public speaking. But to-night, in his excitement, it showed in his talk, and Dora was bewildered. Oh, how clever he was! He talked like a book—just like a book. She pushed her chair back from the silks, and sat absorbed in the pleasure of listening, environed too by the happy thought that he was making a friend of her, giving her—plain, insignificant, humble Dora Lomax—his confidence.

As for him, the more he talked the more he enjoyed talking. Never since he came to Manchester had he fallen into such a moment of unburdenment, of intimacy, or something like it, with any human being. He had talked to Anerum and to John. But that was quite different. No man confides in a woman as he confides in a man. The touch of difference of sex gives charm and edge, even when, as was the case here, the man has no thrill whatever in his veins, and no thought of love-making in his head.

'You must have been very fond of your sister,' Dora said at last, tremulously. 'You two all alone—and no mother.'

Somehow the soft sentiment in her words and tone struck him suddenly as incongruous. His expression changed.

'Oh, I don't know,' he said, with a sort of laugh, not a very bright one. 'Don't you imagine I was a pattern brother; I was a brute to her lots of times. And Louie—ah, well, you'll see for yourself what she's like; she's a queer customer sometimes. And now I'll tell you what I wanted to ask you, Miss Dora. You see, if Louie comes it won't do for her to have no employment, after she's had a trade all day; and she won't take to mine—she can't abide books.'

And he explained to her his perplexities—the ebbing of the silk trade from Manchester, and so on. He might hire a loom, but Louie would get no work. All trades have their special channels, and keep to them.

So it had occurred to him, if Louie was willing, would Dora take her as an apprentice, and teach her the church work? He would be quite ready to pay for the teaching; that would be only fair.

‘Teach her my work!’ cried Dora, instinctively drawing back. ‘Oh, I don’t think I could.’

He coloured, and misunderstood her. In a great labour-hive like Lancashire, with its large and small industries, the native ear is very familiar with the jealous tone of the skilled worker, threatened with competition in a narrow trade.

‘I didn’t mean any offence,’ he said, with a little stiffness. ‘I don’t want to take the bread out of anybody’s mouth. If there isn’t work to be had, you’ve only to say so, Miss Dora.’

‘Oh, I didn’t mean that,’ she cried, wounded in her turn. ‘There’s plenty of work. At the shop last week they didn’t know what to do for hands. If she was clever at it, she’d get lots of work. But—’

She laid her hand on her frame lovingly, not knowing how to explain herself, her gentle brows knitting in the effort of thought.

Her work was so much more to her than ordinary work paid for in ordinary coin. Into these gorgeous altar-cloths, or these delicate wrappings for chalice and paten, she stitched her heart. To work at them was prayer. Jesus, and His Mother, and the Saints: it was with them she communed as her stitches flowed. She sat in a mystic, a heavenly world. And the silence and solitude of her work made one of its chief charms. And now to be asked to share it with a strange girl, who could not love it as she did, who would take it as hard business—never to be alone any more with her little black book and her prayers!

And then she looked up, and met a young man’s half-offended look, and a shy, proud eye, in which the nascent friendship of five minutes before seemed to be sinking out of sight.

‘Oh yes, I will,’ she cried. ‘Of course I will. It just sounded a bit strange to me at first. I’ve been so used to be alone always.’

But he demurred now—wished stiffly to take back his proposal. He did not want to put upon her, and perhaps, after all, Louie would have her own notions.

But she could not bear it, and as he retreated she pressed forward. Of course there was work. And it would be very good for her, it would stir her up to take a pupil; it was just her old-maidish ways—it had startled her a bit at first.

And then, her reserve giving way more and more as her emotion grew, she confessed herself at last completely.

‘You see, it’s not just *work* to me, and it’s not the money,

though I’m glad enough for that; but it’s for the church; and I’d live on a crust, and do it for nothing, if I could!’

She looked up at him—that ardent dream-life of hers leaping to the eyes, transforming the pale face.

David sat silent and embarrassed. He did not know what to say—how to deal with this turn in the conversation.

‘Oh, I know you think I’m just foolish,’ she said, sadly, taking up her needle. ‘You always did; but I’ll take your sister—indeed I will.’

‘Perhaps you’ll turn her your way of thinking,’ said David, with a little awkward laugh, looking round for his hat. ‘But Louie isn’t an easy one to drive.’

