

Husband and wife laughed into each other's eyes. Then Lucy knelt down to tie the child's shoe, and David, first kissing the boy, bent forward and laid another kiss on the mother's hair.

CHAPTER V

'AN exciting post,' said David to Lucy one morning as she entered the dining-room for breakfast. 'Louie proposes to bring her little girl over to see us, and Ancrum will be home to-night!'

'Louie!' repeated Mrs. Grieve, standing still in her amazement. 'What do you mean?'

It was certainly unexpected. David had not heard from Louie for more than six months; his remittances to her, however, were at all times so casually acknowledged that he had taken no particular notice; and he and she had not met for two years and more—since that visit to Paris, in fact, recorded in his journal.

'It is quite true,' said David; 'it seems to be one of her sudden schemes. I don't see any particular reason for it. She says she must "put matters before" me, and that Cécile wants a change. I don't see that a change to Manchester in February is likely to help the poor child much. No, it must mean more money. We must make up our minds to that,' said David with a little sad smile, looking at his wife.

'David! I don't see that you're called to do it at all!' cried Lucy. 'Why, you've done much more for her than anybody else would have done! What they do with the money I can't think—dreadful people!'

She began to pour out the tea with vehemence and an angry lip. She had always in her mind that vision of Louie, as she had seen her for the first and only time in her life, marching up Market Place in the 'loud' hat and the black and scarlet dress, stared at and staring. Nor had she ever lost her earliest impression of strong dislike which had come upon her immediately afterwards, when Louie and Reuben had mounted to Dora's sitting-room, and she, Lucy, had angrily told the quick-fingered, bold-eyed girl who claimed to be David Grieve's sister not to touch Dora's work. Nay, every year since had but intensified it, especially since their income had ceased to expand rapidly, and the drain of the Montjoies' allowance had been more plainly felt. She might have begun to feel a little ashamed of herself that she was able to give her husband so little sympathy in his determination to share his gains with his co-workers. She was quite clear that she was right in resenting the wasting of his money on such worthless people as the Montjoies. It was disgusting that they should sponge upon them so—and with hardly a 'thank you' all the time. Oh dear, no!—Louie took everything as her right, and had once abused David through four pages because his cheque had been two days late.

David received his wife's remarks in a meditative silence. He

devoted himself a while to Sandy, who was eating porridge at his right hand, and tended with great regularity to bestow on his pinafore what was meant for his mouth. At last he said, pushing the letter over to Lucy:

'You had better read it, Lucy. She talks of coming next week.'

Lucy read it with mounting wrath. It was the outcome of a fit of characteristic violence. Louie declared that she could stand her life no longer; that she was coming over to put things before David; and if he couldn't help her, she and her child would just go out and beg. She understood from an old Manchester acquaintance whom she had met in the Rue de Rivoli about Christmas-time that David was doing very well with his business. She wished him joy of it. If he was prosperous, it was more than she was. Nobody ever seemed to trouble their heads about her.

'Well, I never!' said Lucy, positively choked. 'Why, it's not much more than a month since you sent her that last cheque. And now I know you'll be saying you can't afford yourself a new great-coat. It's disgraceful! They'll suck you dry, those kind of people, if you let them.'

She had taken no pains so far to curb her language for the sake of her husband's feelings. But as she gave vent to the last acid phrase she felt a sudden compunction. For David was looking straight before him into vacancy, with a painful intensity in the eyes, and a curious droop and contraction of the mouth. Why did he so often worry himself about Louie? He had done all he could, anyway.

She got up and went over to him with his tea. He woke up from his absorption and thanked her.

'Is it right?'

'Just right!' he said, tasting it. 'All the same, Lucy, it would be really nice of you to be kind to her and poor little Cécile. It won't be easy for either of us having Louie here.'

He began to cut up his bread with sudden haste, then, pausing again, he went on in a low voice. 'But if one leaves a task like that undone it makes a sore spot, a fester in the mind.'

She went back to the place in silence.

'What day is it to be?' she said presently. Certainly they both looked dejected.

'The 16th, isn't it? I wonder who the Manchester acquaintance was. He must have given a rose-coloured account. We aren't so rich as all that, are we, wife?'

He glanced at her with a charming half-apprehensive smile, which made his face young again. Lucy looked ready to cry.

'I know you'll get out of buying that coat,' she said with energy, as though referring to an already familiar topic of discussion between them.

