

told tales. He was not sure that one of the Wigsons had not been hanging about the station yard. And that letter of David's to Louie, which in his clumsy blundering way he had dropped somewhere about the farm buildings or the house, and had not been able to find again! It gave him a cold sweat to think that in his absence Hannah might have come upon it and drawn her own conclusions. As he followed out this possibility in his mind, his step quickened till it became almost a run.

Aye, and Hannah had been ailing of late—there had been often 'summat wrang wi her.' Well, they were both getting into years. Perhaps now that Louie with her sharp tongue and aggravating ways was gone, now that there was only him to do for, Hannah would take things easier.

He opened the gate into the farmyard and walked up to the house door with a beating heart. It struck him as strange that the front blinds were not drawn, for it was nearly dark and the storm beat against the windows. There was a glimmer of fire in the room, but he could see nothing clearly. He turned the handle and went into the passage, making a clatter on purpose. But nothing stirred in the house, and he pushed open the kitchen door, which stood ajar, filled with a vague alarm.

Hannah was sitting in the rocking-chair, by the fire. Beside her was the table partly spread with tea, which, however, had been untouched. At Reuben's entrance she turned her head and looked at him fixedly. In the dim light—a mixture of the dying fire and of the moonlight from outside—he could not see her plainly, but he felt that there was something strange, and he ran forward to her.

'Hannah, are yo bad?—is there owt wrang wi yo?'

Then his seeking eye made out a crumpled paper in her left hand, and he knew at once that it must be Davy's letter.

Before he could speak again she gave him a push backward with her free hand, and said with an effort:

'Where's t' gell?'

'Louie? She's left i' Manchester. A've found Davy, Hannah.'

There was a pause, after which he said, trembling:

'Shall I get yo summat, Hannah?'

A hoarse voice came out of the dark:

'Ha doon wi yo! Yo ha been lecin to me. Yo wor seen at t' station.'

Reuben sat down.

'Hannah,' he said, 'yo mun just listen to me.'

And taking his courage in both hands, he told everything without a break: how he had been 'feart' of what Sandy might say to him 'at th' joodgment,' how he had saved and lied, and how now he had seen David, had written to Mr. Gurney, and stopped the cheques for good and all.

When he came to the letter to Mr. Gurney, Hannah sat suddenly upright in her chair, grasping one arm of it.

'It shall mak noa difference to tha, a tell tha,' he cried

hastily, putting up his hand, fearing he knew not what, 'nobbut a few shillins ony way. I'll work for tha an mak it up.'

She made a sound which turned him cold with terror—a sound of baffled weakness, pain, vindictive passion all in one—then she fell helplessly to one side in her chair, and her grey head dropped on her shoulder.

In another moment he was crying madly for help in the road outside. For long there was no answer—only the distant roar of the Downfall and the sweep of the wind. Then a labourer, on the path leading to the Wigsons' farm, heard and ran up.

An hour later a doctor had been got hold of, and Hannah was lying upstairs, tended by Mrs. Wigson and Reuben.

'A paralytic seizure,' said the doctor to Reuben. 'This woman says she's been failing for some time past. She's lived and worked hard, Mr. Grieve; you know that. And there's been some shock.'

Reuben explained incoherently. The doctor did not understand, and did not care, being a dull man and comparatively new to the place. He did what he could, said she would recover—oh, yes, she would recover; but, of course, she could never be the same woman again. Her working days were done.

A servant came over from Wigsons' to sit up with Reuben, Mrs. Wigson being too delicate to undertake it. The girl went to lie down first for an hour or two in the room across the landing, and he was left alone in the gaunt room with his wife. Poor quailing soul! As he sat there in the windy darkness, hour after hour, open-mouthed and open-eyed, he was steeped in terror—terror of the future, of its forlornness, of his own feebleness, of death. His heart clave piteously to the unconscious woman beside him, for he had nothing else. It seemed to him that the Lord had indeed dealt hardly with him, thus to strike him down on the day of his great atonement!

CHAPTER IX

No news of the catastrophe at Needham Farm reached the brother and sister in Potter Street. The use of the pen had always been to Reuben one of the main torments and mysteries of life, and he had besides all those primitive instincts of silence and concealment which so often in the peasant nature accompany misfortune. His brain-power, moreover, was absorbed by his own calamity and by the changes in the routine of daily life which his wife's state brought upon him, so that immediately after his great effort of reparation towards them—an effort which had taxed the whole man physically and mentally—his brother's children and their affairs passed for a while strangely and completely from his troubled mind.

Meanwhile, what a transformation he had wrought in their fortunes! When the shock of his parents' story had subsided in

him, and that other shock of jarring temperaments, which the first hour of Louie's companionship had brought with it, had been for the time forgotten again in the stress of plans and practical detail, David felt to the full the exhilaration of his new prospects. He had sprung at a leap, as it seemed to him, from the condition of the boy-adventurer to that of the man of affairs. And as he looked back upon their childhood and realised that all the time, instead of being destitute and dependent orphans, they and their money had really been the mainstay of Hannah and the farm, the lad seemed to cast from him the long humiliation of years, to rise in stature and dignity. That old skinflint and hypocrite, Aunt Hannah! With the usual imperfect sympathy of the young he did not much realise Reuben's struggle. But he bore his uncle no grudge for these years' delay. The contrivances and hardships of his Manchester life had been, after all, enjoyment. Without them and the extravagant self-reliance they had developed in him his pride and ambition would have run less high. And at this moment the nerve and savour of existence came to him from pride and from ambition.