‘Oh, you can’t drive people!’ cried Dora, flushing; ‘you can’t, and you oughtn’t. But if Father Russell talked to her she might like him—and the church. Oh, Mr. Grieve, won’t you go one Sunday and hear him—won’t you—instead of—’

She did not finish her sentence, but David finished it for her: ‘Instead of going to the Hall of Science? Well, but you know, Miss Dora, I being what I am, I get more good out of a lecture at the Hall of Science than I should out of Father Russell. I should be quarrelling with him all the time, and wanting to answer him.’

‘Oh, you couldn’t,’ said Dora eagerly, ‘he’s so good, and he’s a learned man—I’m sure he is. Mr. Foss, the curate, told me they think he’ll be a bishop some day.’

‘All the better for him,’ said David, unmoved. ‘It don’t make any difference to me. No, Miss Dora, don’t you fret yourself about me. Books are my priests.’

He stood over her, his hands on his sides, smiling.

‘Oh, no!’ cried Dora, involuntarily. ‘You mustn’t say that. Books can’t bring us to God.’

‘No more can priests,’ he said, with a sudden flash of his dark eyes, a sudden dryness of his tone. ‘If there is a God to bring us to—prove me that first, Miss Dora. But it’s a shame to say these things to you—that it is—and I’ve been worrying you a deal too much about my stupid affairs. Good night. We’ll talk about Father Russell again another time.’

He ran downstairs. Dora went back to her frame, then pushed it away again, ran eagerly to the window, and pulled the blind aside. Down below in the lighted street, now emptying fast, she saw the tall figure emerge, saw it run down the street, and across St. Mary’s Gate. She watched it till it disappeared; then she put her hands over her face, and leant against the window-frame weeping. Oh, what a sudden descent from a moment of pure joy! How had the jarring note come? They had been put wrong with each other; and perhaps, after all, he would be no more to her now than before. And she had seemed to make such a leap forward—to come so near to him.

‘Oh! I’ll just be good to his sister,’ she said to herself drearily, with an ache at her heart that was agony.

Then she thought of him as he had sat there beside her; and

suddenly in her pure thought there rose a vision of herself in his arms, her head against his broad shoulder, her hand stealing round his neck. She moved from the window and threw herself down in the darkest corner of the room, wrestling desperately with what seemed to her a sinful imagination. She ought not to think of him at all; she loathed herself. Father Russell would tell her she was wicked. He had no faith—he was a hardened unbeliever—and she could not make herself think of that at all—could not stop herself from wanting—*wanting* him for her own, whatever happened.

And it was so foolish too, as well as bad; for he hadn't an idea of falling in love with anybody—anyone could see that. And she who was not pretty, and not a bit clever—it was so likely he would take a fancy to her! Why, in a few years he would be a big man, he would have made a fortune, and then he could take his pick.

'Oh! and Lucy—Lucy would *hate* me.'

But the thought of Lucy, instead of checking her, brought with it again a wild gust of jealousy. It was fiercer than before, the craving behind it stronger. She sat up, forcing back her tears, her whole frame tense and rigid. Whatever happened he would *never* marry Lucy! And who could wish it? Lucy was just a little, vain, selfish thing, and when she found David Grieve wouldn't have her, she would soon forget him. The surging longing within refused, proudly refused, to curb itself—for Lucy's sake.

Then the bell of St. Ann's slowly began to strike ten o'clock. It brought home to her by association one of the evening hymns in the little black book she was frequently accustomed to croon to herself at night as she put away her work:

O God who canst not change nor fail,
Guiding the hours as they roll by,
Brightening with beams the morning pale,
And burning in the mid-day sky!

Quench thou the fires of hate and strife,
The wasting fever of the heart;
From perils guard our feeble life,
And to our souls thy peace impart.

The words flowed in upon her, but they brought no comfort, only a fresh sense of struggle and effort. Her Christian peace was gone. She felt herself wicked, faithless, miserable.

Meanwhile, in the stormy night outside, David was running and leaping through the streets, flourishing his stick from side to side in cut and thrust with an imaginary enemy whenever the main thoroughfares were left behind, and he found himself in some dark region of warehouses, where his steps echoed, and he was king alike of roadway and of pavement.

The wind, a stormy north-easter, had risen since the afternoon. David fought with it, rejoiced in it. After the little hot sitting-room, the stinging freshness, the rough challenge of the gusts, were delicious to him. He was overflowing with spirits, with health, with exultation.