'No, I won't,' said David cheerfully. 'I'll buy it before Louie comes, if that will please you. Oh, we shall do, dear! I've had a real good turn at the shop this last month. Things will look better this quarter's end, you'll see.'

'Why, I thought you'd been so busy in the printing office,' she said, a good deal cheered, however, by his remark.

'So we have. But John's a brick, and doesn't care how much he does. And the number of men who take a personal interest in the house, who do their utmost to forward work, and to prevent waste and scamping, is growing fast. When once we get the apprentices' school into full working order, we shall see.'

David gave himself a great stretch; and then, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, stood by the fire enjoying it and his dreams together.

'Has it begun?' said Lucy. Her tone was not particularly cordial; but anyone who knew them well would perhaps have reflected that six months before he would have neither made his remark, nor she have asked her question.

'Yes—what?' he said with a start. 'Oh, the school! It has begun tentatively. Six of our best men give in rotation two hours a day to it at the time when work and the machines are slackest. And we have one or two teachers from outside. Twenty-three boys have entered. I have begun to pay them a penny a day for attendance.'

His face lit up with merriment as though he anticipated her remonstrance.

'David, how foolish! If you coax them like that they won't care a bit about it.'

'Well, the experiment has been tried by a great French firm,' he said, 'and it did well. It is really a slight addition to wages, and pays the firm in the end. You should see the little fellows hustle up for their money. I pay it them every month.'

'And it all comes out of *your* pocket—that, of course, I needn't ask,' said Lucy. But her sarcasm was not bitter, and she had a motherly eye the while to the way in which Sandy was stuffing himself with his bread and jam.

'Well,' he said, laughing and making no attempt to excuse himself, 'but I tell you, madam, you will do better this year. I positively must make some money out of the shop for you and myself too. So I have been going at it like twenty horses, and we've sent out a splendid catalogue.'

'Oh, I say, David!' said Lucy, dismayed, 'you're not going to take the shop-money too to spend on the printing?'

'I won't take anything that will leave you denuded,' he said affectionately; 'and whenever I want anything I'll tell you all about it—if you like.'

He looked at her significantly. She did not answer for a minute, then she said:

'Don't you want me to give those boys a treat some time?'

'Yes, when the weather gets more decent, if it ever does. We must give them a day on the moors—take them to Clough End perhaps. Oh, look here!' he exclaimed with a sudden change of tone, 'let us ask Uncle Reuben to come and spend the day to see Louie!'

'Why, he won't leave *her*,' said Lucy.

'Who? Aunt Hannah? Oh yes, he will. It's wonderful what she can do now. I saw her in November, you remember, when I went to see Margaret. It's a resurrection. Poor Uncle Reuben!'

'What do you mean?' said Lucy, startled.

'Well,' said David slowly, with a half tender, half humorous twist of the lip, 'he can't understand it. He prayed so many years, and it made no difference. Then came a new doctor, and with electricity and rubbing it was all done. Oh yes, Uncle Reuben would like to see Louie. And I want to show him that boy there!'

He nodded at Sandy, who sat staring open-mouthed and open-eyed at his parents, a large piece of bread and jam slipping slowly down his throat.

'David, you're silly,' said Lucy. But she went to stand by him at the fire, and slipped her hand inside his arm. 'I suppose she and Cécile had better have the front room,' she went on slowly.

'Yes, that would be the most cheerful.'

Then they were silent a little, he leaning his head lightly against hers.

'Well, I must go,' he said, rousing himself; 'I shall just catch the train. Send a line to Ancrum, there's a dear, to say I will go and see him to-night. Four months! I am afraid he has been very bad.'

Lucy stood by the fire a little, lost in many contradictory feelings. There was in her a strange sense as of some long strain slowly giving way, the quiet melting of some old hardness. Ever since that autumn time when, after their return from Benet's Park, her husband's chivalry and delicacy of feeling had given back to her the self-respect and healed the self-love which had been so rudely hurt, there had been a certain readjustment of Lucy's nature going on below the little commonplaces and vanities and affections of her life which she herself would never have been able to explain. It implied the gradual abandonment of certain ambitions, the relinquishment bit by bit of an arid and fruitless effort.

She would stand and sigh sometimes—long, regretful sighs like a child—for she knew not what. But David would have his way, and it was no good; and she loved him and Sandy.

But she owed no love to Louie Montjoie! It was a relief to her now—an escape from an invading sweetness of which her little heart was almost afraid—to sit down and plan how she would protect David from that grasping woman and her unspeakable husband.