But first of all he had to get his money. As soon as Mr. Gurney's answer to Reuben's letter came, David took train for London, made his way to the great West-End shop which had employed his father, and saw the partner who had taken charge of Sandy's money for so long. Mr. Gurney, a shrewd and pompous person, was interested in seeing Grieve's son, inquired what he was about, ran over the terms of a letter to himself, which he took out of a drawer, and then, with a little flourish as to his own deserts in the matter of the guardianship of the money—a flourish neither unnatural nor unkindly—handed over to the lad both the letter and a cheque on a London bank, took his receipt, talked a little, but with a blunted memory, about the lad's father, gave him a little general business advice, asked whether his sister was still alive, and bade him good morning. Both were satisfied, and the young man left the office with the cheque lying warm in his pocket, looking slowly and curiously round the shop where his father had earned it, as he walked away.

Outside he found himself close to Trafalgar Square, and, striking down to the river, he went to sit on the Embankment and ponder the enclosures which Mr. Gurney had given him. First he took out the cheque, with infinite care, lest the breeze on the Embankment should blow it out of his hand, and spread it on his knee. 600*l.*! As he stared at each letter and flourish his eyes widened anew; and when he looked up across the grey and misty river, the figures still danced before him, and in his exultation he could have shouted the news to the passers-by. Then, when the precious paper had been safely stowed away again, he hesitatingly took out the other—his father's dying memorandum on the subject of his children, so he had understood Mr. Gurney. It was old and brown; it had been written

with anguish, and it could only be deciphered with difficulty. There had been no will properly so called. Sandy had placed more confidence in 'the firm' than in the law, and had left behind him merely the general indication of his wishes in the hands of the partner who had specially befriended him. The provisions of it were as Sandy had described them to Reuben on his death-bed. Especially did the father insist that there should be no artificial restriction of age. 'I wanted money most when I was nineteen, and I could have used it just as well then as I could at any later time.'

So he might have been a rich man at least a year earlier. Well, much as he had loathed Purcell, he was glad, on the whole, that things were as they were. He had been still a great fool, he reflected, a year ago.

Then, as to Louie, the letter ran: 'Let Davy have all the money, and let him manage for her. I won't divide it; he must judge. He may want it all, and it may be best for them both he should have it. He's got a good heart; I know that; he'll not rob his sister. I lay it on him, now I'm dying, to be patient with her, and look after her. She's not like other children. But it's not her fault; it was born in her. Let him see her married to a decent man, and then give her what's honestly hers. That little lad has nursed me like a woman since I've been ill. He was always a good lad to me, and I'd like him to know when he's grown up that his father loved him—'

But here the poor laboured scrawl came to an end, save for a few incoherent strokes. David thrust it back into his pocket. His cheek was red; his eyes burnt; he sat for long, with his elbows on his knees, staring at the February river. The choking, passionate impulse to comfort his father he had felt so often as a child was there again, by association, alive and piteous.

Suddenly he woke up with a start. There, to either hand, lay the bridges, with the moving figures atop and the hurrying river below. And from one of them his mother had leapt when she destroyed herself. In the trance of thought that followed, it was to him as though he felt her wild nature, her lawless blood, stirring within him, and realised, in a fierce, reluctant way, that he was hers as well as his father's. In a sense, he shared Reuben's hatred; for he, best of all, knew what she had made his father suffer. Yet the thought of her drew his restless curiosity after it. Where did she come from? Who were her kindred? From the south of France, Reuben thought. The lad's imagination travelled with difficulty and excitement to the far and alien land whence half his being had sprung. A few scraps of poetry and history recurred to him—a single tattered volume of 'Monte Cristo,' which he had lately bought with an odd lot at a sale—but nothing that suggested to his fancy anything like the peasant farm in the Mont Ventoux, within sight of Arles, where Louise Suveret's penurious childhood had been actually cradled.

Two o'clock struck from the belfry of St. Paul's, looming there

to his left in the great bend of the river. At the sound he shook off all his thoughts. Let him see something of London. He had two hours and a half before his train from Euston. Westminster first—a hasty glance; then an omnibus to St. Paul's, that he might look down upon the city and its rush; then north. He had a map with him, and his quick intelligence told him exactly how to use his time to the best advantage. Years afterwards he was accustomed to look back on this hour spent on the top of an omnibus, which was making its difficult way to the Bank through the crowded afternoon streets, as one of the strong impressions of his youth. Here was one centre of things; Westminster represented another; and both stood for knowledge, wealth, and power. The boy's hot blood rose to the challenge. His foot was on the ladder, and many men with less chances than he had risen to the top. At this moment, small Manchester tradesman that he was, he had the constant presentiment of a wide career.

That night he let himself into his own door somewhere about nine o'clock. What had Louie been doing with herself all day? She was to have her first lesson from Dora Lomax; but she must have been dull since, unless Dora had befriended her.