As he thought of Purcell he could hardly keep himself from shouting aloud. If he could only be there to see when Purcell learnt how he had been foiled! And trust Daddy to spread a story which would certainly do Purcell no good! No, in that direction he felt that he was probably safe from attack for a long time to come. Success beckoned to him; his enemy was under foot; his will and his gifts had the world before them.

Father Russell indeed! Let Dora Lomax set him on. His young throat filled with contemptuous laughter. As a bookseller, *he* knew what the clergy read, what they had to say for themselves. How much longer could it go on, this solemn folly of Christian superstition? 'Just give us a good Education Bill, and we shall see!'

Then, as he fell thinking of his talk with Dora and Lomax, he wished impatiently that he had been even plainer with Daddy about Lucy Purcell. With regard to her he felt himself caught in a tangled mesh of obligation. He must, somehow, return her the service she had done him. And then all the world would think he was making up to her and wanted to marry her. Meanwhile—in the midst of real gratitude, a strong desire to stand between her and her father, and much eager casting about for some means of paying her back—his inner mind was in reality pitilessly critical towards her. Her overdone primness and neatness, her fashionable frocks, of which she was so conscious, her horror of things and people that were not 'nice,' her contented ignorance and silly chattering ways—all these points of manner and habit were scored against her in his memory. She had become less congenial to him rather than more since he knew her first. All the same, she was a little brick, and he would have liked one minute to kiss her for her pluck, make her some lordly present, and the next—never to see her again!

In reality his mind at this moment was filling with romantic images and ideals totally remote from anything suggested by his own everyday life. A few weeks before, old Barbier, his French master, had for the first time lent him some novels of George Sand's. David had carried them off, had been enchanted to find that he could now read them with ease and rapidity, and had plunged straightway into the new world thus opened to him with indescribable zest and passion. His Greek had been neglected, his science laid aside. Night after night he had been living with Valentine, with Consuelo, with Caroline in 'Le Marquis de Villemer.' His poetical reading of the winter had prepared the way for what was practically his first introduction to the modern literature of passion. The stimulating novelty and foreignness of it was stirring all his blood. George Sand's problems, her

situations, her treatment of the great questions of sex, her social and religious enthusiasms—these things were for the moment a new gospel to this provincial self-taught lad, as they had been forty years before to the youth of 1830. Under the vitalising touch of them the man was fast developing out of the boy; the currents of the nature were setting in fresh directions. And in such a mood, and with such preoccupations, how was one to bear patiently with foolish, friendly fingers, or with uncomfortable thoughts of your own, pointing you to *Lucy Purcell*? With the great marriage-night scene from 'Valentine' thrilling in your mind, how was it possible to think of the prim self-conceit, the pettish temper and mincing airs of that little person in Half Street without irritation?

No, no! *The unknown, the unforeseen!* The young man plunged through the rising storm, and through the sleety rain, which had begun to beat upon him, with face and eyes uplifted to the night. It was as though he searched the darkness for some form which, even as he looked, began to take vague and luminous shape there.

Next morning Daddy, in his exultation, behaved himself with some grossness towards his enemy. About eleven o'clock he became restless, and began patrolling Market Place, passing every now and then up the steps into the narrow passage of Half Street, and so round by the Cathedral and home. He had no definite purpose, but 'have a squint at Tom,' under the circumstances, he must, some way or other.

And, sure enough, as he was coming back through Half Street on one of his rounds, and was within a few yards of Purcell's window, the bookseller came out with his face set in Daddy's direction. Purcell, whose countenance, so far as Daddy could see at first sight, was at its blackest and sourest, and whose eyes were on the ground, did not at once perceive his adversary, and came stem on.

The moment was irresistible. Laying his thumbs in his waistcoat pocket, and standing so as to bar his brother-in-law's path, Daddy launched a few unctuous words in his smoothest voice.

'Tom, me boy, thou hast imagined a device which thou wast not able to perform. But the Lord, Tom, hath made thee turn thy back. And they of thy own household, Tom, have lifted up the heel against thee.'

Purcell, strong, dark-browed fellow that he was, wavered and blanched for a moment under the surprise of this audacious attack. Then with an oath he put out his hand, seized Daddy's thin shoulder, flung him violently round, and passed him.

