

Why did David go? As a matter of fact, with every month of this winter and spring, Dora's friendship became more necessary to him. All the brotherly feeling he would once so willingly have spent on Louie, he now spent on Dora. She became in truth a sister to him. He talked to her as he would have done to Louie had she been like Dora. No other relationship ever entered his mind; and he believed that he was perfectly understood and met in the same way.

Both often spoke of Lucy, towards whom David in this new and graver temper felt both kindly and gratefully. She, poor child, wrote to Dora from time to time letters full of complaints of her father and of his tyranny in keeping her away from Manchester. He indeed seemed to have taken a morbid dislike to his daughter, and what company he wanted he got from the widow, whom yet he had never made up his mind to marry. Lucy chafed and rebelled against the perpetual obstacles he placed in the way of her returning home, but he threatened to make her earn her own living if she disobeyed him, and in the end she always submitted. She poured herself out bitterly, however, to Dora, and Dora was helplessly sorry for her, feeling that her idle wandering life with the various aunts and cousins she boarded with was excessively bad for her—seeing that Lucy was not of the stuff to fashion new duties or charities for herself out of new relations—and that the small, vain, and yet affectionate nature ran an evil chance of ultimate barrenness and sourness.

But what could she do? In every letter there was some mention of David Grieve or request for news about him. About the visit to Paris Dora had written discreetly, telling only what she knew, and nothing of what she guessed. In reality, as the winter passed on, Dora watched him more and more closely, waiting for the time when that French mystery, whatever it was, should have ceased to overshadow him, and she might once more scheme for Lucy. He must marry—that she knew!—whatever he might think. Anyone could see that, with the returning spring, in spite of her friendship and Ancrum's, he felt his loneliness almost intolerable. It was clear, too, as his manhood advanced, that he was naturally drawn to women, naturally dependent on them. In spite of his great intelligence, to her so formidable and mysterious, Dora had soon recognised, as Elise had done, the eager, clinging, confiding temper of his youth. And beneath the transformation of passion and grief it was still there—to be felt moving often like a wounded thing.

CHAPTER XV

It was a showery April evening. But as it was also a Saturday, Manchester took no heed at all of the weather. The streets were thronged. All the markets were ablaze with light, and full of buyers. In Market Place, Dora's old home, the covered glass booths beside the pavement brought the magic of the spring into

the very heart of the black and swarming town, for they were a fragrant show of daffodils, hyacinths, primroses, and palms. Their lights shone out into the rainy mist of the air, on the glistening pavements, and on the faces of the cheerful chattering crowd, to which the shawled heads so common among the women gave the characteristic Lancashire touch. Above rose the dark tower of the Exchange; on one side was the Parlour, still dedicated to the kindly diet of corn- and fruit-eating men, but repainted, and launched on a fresh career of success by Daddy's successor; on the other, the gabled and bulging mass of the old Fishing-tackle House, with a lively fish and oyster traffic surging in the little alleys on either side of it.

Market Street, too, was thronged. In the great cheap shop at the head of it, aflame with lights from top to base, you could see the buyers story after story, swarming like bees in a glass hive. Farther on in the wide space of the Infirmary square, the omnibuses gathered, and a detachment of redcoats just returned from rifle-practice on the moors crowded the pavement outside the hospital, amid an admiring escort of the youth of Manchester, while their band played lustily.

But especially in Peter Street, the street of the great public halls and principal theatres, was Manchester alive and busy. Nilsson was singing at the 'Royal,' and the rich folk were setting down there in their broughams and landaus. But in the great Free Trade Hall there was a performance of 'Judas Maccabeus' given by the Manchester Philharmonic Society, and the vast place, filled from end to end with shilling and two-shilling seats, was crowded with the 'people.' It was a purely local scene, unlike anything of the same kind in London, or any other capital. The performers on the platform were well known to Manchester, unknown elsewhere; Manchester took them at once critically and affectionately, remembering their past, looking forward to their future; the Society was one of which the town was proud; the conductor was a character, and popular; and half the audience at least was composed of the relations and friends of the chorus. Most people had a 'Susan,' an 'Alice,' or a 'William' making signs to them at intervals from the orchestra; and when anything went particularly well, and the applause was loud, the friends of Susan or Alice beamed with a proprietary pride.