To his astonishment, as he shut the door he heard voices in the kitchen—Louie and John. John, the shy, woman-hating creature, who had received the news of Louie's expected advent in a spirit of mingled irritation and depression—who, after his first startled look at her as she passed through the shop, seemed to David to have fled the sight of her whenever it was possible!

Louie was talking so fast and laughing so much that neither of them had heard David's latchkey, and in his surprise the brother stood still a moment in the dark, looking round the kitchen-door, which stood a little open. Louie was sitting by the fire with some yards of flowered cotton stuff on her knee, at which she was sewing; John was opposite to her on the oak stool, crouched over a box of nails, from which he was laboriously sorting out those of a certain size, apparently at her bidding, for she gave him sharp directions from time to time. But his toil was intermittent, for whenever her sallies were louder or more amusing than usual his hand paused, and he sat staring at her, his small eyes expanding, a sympathetic grin stealing over his mouth.

It seemed to David that she was describing her lover of the winter; he caught her gesture as she illustrated her performance with Jim Wigson—the boxing of the amorous lout's ears in the lane by the Dye-works. Her beautiful curly black hair was combed to-night into a sort of wild halo round her brow and cheeks, and in this arrangement counteracted the one fault of the face—a slightly excessive length from forehead to chin. But the brilliance of the eyes, the redness of the thin lips over the small and perfect teeth, the flush on the olive cheek, the slender neck, the distinction and delicacy of every sweeping line and curve—for the first time even David realised, as he stood

there in the dark, that his sister was an extraordinary beauty. Strange! Her manner and voice had neither natural nor acquired refinement; and yet in the moulding of the head and face there was a dignity and perfection—a touch, as it were, of the grand style—which marked her out in a northern crowd and riveted the northern eye. Was it the trace of another national character, another civilisation, longer descended, less mixed, more deeply graven than ours?

But what was that idiot John doing here?—the young master wanted to know. He coughed loudly and hung up his hat and his stick, to let them hear that he was there. The pair in the kitchen started. Louie sprang up, flung down her work, and ran out to him.

'Well,' said she breathlessly, 'have you got it?'

'Yes.'

She gave a little shriek of excitement.

'Show it then.'

'There's nothing to show but a cheque. It's all right. Is there anything for supper?'

'There's some bread and cheese and cold apple-pie in there,' said Louie, annoyed with him already; then, turning her head over her shoulder, 'Mr. Dalby, I'll trouble you to get them out.'

With awkward alacrity John flew to do her bidding. When the lad had ransacked the cupboard and placed all the viands it contained on the table, he looked at David. That young man, with a pucker in his brow, was standing by the fire with his hands in his pockets, making short answers to Louie's sharp and numerous questions.

'That's all I can find,' said John. 'Shall I run for something?'

'Thanks,' said David, still frowning, and sat him down, 'that 'll do.'

Louie made a face at John behind her brother's back. The assistant slowly flushed a deep red. In this young fellow, with his money buttoned on his breast, both he and Louie for the first time realised the master.

'Well, good night,' he said, hesitating, 'I'm going.'

David jumped up and went with him into the passage.

'Look here,' he said abruptly, 'you and I have got some business to talk to-morrow. I'm not going to keep you slaving here for nothing now that I can afford to pay you.'

'Are you going to turn me off?' said the other hastily.

David laughed. The cloud had all cleared from his brow.

'Don't be such a precious fool!' he said. 'Now be off—and seven sharp. I must go at it like ten horses to-morrow.'

John disappeared into the night, and David went back to his sister. He found her looking red and excited, and sewing energetically.

'Look here!' she said, lifting a threatening eye to him as he entered the room. 'I'm not going to be treated like a baby. If

you don't tell me all about that money, I'll write to Mr. Gurney myself. It's part of it mine, and *I'll know*, so there!

'I'll tell you everything,' he said quietly, putting a hand into his coat pocket before he sat down to his supper again. 'There's the cheque—and there's our father's letter,—what Mr. Gurney gave me. There was no proper will—this was instead.'

He pretended to eat, but in reality he watched her anxiously as she read it. The result was very much what he had expected. She ran breathlessly through it, then, with a look all flame and fury, she broke out—

'Upon my word! So you're going to take it all, and I'm to be beholden to you for every penny. I'd like to see myself!'

'Now look here, Louie,' he said, firmly, pushing back his chair from the table, 'I want to explain things to you. I should like to tell you all about my business, and what I think of doing, and then you can judge for yourself. I'll not rob you or anyone.'

Whereupon with a fierce gesture she caught up her work again, and he fell into long and earnest talk, setting his mind to the task. He explained to her that the arrival of this money—this capital—made just all the difference, that the whole of it would be infinitely more useful to him than the half, and that he proposed to employ it both for her benefit and his own. He had already cleared out the commission agent from the first floor, and moved down the lodgers—a young foreman and his wife—from the attics to the first-floor back. That left the two attics for himself and Louie, and gave him the front first-floor room, the best room in the house, for an extension of stock.

'Why don't you turn those people out altogether?' said Louie, impatiently. 'They pay very little, and you'll be wanting that room soon, very like.'

'Well, I shall get it soon,' said David bluntly; 'but I can't get it now. Mrs. Mason's bad; she going to be confined.'

'Well, I dare say she is!' cried Louie. 'That don't matter; she isn't confined yet.'

David looked at her in amazement. Then his face hardened.