'Speak to me again in the street, you scoundrel, and I'll give you in charge!' he threw behind him, as he strode on just in time to avoid a flight of street-arabs, who had seen the scuffle from a distance and were bearing down eagerly upon him.

Daddy went home in the highest spirits, stepping jauntily

along like a man who has fulfilled a mission. But when he came to boast himself to Dora, he found to his chagrin that he had only earned a scolding. Dora flushed up, her soft eyes all aflame.

'You've done nothing but mischief, father,' said Dora, bitterly. 'How *could* you say such things? You might have left Uncle Tom to find out for himself about Lucy. He'll be mad enough without your stirring him up. Now he'll forbid her to come here, or see me at all. I don't know what'll become of that child; and whatever possessed you to go aggravating him worse and worse I can't think.'

Daddy blinked under this, but soon recovered himself. No one, he vowed, could be expected to put up for ever with Purcell's mean tricks. He had held his tongue for twenty-one years, and now he had paid back one *little* text in exchange for the hundreds wherewith Purcell had been wont to break his bones for him in past days. As for Dora, she hadn't the spirit of a fly.

'Well, I dare say I am afraid,' said Dora, despondently. 'I saw Uncle Tom yesterday, too, and he gave me a look made me feel cold down my back. I don't like anybody to hate us like that, father. Who knows—'

A tremor ran through her. She gave her father a piteous, childish look. She had the timidity, the lack of self-confidence which seems to cling through life to those who have been at a disadvantage with the world in their childhood and youth. The anger of a man like Purcell terrified her, lay like a nightmare on a sensitive and introspective nature.

'Pish!' said Daddy, contemptuously; 'I should like to know what harm he can do us, now that I've turned so d—d respectable. Though it is a bit hard on a man to have to keep so in order to spite his brother-in-law.'

Dora laughed and sighed. She came up to her father's chair, put his hair straight, re-tied his tie, and then kissed him on the cheek.

'Father, you're not getting tired of the Parlour?' she said, unsteadily. He evaded her downward look, and tried to shake her off.

'Don't I slave for you from morning till night, you thankless chit, you? And don't you begrudge me all the little amusements which turn the tradesman into the man and sweeten the pill of bondage—eh, you poor-souled thing?'

Her eyes, however, drew his after them, whether he would or no, and they surveyed each other—he uneasily hostile; she sad. She slowly shook her head, and he perfectly understood what was in her mind, though she did not speak. He *had* been extremely slack at business lately; the month's accounts made up that morning had been unusually disappointing; and twice during the last ten days Dora had sat up till midnight to let her father in, and had tried with all the energy of a sinking heart to persuade herself that it was accident, and that he was only excited, and not drunk.

Now, as she stood looking at him, suddenly all the horror of those long-past days came back upon her, thrown up against the peace of the last few years. She locked her hands round his neck with a vehement pathetic gesture.

'Father, be good to me! don't let bad people take you away from me—don't, father—you're all I have—all I ever shall have.'

Daddy's green eyes wavered again uncomfortably.

'Stuff!' he said, irritably. 'You'll get a husband directly, and think no more of me than other girls do when the marrying fit takes 'em. What are you grinning at now, I should like to know?'

For she was smiling—a light tremulous smile which puzzled him.

'At you, father. You'll have to keep me whether you like it or no. For I'm not a marrying sort.'

She looked at him with a curious defiance, her lip twitching.

'Oh, we know all about that!' said Daddy, impatiently, adding in a mincing voice, "'I will not love; if I do hang me; i' faith I will not.'" No, my pretty dear, not till the "wimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy" comes this road—oh, no, not till next time! Quite so.'

She let him rail, and said nothing. She sat down to her work; he faced round upon her suddenly, and said, frowning:

'What do you mean by it, eh? You're as good-looking as anybody!'

'Well, I want you to think it, father,' she said, affectionately, raising her eyes to his. A mother must have seen the shrinking sadness beneath the smile. What Daddy saw was simply a rounded girlish face, with soft cheeks and lips which seemed to him made for kissing; nothing to set the Thames on fire, perhaps, but why should she run herself down? It annoyed him, touched his vanity.

'Oh, I dare say!' he said to her, roughly, with an affected brutality. 'But you'll be precious disappointed if some one else doesn't think so too. Don't tell me!'

She bent over her frame without speaking. But her heart filled with bitterness, and a kind of revolt against her life.