Looking down upon this friendly cheerful throng sat David Grieve, high up in the balcony. It had been his wont of late to frequent these cheap concerts, where as a rule, owing to the greater musical sensitiveness of the English North as compared with the South, the music is singularly good. During the past winter, indeed, music might almost be said to have become part of his life. He had no true musical gift, but in the paralysis of many of his natural modes of expression which had overtaken him music supplied a need. In it he at least, and at this moment, found a voice and an emotion not too personal or poignant. He lost himself in it, and was soothed.

Towards the beginning of the last part he suddenly with a start recognised Lucy Purcell in the body of the hall. She was sitting with friends whom he did not know, staring straight before her. He bent forward and looked at her carefully. In a minute or two he decided that she was looking tired, cross, and unhappy, and that she was not attending to the music at all.

So at last her father had let her come home. As to her looks, to be daughter to Purcell was to be sure of disagreeable living; and perhaps her future stepmother had been helping Purcell to annoy her.

Poor little thing! David felt a strong wish to speak to her after the performance. Meanwhile he tried to attract her attention, but in vain. It seemed to him that she looked right along the bench on which he sat; but there was no flash in her face; it remained as tired and frowning as before.

He ran downstairs before the end of the last chorus, and placed himself near the door by which he felt sure she would come out. He was just in time. She and her party also came out early before the rush. There was a sudden crowd of people in the doorway, and then he heard a little cry. Lucy stood before him, flushed, pulling at her glove, and saying something incoherent. But before he could understand she had turned back to the two women who accompanied her and spoken to them quickly; the elder replied, with a sour look at David; the younger laughed behind her muff. Lucy turned away wilfully, and at that instant the crowd from within, surging outwards, swept them away from her, and she and David found themselves together.

'Come down those steps there to the right,' she said peremptorily. 'They are going the other way.'

By this time David himself was red. She hurried him into the street, however, and then he saw that she was breathing hard, and that her hands were clasped together as though she were trying to restrain herself.

'Oh, I am so unhappy!' she burst out, 'so unhappy! And it was all, you know, to begin with, because of you, Mr. Grieve! But oh! I forgot you'd been ill—you look so different!'

She paused suddenly, while over her face there passed an expression half startled, half shrinking, as of one who speaks familiarly, as he supposes, to an old friend and finds a stranger. She could not take her eyes off him. What was this new dignity, this indefinable change of manner?

'I am not different,' he said hastily, 'not in the least. So your father has never forgiven you the kindness you did me? I don't know what to say, Miss Lucy. I'm both sorry and ashamed.'

'Forgiven it!—no, nor ever will,' she said shortly, walking on, and forgetting everything but her woes. 'Oh, do listen! Come up Oxford Street. I must tell some one, or I shall die! I must see Dora. Father's forbidden me to go, and I haven't had a moment to myself yet. She hasn't written to me since she left

the Parlour, and no one'll tell me where she is. And that *odious* woman! Oh, she is an abominable wretch! She wants to claim all my things—all the bits of things that were mother's, and I have always counted mine. She won't let me take any of them away. And she's stolen a necklace of mine—yes, Mr. Grieve, *stolen* it. I don't care *that* about it—not in itself; but to have your things taken out of your drawers without "*With your leave*" or "*By your leave*"!—She's made father worse than ever. I thought he had found her out, but he is actually going to marry her in July, and they won't let me live at home unless I make a solemn promise to "perform my religious duties" and behave properly to the chapel people. And I never will, not if I starve for it—nasty, canting, crawling, backbiting things! Then father says I can live away, and he'll make me an allowance. And what do you think he'll allow me?'

She faced round upon him with curving lip and eyes aflame. David averred truly that he could not guess.