'I'm not going to turn her out, I tell you,' he said, and immediately returned to his statement. Well, there were all sorts of ways in which he might employ his money. He might put up a shed in the back yard, and get a printing-press. He knew of a press and a very decent fount of type, to be had extremely cheap. John was a capital workman, and between them they might reprint some of the scarce local books and pamphlets, which were always sure of a sale. As to his stock, there were endless possibilities. He knew of a collection of rare books on early America, which belonged to a gentleman at Cheadle. He had been negotiating about them for some time. Now he would close at once; from his knowledge of the market the speculation was a certain one. He was also inclined to largely increase his stock of foreign books, especially in the technical and scientific direction. There was a considerable opening, he believed, for such books in Man-

chester; at any rate, he meant to try for it. And as soon as ever he could he should learn German. There was a fellow—a German clerk—who haunted the Parlour, who would teach him in exchange for English lessons.

So, following a happy instinct, he opened to her all his mind, and talked to her as though they were partners in a firm. The event proved that he could have done nothing better. Very early in his exposition she began to put her wits to his, her irritation dropped, and he was presently astonished at the intelligence she showed. Every element almost in the problems discussed was unfamiliar to her, yet after a while a listener coming in might have thought that she too had been Purcell's apprentice, so nimbly had she gathered up the details involved, so quick she was to see David's points and catch his phrases. If there was no moral fellowship between them, judging from to-night, there bade fair to be a comradeship of intelligence.

'There now,' he said, when he had come to the end of his budget, 'you leave your half of the money to me. Mind, I agree it's your half, and I'll do the best I can with it. I'll pay you interest on it for two years, and I'll keep you. Then we'll see. And if you want to improve yourself a bit, instead of going to work at once, I'll pay for teachers. And look here, we'll keep good friends over it.'

His keen eyes softened to a charming, half-melancholy smile. Louie took no notice; she was absorbed in meditation; and at the end of it, she said with a long breath—

'Well, you may have it, and I'll keep an eye on the accounts. But you needn't think I'll sit at home "improving" myself! Not I. I'll do that church-work. That girl gave me a lesson this morning, and I'm going again to-morrow.'

David received the news with satisfaction, remarking heartily that Dora Lomax was a real good sort, and if it weren't for her the Parlour and Daddy would soon be in a fix. He told the story of the Parlour, dwelling on Dora's virtues.

'But she is a crank, though!' said Louie. 'Why, if you make free with her things a bit, or if you call 'em by the wrong names, she'll fly at you! How's anybody to know what they're meant for?'

David laughed, and got up to get some books he was repairing. As he moved away he looked back a moment.

'I say, Louie,' he began, hesitating, 'that fellow John's worked for me like a dozen, and has never taken a farthing from me. Don't you go and make a fool of him.'

A flush passed over Louie's face. She lifted her hand and tucked away some curly ends of long hair that had fallen on her shoulders.

'He's like one of Aunt Hannah's suet rolies,' she said, after a minute, with a gleam of her white teeth. 'Seems as if some one had tied him in a cloth and boiled him that shape.'

Neither of them cared to go to bed. They sat up talking.

David was mending, sorting, and pricing a number of old books he had bought for nothing at a country sale. He knew enough of bookbinding to do the repairing with much skill, showing the same neatness of finger in it that he had shown years ago in the carving of toy boats and water-wheels. Louie went on with her work, which proved to be a curtain for her attic. She meant to have that room nice, and she had been out buying a few things, whereby David understood—as indeed Reuben had said—that she had some savings. Moreover, with regard to certain odd jobs of carpentering, she had already pressed John into her service, which explained his lingering after hours, and his eagerness among the nails. As to the furniture David had bought for her, on which, in the intervals of his busy days, he had spent some time and trouble, and of which he was secretly proud, humble and cheap as it was—she took it for granted. He could not remember that she had said any ‘thank you’s’ since she came.

Still, youth and comradeship were pleasant. The den in which they sat was warm with light and fire, and was their own. Louie’s exultation, too, in their change of fortune, which flashed out of her at every turn, was infectious, and presently his spirits rose with hers, and the two lost themselves in the excitement of large schemes and new horizons.

After a time he found himself comparing notes with her as to that far-off crisis of his running away.

‘I suppose you heard somehow about Jim Wigson and me?’ he asked her, his pulse quickening after all these years.

She nodded with a little grin. He had already noticed, by the way, that she, while still living among the moors, had almost shaken herself free of the Kinder dialect, whereas it had taken quite a year of Manchester life to rub off his own Doric.

‘Well, you didn’t imagine’—he went on—‘I was going to stop after that? I could put a knife between Jim’s ribs now when I think of it!’

And, pushing his book away from him, he sat recalling that long past shame, his face, glowing with vindictive memory, framed in his hands.

‘I don’t see, though, what you sneaked off for like that after all you’d promised me,’ she said with energy.

‘No, it was hard on you,’ he admitted. ‘But I couldn’t think of any other way out. I was mad with everybody, and just wanted to cut and run. But before I hit on that notion about Tom’ (he had just been explaining to her in detail, not at all to her satisfaction, his device for getting regular news of her) ‘I used to spend half my time wondering what you’d do. I thought, perhaps, you’d run away too, and that would have been a kettle of fish.’