Meanwhile her conscience accused her about Lucy. Lucy must have got herself into trouble at home, that she was sure of. And it was unlike her to keep it to herself—not to come and complain.

Some days—a week—passed. But Dora dared not venture herself into her uncle's house after Daddy's escapade, and she was, besides, much pressed with her work. A whole set of altar furniture for a new church at Blackburn had to be finished by a given day.

The affairs of the Parlour troubled her, and she got up long before it was light to keep the books in order and to plan for the day. Daddy had no head for figures, and he seemed to her to be growing careless about expenses. Her timid, over-anxious mind

conjured up the vision of a slowly rising tide of debt, and it haunted her all day. When she went to her frame she was already tired out, and yet there she sat over it hour after hour.

Daddy was blind. But Sarah, the stout cook, who worshipped her, knew well enough that she was growing thin and white.

'If yo doan't draw in yo'll jest do yoursel a mischief,' she said to her, angrily. 'Yo're nowt but a midge onyways, and a body 'll soon be able to see through yo.'

'I shall be all right, Sarah,' Dora would say.

'Aye, we'st aw on us be aw reet in our coffins,' returned the irate Sarah. Then, melting into affection, 'Neaw, honey, be raysonable, an' I'st just run round t' corner, an' cook you up a bit o' meat for your supper. Yo git no strength eawt i' them messin things yo eat. Theer's nowt but wind in em.'

But not even the heterodox diet with which, every now and then, Dora for peace' sake allowed herself to be fed, behind Daddy's back, put any colour into her cheeks. She went heavily in these days, and the singularly young and childish look which she had kept till now went into gradual eclipse.

David Grieve dropped in once or twice during the week to laugh and gossip about Purcell with Daddy. Thanks to Daddy's tongue, the bookseller's plot against his boy rival was already known to a large circle of persons, and was likely to cost him customers.

Whenever she heard the young full voice below or on the stairs, Dora would, as it were, draw herself together—stand on her defence. Sometimes she asked him eagerly about his sister. Had he written? No; he thought he would still wait a week or two. Ah, well, he must let her know.

And, on the whole, she was glad when he went, glad to get to bed and sleep. Being no sentimental heroine, she was prosaically thankful that she kept her sleep. Otherwise she must have fallen ill, and the accounts would have gone wrong.

At last one evening came a pencil note from Lucy, in these terms:

'You may come and see me, father says. I've been ill.—
LUCY.'

In a panic Dora put on her things and ran. Mary Ann, the little hunted maid, let her in, looking more hunted and scared than usual. Miss Lucy was better, she said, but she had been 'terr'ble bad.' No, she didn't know what it was took her. They'd got a nurse for her two nights, and she, Mary Ann, had been run off her legs.

'Why didn't you send for me?' cried Dora, and hurried up to the attic. Purcell did not appear.

Lucy was waiting for her, looking out eagerly from a bank of pillows.

Dora could not restrain an exclamation which was almost a cry. She could not have believed that anyone could have changed so in ten days. Evidently the acute stage—whatever had been

the illness—was past. There was already a look of convalescence in the white face, with its black-rimmed eyes and peeling lips. But the loss of flesh was extraordinary for so short a time. The small face was so thinned and blanched that the tangled masses of golden-brown hair in which it was framed seemed ridiculously out of proportion to it; the hand playing with some grapes on the counterpane was of a ghostly lightness.

Dora was shocked almost beyond speaking. She stood holding Lucy's hand, and Lucy looked up at her, evidently enjoying her consternation, for a smile danced in her hollow eyes.

'Lucy, *why* didn't you send for me?'

'Because I was so feverish at first. I was all light-headed, and didn't know where I was; and then I was so weak I didn't care about anything,' said Lucy, in a small thread of a voice.

'What was it?'

'Congestion of the lungs,' said the girl, with pride. 'They just stopped it, or you'd be laying me out now, Dora. Dr. Alford told father I was dreadful run-down or I'd never have taken it. I'm to go to Hastings. Father's got a cousin there that lets lodgings.'

'But how did you get so ill, Lucy?'

Lucy was silent a bit. Then she said:

'Sit down close here. My voice is so bad still.'

Dora sat close to her pillow, and bent over, stroking her hands with emotion. The fright of her entrance was still upon her.