'Thirty—pounds—a—year!' she said with vicious emphasis. 'There—would you believe it? If you put a dirty little chit of a nurse-girl on board wages, it would come to more than that. And he just bought three houses in Millgate, and as rich as anything! Oh, it's shameful, I call it, *shameful!*'

She put her handkerchief to her eyes. Then she quickly withdrew it again and turned to him, remembering how his first aspect had surprised her. In the glare of some shops they were passing David could see her perfectly, and she him. Certainly, in the year which had elapsed since they had met she had ripened, or rather softened, into a prettier girl. Whether it was the milder Southern climate in which she had been living, or the result of physical weakness left by her attack of illness in the preceding spring, at any rate her bloom was more delicate, the lines of her small, pronounced face more finished and melting. As for her, now that she had paused a moment in her flow of complaint, she was busy puzzling out the change in him. David became vaguely conscious of it, and tried to set her off again.

'But you'd rather live away,' he said, 'when they treat you like that? You'd rather be independent, I should think? I would!'

'Oh, catch me living with that woman!' she cried passionately. 'She's no better than a thief, a common thief. I don't care who hears me. And *made up!* Oh, its shocking! It seems to me there's nothing I can talk about at home now—whether it's getting old—or teeth—or hair—I'm always supposed to be "passing remarks." And I wouldn't mind if it was my Hastings cousins I had to live with. But they can't have me any more, and now I'm at Wakely with the Astons.'

'The Aston's?' David echoed. Like most people of small training and intelligence, Lucy instinctively supposed that whatever was familiar to her was familiar to other people.

'Oh, don't you know? It's father's sister who married a mill-

overseer at Wakely. And they're very kind to me. Only they're *dreadfully* pious too—not like father—I don't mean that. And, you see—it's Robert!

'Who's Robert?' asked David amused by her blush, and admiring the trim lightness of her figure and walk.

'Robert's the eldest son. He's a reedmaker. He's got enough to marry on—at least he thinks so.'

'And he wants to marry you?'

She nodded. Then she looked at him, laughing, her naturally bright eyes sparkling through the tears still wet in them.

'Father's a Baptist, you know—that's bad enough—but Robert's a *Particular* Baptist. I asked him what it meant once when he was pestering me to marry him. "Well, you see," he said, "a man must *show* that his heart's changed—we don't take in everybody like—we want to be *sure* they're real converted." I don't believe it does mean that—father says it doesn't. Anyway I asked him whether if I married him he'd want me to be a Particular Baptist too. And he said, very slow and solemn, that of course he should look for religious fellowship in his wife, but that he didn't want to hurry me. I laughed till I cried at the thought of *me* going to that hideous chapel of his, dressed like his married sister. But sometimes, I declare, I think he'll make me do what he wants—he's got a way with him. He sticks to a thing as tight as wax, and I don't care what becomes of me sometimes.'

She pouted despondently, but her quick eye stole to her companion's face.

'Oh, no, you won't marry Robert, Miss Lucy,' said David cheerfully. 'You've had a will of your own ever since I've known you. But what are you at home for now?'

'Why, I told you—to pack up my things. But I can't find half of them; she—she's walked off with them. Oh, I'm going off again as soon as possible—I can't stand it. But I must see Dora. Father says I shan't visit Papists. But I'll watch my chance. I'll get there to-morrow—see if I don't! Tell me what she's doing, Mr. Grieve.'

David told her all he knew. Lucy's comments were very characteristic. She was equally hard on Daddy's ill-behaviour and Dora's religion, with a little self-satisfied hardness that would have provoked David but for its childish *naïveté*. Many of the things that she said of Dora, however, showed real feeling, real affection.

'She *is* good,' she wound up at last with a long sigh.

'Yes, she's the best woman I ever saw,' said David slowly; 'she's beautiful, she's a saint.'

Lucy looked up quickly—her dismayed eyes fastened on him—then they fell again, and her expression became suddenly piteous and humble.

'You're still getting on well, aren't you?' she said timidly.

'You were glad not to be turned out, weren't you?'