‘I did run away,’ she said, her wild eyes sparkling—‘twice.’

‘Jiminy!’ said David with a schoolboy delight, ‘let’s hear!’

Whereupon she took up her tale and told him a great deal that was still quite unknown to him. She told it in her own way with

characteristic blindnesses and hardnesses, but the truth of it was this. The very day after David’s departure she too had run away, in spite of the fact that Hannah was keeping her in something very like imprisonment. She supposed that David had gone to Manchester, and she meant to follow him there. But she had been caught begging the other side of Glossop by a policeman, who was a native of Clough End and knew all about her.

‘He made me come along back, but he must have got the mark on his wrist still where I bit him, I should think,’ remarked Miss Louie, with a satisfaction untouched apparently by the lapse of time.

The next attempt had been more serious. It was some months afterwards, and by this time she was in despair about David, and had made up her passionate mind that she would never see him again. But she loathed Hannah more and more, and at last, in the middle of a snowy February, the child determined to find her way over the Peak into the wild valley of the Woodlands, and so to Ashopton and Sheffield, in which last town she meant to go to service. But in the effort to cross the plateau of the Peak she very nearly lost her life. Long before she came in sight of the Snake Inn, on the Woodlands side, she sank exhausted in the snow, and, but for some Frimley shepherds who were out after their sheep, she would have drawn her last breath in that grim solitude. They carried her down to Frimley and dropped her at the nearest shelter, which happened to be Margaret Dawson’s cottage.

Margaret was then in the first smart of her widowhood. Lias was just dead, and she was withering physically and mentally under the heart-hunger of her loss. The arrival of the pallid, half-conscious child—David’s sister, with David’s eyes—for a time distracted and appeased her. She nursed the poor waif, and sent word to Needham Farm. Reuben came for the girl, and Margaret, partly out of compassion, partly out of a sense of her own decaying strength, bribed her to go back home by the promise of teaching her the silk-weaving.

Louie learnt the trade with surprising quickness, and as she shot up in stature and her fingers gained in cunning and rapidity, Margaret became more bowed, helpless and ‘fond,’ until at last Louie did everything, brought home the weft and warp, set it up, worked off the ‘cuts,’ and took them to the warehouse in Clough End to be paid; while Margaret sat in the chimney corner, pining inwardly for Lias and dropping deeper day by day into the gulf of age. By this time of course various money arrangements had been made between them, superintended by Margaret’s brother, a weaver in the same village who found it necessary to keep a very sharp eye on this girl-apprentice whom Margaret had picked up. Of late Louie had been paying Margaret rent for the loom, together with a certain percentage on the weekly earnings, practically for ‘goodwill.’ And on this small sum the widow had managed to live and keep her home, while Louie launched

gloriously into new clothes, started a savings-bank book, and snapped her fingers for good and all at Hannah, who put up with her, however, in a sour silence because of Mr. Gurney's cheques.

'And Margaret can't do *anything* for herself now?' asked David. He had followed the story with eagerness. For years the remembrance had rankled in his mind how during his last months at Kinder, when 'Lias was dying, and the old pair were more in want than ever of the small services he had been accustomed to render them, he had forgotten and neglected his friends because he had been absorbed in the excitements of 'conversion,' so that when Tom Mullins had told him in general terms that his sister Louie was supporting both Margaret and herself, the news had soothed a remorse.

'I should just think not!' said Louie in answer to his question. 'She's gone most silly, and she hasn't got the right use of her legs either.'

'Poor old thing!' said David softly, falling into a dream. He was thinking of Margaret in her active, happy days when she used to bake scones for him, or mend his clothes, or rate him for 'worrying' 'Lias. Then wakening up he drew the book he was binding towards him again. 'She must have been precious glad to have you to do for her, Louie,' he said contentedly.

'Do for her?' Louie opened her eyes. 'As if I could be worried with her! I had my work to do, thank you. There was a niece used to come in and see to her. She used to get in my way dreadful sometimes. She'd have fits of thinking she could work the loom again, and I'd have to keep her away—regular *frighten* her.'

David started.

'Who'll work the loom now?' he asked; his look and tone altering to match hers.

'I'm sure I don't know,' said Louie, carelessly. 'Very like she'll not get anyone. The work's been slack a long while.'

David suddenly drew back from his bookbinding.

'When did you let her know, Louie—about me?' he asked quickly.

'Let her know? Who was to let her know? Your letter came eight o'clock and our train started half-past ten. I'd just time to pitch my things together and that was about all.'

'And you never sent, and you haven't written?'

'You leave me alone,' said the girl, turning instantly sulky under his tone and look. 'It's nowt to you what I do.'

'Why!' he said, his voice shaking, 'she'd be waiting and waiting—and she's got nothing else to depend on.'

'There's her brother,' said Louie angrily, 'and if he won't take her, there's the workhouse. They'll take her there fast enough, and she won't know anything about it.'

'The *workhouse*!' cried David, springing up, incensed past bearing by her callous way. 'Margaret that took you in out of the snow!—you said it yourself. And you—you'd not lift a

finger—not you—you'd not even give her notice—"chuck her into the workhouse—that's good enough for her!" It's *vile*,—that's what it is!'

He stood, choked by his own wrath, eyeing her fiercely—a young thunder god of disdain and condemnation.