'Well, you know,' she said in a hoarse whisper, 'father found out about me and Mr. Grieve—I don't know how, but it was one morning. I was sitting in here, and he came in all white, with his eyes glaring. I thought he was going to kill me, and I was that frightened, I watched my chance, and ran out of the door and along into Mill Gate as fast as I could to get away from him; and then I thought I saw him coming after me, and I ran on across the bridge and up Chapel Street a long, long way. I was in a terrible fright, and mad with him besides. I declared to myself I'd never come back here. Well, it was pouring with rain, and I got wet through. Then I didn't know where to go, and what do you think I did? I just got into the Broughton tram, and rode up and down all day! I had a shilling or two in my pocket, and I waited and dodged a bit at either end, so the conductor shouldn't find out. And that was what did it—sitting in my wet things all day. I didn't think anything about dinner, I was that mad. But when it got dark, I thought of that girl—you know her, too—Minnie Park, that lives with her brother and sells fents, up Cannon Gate. And somehow I dragged up there—I thought I'd ask her to take me in. And what happened I don't rightly know. I suppose I was took with a faint before I could explain anything, for I was shivering and pretty bad when I got there. Anyway, she put me in a cab and brought me home; and I don't remember anything about it, for I was queer in the head

very soon after they got me to bed. Oh, I *was* bad! It was just a squeak,'—said Lucy, her voice dropping from exhaustion; but her eyes glittered in her pinched face with a curious triumph, difficult to decipher.

Dora kissed her tenderly, and entreated her not to talk; she was sure it was bad for her. But Lucy, as usual, would not be managed. She held herself quite still, gathering breath and strength; then she began again:

'If I'd died, perhaps *he'd* have been sorry. You know who I mean. It was all along of him. And father'll never forgive me—never. He looks quite different altogether somehow. Dora! you're not to tell him anything till I've got right away. I think—I think—I *hate* him!'

And suddenly her beautiful brown eyes opened wide and fierce.

Dora hung over her, a strange, mingled passion in her look. 'You poor little thing!' she said slowly, with a deep emphasis, answering not the unreal Lucy of those last words, but the real one, so pitifully evident beneath.

'But look here, Dora; when I'm gone away, you *may* tell him, you *must* tell him, Dora,' said the child, imperiously. 'I'd not have him see me now for anything. I made Mary Ann put all the glasses away. I don't want to remember what a fright I am. But at Hastings I'll soon get well; and—and remember, Dora, you *are* to tell him. I'd like him to know I nearly caught my death that day, and that it was all along of him!'

She laid her hands across each other on the sheet with a curious sigh of satisfaction, and was quiet for a little, while Dora held her hand. But it was not long before the stillness broke up in sudden agitation. A tremor ran through her, and she caught Dora's fingers. In her weakness she could not control herself, and her inmost trouble escaped her.

'Oh, Dora, he wasn't kind to me, not a bit—when I went to tell him that night. Oh! I cried when I came home. I *did* think he'd have taken it different.'

'What did he say?' asked Dora, quietly. Her face was turned away from Lucy, but she still held her hand.

'Oh, I don't know!' said Lucy, moving her head restlessly from side to side and gulping down a sob. 'I believe he was just sorry it was *me* he'd got to thank. Oh, I don't know!—I don't know!—very likely he didn't mean it.'

She waited a minute, then she began again:

'Oh of course you think I'm silly; and that I'd have much more chance if I turned proud, and pretended I didn't care. I know some girls *say* they'd never let a man know they cared for him first. I don't believe in 'em! But I don't care. I can't help it. It's my way. But, Dora, look here!'

The tears gathered thick in her eyes. Dora, bending anxiously over her, was startled by the change of expression in her. From what depths of new emotion had the silly Lucy caught the sweet-

ness which trembled for a moment through every line of her little trivial face?

'You know, Dora, it was all nonsense at the beginning. I just wanted some one to amuse myself with and pay me attentions. But it isn't nonsense now. And I don't want him all for myself. Friday night I thought I was going to die. I don't care whether the doctor did or not; I did. And I prayed a good deal. It was queer praying, I dare say. I was very light-headed, but I thanked God I loved him, though—though—he didn't care about me; and I thought if I did get well, and he were to take a fancy to me, I'd show him I could be as nice as other girls. I wouldn't want everything for myself, or spend a lot of money on dress.'