Somehow, for the life of her, she could not at that moment help reminding him of her claim upon him. He admitted it very

readily, told her broadly how he was doing and what new connections he was making. It was pleasant to tell her, pleasant to speak to this changing rose-leaf face with its eager curiosity and attention.

'And you were ill when you were abroad?—so Dora said. Father, of course, made unkind remarks—you may be sure of that!—*he'll* set stories about when he doesn't like anybody. I didn't believe a word.'

'It don't matter,' said David hotly, but he flushed. His desire to wring Purcell's neck was getting inconveniently strong.

'No, not a bit,' she declared. Then she suddenly broke into laughter. 'Oh, Mr. Grieve, how many assistants do you think father's had since you left?'

And she chatted on about these individuals, describing a series of dolts, their achievements and personalities, with a great deal of girlish fun. Her companion enjoyed her little humours and egotisms, enjoyed the walk and her companionship. After the strain of the day, a day spent either in the toil of a developing business or under a difficult pressure of thought, this light girl's voice brought a gay, relaxed note into life. The spring was in the air, and his youth stirred again in that cavern where grief had buried it.

'Oh, *dear*, I must go home,' she said at last regretfully, startled by a striking clock. 'Father'll be just mad. Of course, he'll hear all about my meeting you—I don't care. I'm not going to be parted from all my friends to please him, particularly now he's turned me out for good—from Dora and—'

'From you,' she would have said, but she became suddenly conscious and her voice failed.

'No, indeed! And your friends won't forget you, Miss Lucy. You'll go and see Dora to-morrow?'

'Yes, if I can give them the slip at home.'

There was a pause, and then he said—

'And will you allow me to visit you at Wakely some Sunday? I know those moors well.'

She reddened all over with delight. There was something in the little stiffness of the request which gave it importance.

'I wish you would; it's not far,' she stammered. 'Aunt Miriam would be glad to see you.'

They walked back rapidly along Mosley Street and into Market Place. There she stopped and shyly asked him to leave her. Almost all the Saturday-night crowd had disappeared from the streets. It was really late, and she became suddenly conscious that this walk of hers might reasonably be regarded at home as a somewhat bold proceeding.

'I wish you'd let me see you right home,' he said, detaining her hand in his.

'Oh, no, no—I shall catch it enough as it is. Oh, they'll let me in! Will it be next Sunday, Mr. Grieve?'

'No, the Sunday after. Can I do anything for you?'

He came closer to her, seeming to envelope her in his tall, protecting presence. It was impossible for him to ignore her girlish flutter, her evident joy in having seen and talked to him again, in spite of her dread of her father. Nor did he wish to ignore them. They were unexpectedly sweet to him, and he surprised himself.

'Oh no, nothing,—but it's very good of you to say so,' she said impulsively; '*very*. Good night again.'

And instinctively she put out another small hand, which also he took, so holding her prisoner a moment.

'Look here,' he said, 'I'll just slip down that side of the Close and wait till I see you get safe in. Good night; I *am* glad I saw you!'

She ran away in a blind whirl of happiness up the steps into the passage of Half Street. He slipped down to the left and waited, looking through the railings across the corner of the Close, his eyes fixed on that upper window, where he had so often sat, parleying alternately with the cathedral and Voltaire.

Lucy rang, the door opened, there were loud sounds within, but she was admitted; it closed behind her.

David was soon in his back room, kindling a lamp and a bit of fire to read by. But when it was done he sat bent forward over the blaze, till the cathedral clock chimed the small hours, thinking.

She was so unformed and childish, that poor little thing!—surely a man could make what he would of her. She would give him affection and duty; the core of the nature was sound, and her little humours would bring life into a house.

He had but to put out his hand—that was plain enough. And why not? Was any humbler draught to be for ever put aside, because the best wine had been poured to waste?

Then the rebellions of an unquenched romance, an untamed heart, beset him. Surging waves of bitterness and pain, the after-swell of that tempest in which his youth had so nearly foundered, seemed to bear him away to seas of desolation.