Louie too got up—gathering up her work round her—and gave him back his look with interest before she flung out of the room.

'Keep a civil tongue in your head, sir, or I'll let you know,' she cried. 'I'll not be called over the coals by you nor nobody. I'll do what I *please*,—and if you don't like it you can do the other thing—so there—now you know!'

And with a nod of the utmost provocation and defiance she banged the door behind her and went up to bed.

David flung down the pen with which he had been lettering his books on the table, and, drawing a chair up to the fire, he sat moodily staring into the embers. So it was all to begin again—the long wrangle and jar of their childhood. Why had he broken silence and taken this burden once more upon his shoulders? He had a moment of passionate regret. It seemed to him more than he could bear. No gratitude, no kindness; and this fierce tongue!

After a while he fetched pen and paper and began to write on his knee, while his look kindled again. He wrote to Margaret, a letter of boyish effusion and affection, his own conscience quickened to passion by Louie's lack of conscience. He had never forgotten her, he said, and he wished he could see her again. She must write, or get some one to write for her—and tell him what she was going to do now that Louie had left her. He had been angry with Louie for coming away without sending word. But what he wanted to say was this: if Margaret could get no one to work the loom, he, David, would pay her brother four shillings a week, for six months certain, towards her expenses if he would take her in and look after her. She must ask somebody to write at once and say what was to be done. If her brother consented to take her, David would send a post-office order for the first month at once. He was doing well in his business, and there would be no doubt about the payments.

He made his proposal with a haste and impulsiveness very unlike the cool judgment he had so far shown in his business. It never occurred to him to negotiate with the brother who might be quite well able to maintain his sister without help. Besides he remembered him as a hard man of whom both Margaret and 'Lias—soft, sensitive creatures—were both more or less afraid. No, there should be no doubt about it—not a day's doubt, if he could help it! He could help, and he would; and if they asked him more he would give it. Nearly midnight! But if he ran out to the General Post Office it would be in time.

When he had posted it and was walking home, his anger was all gone. But in its stead was the smart of a baffled instinct—the

hunger for sympathy, for love, for that common everyday life of the affections which had never been his, while it came so easily to other people.

In his chafing distress he felt the curb of something unknown before; or, rather, what had of late taken the pleasant guise of kinship and natural affection assumed to-night another and a sterner aspect, and in this strait of conduct, that sheer 'imperative' which we carry within us made itself for the first time heard and realised.

'I have done my duty and must abide by it. I *must* bear with her and look after her.'

Why?

'Because my father laid it on me?'—

And because there is a life within our life which urges and presses?—because we are 'not our own'? But this is an answer which implies a whole theology. And at this moment of his life David had not a particle or shred of theology about him. Except, indeed, that, like Voltaire, he was graciously inclined to think a First Cause probable.

Next day this storm blew over, as storms do. Louie came down early and made the porridge for breakfast. When David appeared she carried things off with a high hand, and behaved as if nothing had happened; but anyone accustomed to watch her would have seen a certain quick nervousness in her black, wild bird's eyes. As for David, after a period of gruffness and silence, he passed by degrees into his usual manner. Louie spent the day with Dora, and he went off to Cheadle to conclude the purchase of that collection of American books he had described to Louie. But first, on his way, he walked proudly into Heywood's bank and opened an account there, receiving the congratulations of an old and talkative cashier, who already knew the lad and was interested in his prospects, with the coolness of one who takes good fortune as his right.

In the afternoon he was busy in the shop—not too busy, however, to notice John. What ailed the lad? While he was inside, as soon as the door did but creak in the wind he sprang to open it, but for the most part he preferred to stand outside watching the stall and the street. When Louie appeared about five o'clock—for her hours with Dora were not yet regular—he forthwith became her slave. She set him to draw up the fire while she got the tea, and then, without taking any notice of David, she marched John upstairs to help her hang her curtains, lay her carpet, and nail up the coloured fashion plates and newspaper prints of royalties or beauties with which she was adorning the bare walls of the attic.

When all her additions had been made to David's original stock; when the little deal dressing-table and glass had been draped in the cheapest of muslins over the pinkest of calicoes; when the flowery curtains had been tied back with blue ribbons;

when the china vases on the mantelpiece had been filled with nodding plumes of dyed grasses, mostly of a rosy red; and a long glass in a somewhat damaged condition, but still presenting enough surface to enable Miss Louie to study herself therein from top to toe, had been propped against the wall; there was and could be nothing in the neighbourhood of Potter Street, so John reflected, as he furtively looked about him, to vie with the splendours of Miss Grieve's apartment. There was about it a sensuousness, a deliberate quest of luxury and gaiety, which a raw son of poverty could feel though he could not put it into words. No Manchester girl he had ever seen would have cared to spend her money in just this way.

'Now that's real nice, Mr. Dalby, and I'm just obliged to you,' said Louie, with patronising emphasis, as she looked round upon his labours. 'I do like to get a man to do things for you—he's got some strength in him—not like a gell!'

And she looked down at herself and at the long, thin-fingered hand against her dress, with affected contempt. John looked at her too, but turned his head away again quickly.

'And yet you're pretty strong too, Miss,' he ventured.