She broke off for want of breath. This moral experience of hers was so new and strange to her that she could hardly find words in which to clothe it.

Dora had slipped down beside her and buried her face in the bed. When Lucy stopped, she still knelt there in a quivering silence. But Lucy could not bear her to be silent—she must have sympathy.

'Aren't you glad, Dora?' she said presently, when she had gathered strength again. 'I thought you'd be glad. You've always wanted me to turn religious. And—and—perhaps, when I get well and come back, I'll go with you to St. Damian's, Dora. I don't know what it is. I suppose it's caring about somebody—and being ill—makes one feel like this.'

And, drawing herself from Dora's hold, she turned on her side, put both her thin hands under her cheek, and lay staring at the window with a look which had a certain dreariness in it.

Dora at last raised herself. Lucy could not see her face. There was in it a sweet and solemn resolution—a new light and calm.

'Dear Lucy,' she said, tremulously, laying her cheek against her cousin's shoulder, 'God speaks to us when we are unhappy—that was what you felt. He makes everything a voice to call unto Himself.'

Lucy did not answer at once. Then suddenly she turned, and said eagerly:

'Dora, did you ever ask him—did you ever find out—whether he was thinking about getting married? You said you would.'

'He isn't, Lucy. He was vexed with father for speaking about it. I think he feels he must make his way first. His business takes him up altogether.'

Lucy gave an irritable sigh, closed her eyes, and would talk no more. Dora stayed with her, and nursed her through the evening. When at last the nurse arrived who was to take charge of her through the night, Lucy pulled Dora down to her and said, in a hoarse, excitable whisper:

'Mind you tell him—that I nearly died—that father 'll never be the same to me again—and it was all for him! You needn't say I said so.'

Late that night Dora stood long at her attic-window in the roof looking out at the April night. From a great bank of clouds to the east the moon was just appearing, sending her light along the windy streamers which, issuing from the main mass, spread like wide open fingers across the inner heaven. Opposite there was an old timbered house, one of the few relics of an earlier Manchester, which still, in the very centre of the modern city, thrusts out its broad eaves and overhanging stories beyond the line of the street. Above and behind it, roof beyond roof, to the western limit of sight, rose block after block of warehouses, vast black masses, symbols of the great town, its labours and its wealth; far to the right, closing the street, the cathedral cut the moonlit sky; and close at hand was an old inn, with a wide archway, under which a huge dog lay sleeping.

Town and sky, the upper clouds and stars, the familiar streets and buildings below—to-night they were all changed for Dora, and it was another being that looked at them. In all intense cases of religious experience the soul lies open to 'voices'—to impressions which have for it the most vivid and, so to speak, physical reality. Jeanne d'Arc's visions were but an extreme instance of what humbler souls have known in their degree in all ages. The heavenly voices speak, and the ear actually hears. So it was with Dora. It seemed to her that she had been walking in a feverish loneliness through the valley of the shadow of death; that one like unto the Son of Man had drawn her thence with warning and rebuke, and she was now at His feet, clothed and in her right mind. Words were in her ear, repeated again and again—peremptory words which stabbed and healed at once: '*Daughter, thou shalt not covet. I have refused thee this gift. If it be My will to give it to another, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.*'

As she sank upon her knees, she thought of the confession she would make on Sunday—of the mysterious sanctity and sweetness of the single life—of the vocation of sacrifice laid upon her. There rose in her a kind of ecstasy of renunciation. Her love—already so hopeless, so starved!—was there simply that she might offer it up—burn it through and through with the fires of the spirit.

Lucy should never know, and David should never know. Unconsciously, sweet soul, there was a curious element of spiritual arrogance mingled with this absolute surrender of the one passionate human desire her life was ever to wrestle with. The baptised member of Christ's body could not pursue the love of David Grieve, could not marry him as he was now, without risk and sin. But Lucy—the child of schism, to whom the mysteries of Church fellowship and sacramental grace were unknown—for her, in her present exaltation, Dora felt no further scruples. Lucy's love was clearly 'sent' to her; it was right, whether it were ultimately happy or no, because of the religious effect it had already had upon her.

The human happiness Dora dared no longer grasp at for herself she yearned now to pour lavishly, quickly, into Lucy's hands. Only so—such is our mingled life!—could she altogether still, violently and by force, a sort of upward surge of the soul which terrified her now and then. A mystical casuistry, bred in her naturally simple nature by the subtle influences of a long-descended Christianity, combined in her with a piteous human instinct. When she rose from her knees she was certain that she would never win and marry David Grieve; she was equally certain that she would do all in her power to help little Lucy to win and marry him.