After all that had happened, the greed for personal joy he every now and then detected in himself surprised and angered him by its strength. The truth was that in whole tracts of his nature he was still a boy, still young beyond his years, and it was the conflict in him between youth's hot immaturity and a man's baffling experience which made the pain of his life.

He meant to go to Wakely on the next Sunday but one—that he was certain of—but as to what he was to do and say when he got there he was perhaps culpably uncertain. But in his weakness and *sehnsucht* he dwelt upon the thought of Lucy more and more.

Then Dora—foolish saint!—came upon the scene.

Lucy found her way to the street in Ancoats where Dora lived, the morning after her talk with David, and the two cousins spent an agitated hour together. Lucy could hardly find time to ask Dora about her sorrows, so occupied was she in recounting all her

own adventures. She was to go back to Wakely that very afternoon. Purcell had been absolutely unapproachable since the cousin who had escorted Lucy to the Free Trade Hall the night before had in her own defence revealed the secret of that young lady's behaviour. Pack and go she should! He wouldn't have such a hussy another night under his roof. Let them do with her as could.

'I thought he would have beaten me this morning,' Lucy candidly confessed. There was a red spot on each cheek, and she was evidently glorying in martyrdom. 'He looked like a devil—a real devil. Why can't he be fond of me, and let me alone, like other girls' fathers? I believe he *is* fond of me somehow, but he wants to break my spirit—'

She tossed her head significantly.

'Lucy, you know you ought to give in when you can,' said the perplexed Dora, with rebuke in her voice.

'Oh, nonsense!' said Lucy. 'You can't—it's ridiculous. Well, he'll quarrel with that woman some day—I'm sure *she's* his match—and then maybe he'll want me back. But perhaps he won't get me.'

Dora looked up with a curious expression, half smiling, half wistful. She had already heard all the story of the walk.

'O Dora!' cried the child, laying down her head on the table beneath her cousin's eyes, 'Dora, I do believe he's beginning to care. You see he *asked* to come to Wakely. I didn't ask him. Oh, if it all comes to nothing again, I shall break my heart!'

Dora smoothed the fine brown hair, and said affectionate things, but vaguely, as if she was not quite certain what to say.

'He does look quite different, somehow,' continued Lucy. 'Why do you think he was so long away over there, Dora? Father says nasty things about it—says he fell into bad company and lost his money.'

'I don't know how uncle Purcell can know,' said Dora indignantly. 'He's always thinking the worst of people. He was ill, for Mr. Ancrum told me, and he's the only person that *does* know. And anyone can see he isn't strong yet.'

'Oh, and he is so handsome!' sighed Lucy, 'handsomer than ever. There isn't a man in Manchester to touch him.'

Dora laughed out and called her a 'little silly.' But, as privately in her heart of hearts she was of the same opinion, her reproof had not much force.

When Lucy left, Dora put away her work, and, lifting a flushed face, walked to the window and stood there looking out. A pale April sun was shining on the brewery opposite, and touched the dark waters of the canal under the bridge to the left. The roofs of the squalid houses abutting on the brewery were wet with rain. Through a gap she could see a laundress's back-yard mainly filled with drying clothes, but boasting besides a couple of pink flowering currants just out, and holding their own for a few

brief days against the smuts of Manchester. Here and there a man out of work lounged, pipe in mouth, at his open door, silently absorbing the sunshine and the cheerfulness of the moist blue over the house-tops. There was a new sweetness and tenderness in the spring air—or were they in Dora's soul?

She leant her head against the window, and remained there with her hands clasped before her for some little time—for her, a most unusual idleness.

Yes, Lucy was very obstinate. Dora had never thought she would have the courage to fight her father in this way. And selfish, too. She had spoken only once of Daddy, and that in a way to make the daughter wince. But she was so young—such a child!—and would be ruined if she were left to this casual life, and people who didn't understand her. A husband to take care of her, and children—they would be the making of her.