'Well, perhaps I am,' she admitted; 'and a good thing too, when you come to think of the rough time I had over there'—and she jerked her head behind her—'ever since Davy ran away from me.'

'Ran away from you, Miss?'

She nodded, pressing her lips together with the look of one who keeps a secret from the highest motives. But she brought two beautiful plaintive eyes to bear on John, and he at once felt sure that David's conduct had been totally inexcusable.

Then suddenly she broke into a laugh. She was sitting on the edge of the bed, swinging her feet lightly backwards and forwards.

'Look here!' she said, dropping her voice, and looking round at the door. 'Do you know a lot about Davy's affairs?—you're a great friend of his, aren't you?'

'I s'pose so,' said the lad, awkwardly.

'Well, has he been making up to anybody that you know of?'

John's invisible eyebrows stretched considerably. He was so astonished that he did not readily find an answer.

'Why, of course, I mean,' said Louie, impatiently, 'is he *in love* with anybody?'

'Not that I know of, Miss.'

'Well, then, there's somebody in love with *him*,' said Louie, maliciously; 'and some day, Mr. Dalby, if we get a chance, perhaps I'll tell you all about it.'

The charming confidential smile she threw him so bewildered the lad that he hardly knew where he was.

But an exasperated shout of 'John' from the stairs recalled him, and he rushed downstairs to help David deal with a cargo of books just arrived.

That evening David ran up to the Parlour for half an hour, to have a talk with Daddy and find out what Dora thought of Louie. He had sent a message by Louie about Reuben's revelations, and it occurred to him that since Daddy had not been to look him up since, that incalculable person might be offended that he had not brought his great news in person. Besides, he had a very strong curiosity to know what had happened after all to Lucy Purcell, and whether anything had been commonly observed of Purcell's demeanour under the checkmate administered to him. For the past few days he had been wholly absorbed in his own affairs, and during the previous week he had seen nothing of either Daddy or Dora, except that at a casual meeting in the street with Daddy that worthy had described his attack on Purcell with a gusto worthy of his Irish extraction.

He found the restaurant just shutting, and Daddy apparently on the wing for the 'White Horse' parlour, to judge from the relief which showed in Dora's worn look as she saw her father lay down his hat and stick again and fall 'chaffing' with David.

For, with regard to David's change of position, the landlord of the Parlour was in a very testy frame of mind.

'Six hundred pounds!' he growled, when the young fellow sitting cross-legged by the fire had made an end of describing to them both his journey to London. 'H'm, *your* fun's over: any fool can do on six hundred pounds!'

'Thank you, Daddy,' said the lad, with a sarcastic lip. 'As for you, I wonder *you* have the face to talk! Who's coining money here, I should like to know?'

Dora looked up with a start. Her father met her look with a certain hostility and an obstinate shake of his thin shoulders.

'Davy, me boy, you're that consated by now, you'll not be for taking advice. But I'll give it you, bedad, to take or to leave! Never pitch your tent, sir, where you can't strike it when you want to! But there's where your beastly money comes in. Nobody need look to you now for any comprehension of the finer sentiments of man.'

'What do you mean, Daddy?'

'Never you mind,' said the old vagrant, staring sombrely at the floor—the spleen in person. 'Only I want my *Freedom*, I tell you—and a bit of air, sometimes—and by gad I'll have 'em!'

And throwing back his grey head with a jerk he fixed an angry eye on Dora. Dora had grown paler, but she said nothing; her fingers went steadily on with her work; from early morning now till late night neither they nor she were ever at rest. After a minute's silence Lomax walked to the door, flung a good-night behind him and disappeared.

Dora hastily drew her hand across her eyes, then threaded her needle as though nothing had happened. But David was perplexed and sorry. How white and thin she looked, to be sure! That old lunatic must be worrying her somehow.

He moved his chair nearer to Dora.

'Is there anything wrong, Miss Dora?' he asked her, dropping his voice.

She looked up with a quick gratitude, his voice and expression putting a new life into her.

'Oh! I don't know,' she said, gently and sadly. 'Father's been very restless these last few weeks. I can't keep him at home. And I'm not always dull like this. I've done my best to cheer him up. And I don't think there's much amiss with the Parlour—yet—only the outgoings are so large every day. I'm always feart—'

She paused, and a visible tremor ran through her. David's quick eye understood the signs of strain and fatigue, and he felt a brotherly pity for her—a softer, more normal feeling than Louie had ever called out in him.

'I say,' he said heartily, 'if there's anything I can do, you'll let me know, won't you?'

She smiled at him, and then turned to her work again in a hurry, afraid of her own eyes and lips, and what they might be saying.

'Oh! I dare say I fret myself too much,' she said, with the tone of one determined to be cheered. And, by way of protecting her own quivering heart, she fell upon the subject of Louie. She showed the brother some of Louie's first attempts—some of the stitches she had been learning.

'She's that quick!' she said, wondering. 'In a few days I'm going to trust her with that,' and she pointed to a fine old piece of Venetian embroidery, which had to be largely repaired before it could be made up into an altar-cloth and presented to St. Damian's by a rich and devoted member of the congregation.

'Does she get in your way?' the brother inquired.

'N-o,' she said in a low voice, paying particular attention to a complicated stitch. 'She'll get used to me and the work soon. She'll make a first-rate hand if she's patient a bit. They'll be glad to take her on at the shop.'