So, like them of old, she pressed the spikes into her flesh, and found a numbing consolation in the pain.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME ten days more elapsed before Lucy was pronounced fit to travel south. During this time Dora saw her frequently, and the bond between the two girls grew much closer than before. On the one hand, Lucy yielded herself more than she had ever done yet to Dora's example and persuasion, promised to go to church and see at least what it was like when she got to Hastings, and let Dora provide her with some of her favourite High Church devotional books. On the other, it was understood between them that Dora would look after Lucy's interests, and keep her informed how the land lay while she was in the south, and Lucy, with the blindness of self-love, trusted herself to her cousin without a suspicion or a qualm.

While she was tending Lucy, Dora never saw Purcell but twice, when she passed him in the little dark entry leading to the private part of the house, and on those occasions he did not, so far as she could perceive, make any answer whatever to her salutation. He was changed, she thought. He had always been a morose-looking man, with an iron jaw; but now there was a fixed venom and disquiet, as well as a new look of age, in the sallow face, which made it doubly displeasing. She would have been sorry for his loneliness and his disappointment in Lucy but for the remembrance of his mean plot against David Grieve, and for a certain other little fact. A middle-aged woman, in a dowdy brown-stuff dress and black mantle, had begun to haunt the house. She sat with Purcell sometimes in the parlour downstairs, and sometimes he accompanied her out of doors. Mary Ann reported that she was a widow, a Mrs. Whympier, who belonged to the same chapel that Purcell did, and who was supposed by those who knew to have been making up to him for some time.

'And perhaps she'll get him after all,' said the little ugly maid, with a grin. 'Catch me staying then, Miss Dora! It's bad enough as it is.'

On one occasion Dora came across the widow, waiting in the

little sitting-room. She was an angular person, with a greyish-brown complexion, a prominent mouth and teeth, and a generally snappish, alert look. After a few commonplaces, in which Mrs. Whympier was clearly condescending, she launched into a denunciation of Lucy's ill behaviour to her father, which at last roused Dora to defence. She waxed bold, and pointed out that Lucy might have been managed if her father had been a little more patient with her, had allowed her a few ordinary amusements, and had not insisted in forcing her at once, fresh from school, into ways and practices she did not naturally like, while she had never been trained to them by force of habit.

'Hoity toity, Miss!' said the widow, bridling, 'young people are very uppish nowadays. They never seem to remember there is such a thing as the fifth commandment. In *my* young days what a father said was law, and no questions asked; and I've seen many a Lancashire man take a stick to his gell for less provocation than this gell's given her feyther! I wonder at you, Miss Lomax, that I do, for backing her up. But I'm afraid from what I hear you've been taking up with a lot of Popish ways.'

And the woman looked her up and down with an air which plainly said that she was on her own ground in that parlour, and might say exactly what she pleased there.

'If I have, I don't see that it matters to you,' said Dora quietly, and retreated.

Yes, certainly, a stepmother looked likely! Lucy in her bedroom upstairs knew nothing, and Dora decided to tell her nothing till she was stronger. But this new development made the child's future more uncertain than ever.

On the day before her departure for Hastings, Lucy came out for a short walk, by way of hardening herself for the journey. She walked round the cathedral and up Victoria Street, and then, tired out with the exertion, she made her way in to Dora, to rest. Her face was closely hidden by a thick Shetland veil, for, in addition to her general pallor and emaciation, her usually clear and brilliant skin was roughened and blotched here and there by some effect of her illness; she could not bear to look at herself in the glass, and shrank from meeting any of her old acquaintances. It was, indeed, curious to watch the effect of the temporary loss of beauty upon her; her morbid impatience under it showed at every turn. But for it, Dora was convinced that she must and would have put herself in David Grieve's way again before leaving Manchester. As it was, she was still determined not to let him see her.

She came in, much exhausted, and threw herself into Daddy's arm-chair with groans of self-pity. Did Dora think she would ever be strong again—ever be anything but an ugly fright? It was hard to have all this come upon you, just through doing a service to some one who didn't care.

'Hasn't he heard yet that I've been ill?' she inquired petulantly.