And he! Dora's eyes filled with tears. All this winter the change in him, the silent evidences of a shock all the more tragic to her because of its mystery, had given him a kind of sacredness in her eyes. She fell thinking, besides, of the times lately he had been to church with her. Ah, she *was* glad he had heard that sermon, that beautiful sermon of Canon Welby's in Passion Week! He had said nothing about it, but she knew it had been meant for clever, educated men—men like him. The church, indeed, had been full of men—her neighbours had told her that several of the gentlemen from Owens College had been there.

That evening David knocked at the door below about half-past eight. Dora got up quickly and went across to her room-fellow, a dark-faced stooping girl, who took her shirt-maker's slavery without a murmur, and loved Dora.

'Would you mind, Mary?' she said timidly. 'I want to speak to Mr. Grieve.'

The girl looked up, understood, stopped her machine, and, hastily gathering some pieces together that wanted buttonholes, went off into the little inner room and shut the door.

Dora knelt and with restless hands put the bit of fire together. She had just thrown a handkerchief over her canaries. On the frame a piece of her work, a fine altar-cloth gleaming with golds, purples, and pale pinks, stood uncovered. The deal table, the white walls on which hung Daddy's old prints, the bare floor with its strip of carpet, were all spotlessly clean. The tea had been put away. Daddy's vacant chair stood in its place.

When David came in he found her sitting pensively on a little wooden stool by the fire. Generally he gossiped while the two girls worked busily away—sometimes he read to them. To-night as he sat down he felt something impending.

Dora talked of Lucy's visit. They agreed as to the folly and brutality of Purcell's treatment of her, and laughed together over the marauding stepmother.

Then there was a pause. Dora broke it. She was sitting upright on the stool, looking straight into his face,

'Will you not be cross if I say something?' she asked, catching her breath. 'It's not my business.'

'Say it, please.' But he reddened instantly.

'Lucy's—Lucy's—got a fancy for you,' she said tremulously, shrinking from her own words. 'Perhaps it's a shame to say it—oh, it may be! You haven't told me anything, and she's given me no leave. But she's had it a long time.'

'I don't know why you say so,' he replied half sombrelly.

His flush had died away, but his hand shook on his knee.

'Oh, yes, you do,' she cried; 'you must know. Lucy can't keep even her own secrets. But she's got such a warm heart! I'm sure she has. If a man would take her and be kind to her, she'd make him happy.'

She stopped, looking at him intently.

Then suddenly she burst out, laying her hand on the arm of his chair—Daddy's chair:

'Don't be angry; you've been like a brother to me.'

He took her hand and pressed it, reassuring her.

'But how can I make her happy?' he said, with his head on his hand. 'I don't want to be a fool and deny what you say, for the sake of denying it. But—'

His voice sank into silence. Then, as she did not speak, he looked up at her. She was sitting, since he had released her, with her arms locked behind her, frowning in her intensity of thought, her last energy of sacrifice.

'You would make her happy,' she said slowly, 'and she'd be a loving wife. She's flighty is Lucy, but there's nothing bad in her.'

Both were silent for another minute, then, by a natural reaction, both looked at each other and laughed.

'I'm making rather free with you, I'm bound to admit that,' she said, with a merry shamefaced expression, which brought out the youth in her face.

'Well, give me time, Miss Dora. If—if anything did come of it, I should have to let Purcell know, and there'd be flat war. You've thought of that?'

Certainly, Dora had thought of it. They might have to wait, and Purcell would probably refuse to give or leave Lucy any money. All the better, according to David. Nothing would ever induce him to take a farthing of his ex-master's hoards.

But here, by a common instinct, they stopped planning, and David resolutely turned the conversation. When they parted, however, Dora was secretly eager and hopeful. It was curious how little the father's rights weighed with so scrupulous a soul. Whether it was his behaviour to her father which had roused an unconscious hardness even in her gentle nature, or whether it was the subtle influence of his Dissent, as compared with the nascent dispositions she seemed to see in David—anyway, Dora's conscience was silent; she was entirely absorbed in her own act, and in the prospects of the other two.