'But you'll not turn her out? You'll let her work here, alongside of you?' said the young man eagerly. He had just met Louie, in the dark, walking up Market Street with a seedy kind of gentleman, who he had reason to know was a bad lot. John was off his head about her, and no longer of much use to anybody, and in these few days other men, as it seemed to him, had begun to hang about. The difficulties of his guardianship were thickening upon him, and he clung to Dora's help.

'No; I'll not turn her out. She may work here if she wants to,' said Dora, with the same slowness.

And all the time she was saying to herself passionately that, if Louie Grieve had not been his sister, she should *never* have set foot in that room again! In the two days they had been together Louie had outraged almost every feeling the other possessed. And there was a burning dread in Dora's mind that even the secret of her heart of hearts had been somehow discovered by the girl's

hawk-like sense. But she had promised to help him, and she would.

'You must let me know what I owe you for teaching her and introducing her,' said David firmly. 'Yes, you must, Miss Dora. It's business, and you mustn't make any bones about it. A girl doesn't learn a trade and get an opening found her for nothing.'

'Oh no, nonsense!' she said quickly, but with decision equal to his own. 'I won't take anything. She don't want much teaching; she's so clever; she sees a thing almost before the words are out of your mouth. Look here, Mr. Grieve, I want to tell you about Lucy.'

She looked up at him, flushing. He, too, coloured.

'Well,' he said; 'that's what I wanted to ask you.'

She told him the whole story of Lucy's flight from her father, of her illness and departure, of the probable stepmother.

'Old brute!' said David between his teeth. 'I say, Miss Dora, can nothing be done to make him treat her decently?'

His countenance glowed with indignation and disgust. Dora shook her head sadly.

'I don't see what anyone can do; and the worst of it is she'll be such a long while getting over it. I've had a letter from her this morning, and she says the Hastings doctor declares she must stay there a year in the warm and not come home at all, or she'll be going off in a decline. I know Lucy gets nervous about herself, but it do seem bad.'

David sat silent, lost in a medley of feelings, most of them unpleasant. Now that Lucy Purcell was at the other end of England, both her service to him and his own curmudgeon behaviour to her loomed doubly large.

'I say, will you give me her address?' he said at last. 'I've got a smart book I've had bound for her. I'd like to send it her.'

Dora went to the table and wrote it for him. Then he got up to go.

'Upon my word, you do look tired,' he broke out. 'Can't you go to bed? It is hard lines.'

Which last words applied to that whole situation of hers with her father which he was beginning dimly to discern. In his boyish admiration and compassion he took both her hands in his. Dora withdrew them quickly.

'Oh, I'll pull through!' she said, simply, and he went.

When she had closed the door after him she stood looking at the clock with her hands clasped in front of her.

'How much longer will father be?' she said, sighing. 'Oh, I think I told him all Lucy wanted me to say; I think I did.'

CHAPTER X

THREE or four months passed away. During that period David had built up a shed in his back yard and had established a printing-press there, with a respectable, though not extensive, fount

of type—bought, all of it, secondhand, and a bargain. John and he spent every available moment there, and during their first experiments would often sit up half the night working off the sheets of their earliest productions, in an excitement which took no count of fatigue. They began with reprinting some scarce local tracts, with which they did well. Then David diverged into a Radical pamphlet or two on the subject of the coming Education Bill, finding authors for them among the leading ministers of the town; and these timely wares, being freely pushed on the stall, on the whole paid their expenses, with a little profit to spare—the labour being reckoned at nothing. And now David was beginning to cherish the dream of a new history of Manchester, for which among his own collections he already possessed a great deal of fresh material. But that would take time and money. He must push his business a bit further first.

That business, however, was developing quite as rapidly as the two pairs of arms could keep pace with it. Almost everything the young fellow touched succeeded. He had instinct, knowledge, a growing tact, and an indomitable energy, and these are the qualities which make, which are in themselves, success. The purchase of the collection at Cheadle, bearing on the early history of American states and towns, not only turned out well in itself, but brought him to the notice of a big man in London, who set the clever and daring beginner on several large quests both in Lancashire and Yorkshire by which both profited considerably. In another direction he was extending his stock of foreign scientific and technical books, especially such as bore upon the industries of Northern England. Old Barbier, who took a warmer and warmer interest in his pupil's progress, kept him constantly advised as to French books through old friends of his own in Paris, who were glad to do the exile a kindness.

'But why not run over to Paris for yourself, form some connections, and look about you?' suggested Barbier.

Why not, indeed? The young man's blood, quick with curiosity and adventure, under all his tradesman's exterior, leapt at the thought. But prudence restrained him for the present.

As for German books, he was struggling with the language, and feeling his way besides through innumerable catalogues. How he found time for all the miscellaneous acquisitions of these months it would be difficult to say. But whether in his free times or in trade-hours he was hardly ever without a book or a catalogue beside him, save when he was working the printing press; and, although his youth would every now and then break out against the confinement he imposed upon it, and drive him either to long tramps over the moors on days when the spring stirred in the air, or to a spell of theatre-going, in which Louie greedily shared, yet, on the whole, his force of purpose was amazing, and the success which it brought with it could only be regarded as natural and inevitable. He was beginning to be well known to the old-established men in his own business, who could