'David, my dear fellow!' said Ancrum's weak voice.

He rose with difficulty from his seat by the fire. The room was the same little lodging-house sitting-room in Mortimer Road,

where David years before had poured out his boyish account of himself. Neither chiffonnier, nor pictures, nor antimacassars had changed at all; the bustling landlady was still loud and vigorous. But Ancrum was a shadow.

'You are better?' David said, holding his hand in both his.

'Oh yes, better for a time. Not for long, thank God!'

David looked at him with painful emotion. Several times during these eight years had he seen Ancrum emerge from these mysterious crises of his, a broken and shattered man, whom only the force of a superhuman will could drag back to life and work. But he had never yet seen him so beaten down, so bloodless, so emaciated as this. Lung mischief had declared itself more than a year before this date, and had clearly made progress during this last attack of melancholia. He thought to himself that his old friend could not have long to live.

'Has Williams been to see you?' he asked, naming a doctor whom Ancrum had long known and trusted.

'Oh yes! He can do nothing. He tells me to give in and go to the south. But there is a little work left in me still. I wanted my boys. I grew to pine for my boys—up there.'

'Up there' meant that house in Scotland where lived the friends bound to him by such tragic memories of help asked and rendered in a man's worst extremity, that he could never speak of them when he was living his ordinary life in Manchester, passionately as he loved them.

They chatted a little about the boys, some of whom David had been keeping an eye on. Five or six of them, indeed, were in his printing-office, and learning in the apprentices' school he had just started.

But in the middle of their talk, with a sudden change of look, Ancrum stooped forward and laid his hand on David's.

'A little more, Davy—I have just to get a *little* worse—and she will come to me.'

David was not sure that he understood. Ancrum had only spoken of his wife once since the night when, led on by sympathy and emotion, he had met David's young confession by the story of his own fate. She was still teaching at Glasgow so far as David knew, where she was liked and respected.

'Yes, Davy—when I have come to the end of my tether—when I can do no more but die—I shall call—and she will come. It has so far killed us to be together—more than a few hours in the year. But when life is all over for me—she will be kind—and I shall be able to forget it all. Oh, the hours I have sat here thinking—thinking—and *gnashing my teeth!* My boys think me a kind, gentle, harmless creature, Davy. They little know the passions I have carried within me—passions of hate and bitterness—outcries against God and man. But there has been One with me through the storms—his voice sank—'aye! and I have gone to Him again and again with the old cry—*Master!—Master!—carest Thou not that we perish?*'

His drawn grey face worked and he mastered himself with difficulty. David held his hand firm and close in a silence which carried with it a love and sympathy not to be expressed.

'Let me just say this to you, Davy,' Ancrum went on presently, 'before we shut the door on this kind of talk—for when a man has got a few things to do and very little strength to do 'em with, he must not waste himself. You may hear any day that I have been received into the Catholic Church, or you may only hear it when I am dying. One way or the other, you *will* hear it. It has been strange to go about all these years among my Unitarian and dissenting friends and to know that this would be the inevitable end of it. I have struggled alone for peace and certainty. I cannot get them for myself. There is an august, an inconceivable possibility which makes my heart stand still when I think of it, that the Catholic Church may verily have them to give, as she says she has. I am weak—I shall submit—I shall throw myself upon her breast at last.'

'But why not now,' said David, tenderly, 'if it would give you comfort?'

Ancrum did not answer at once; he sat rubbing his hands restlessly over the fire.

'I don't know—I don't know,' he said at last. 'I have told you what the end will be, Davy. But the will still flutters—flutters—in my poor breast, like a caged thing.'

Then that beautiful half-wild smile of his lit up the face.

'Bear with me, you strong man! What have you been doing with yourself? How many more courts have you been pulling down? And how much more of poor Madam Lucy's money have you been throwing out of window?'

He took up his old tone, half bantering, half affectionate, and teased David out of the history of the last six months. While he sat listening he reflected once more, as he had so often reflected, upon the difference between the reality of David Grieve's life as it was and his, Ancrum's, former imaginations of what it would be. A rapid rise to wealth and a new social status, removal to London, a great public career, a personality, and an influence conspicuous in the eyes of England—all these things he had once dreamed of as belonging to the natural order of David's development. What he had actually witnessed had been the struggle of a hidden life to realise certain ideal aims under conditions of familiar difficulty and limitation, the dying down of that initial brilliance and passion to succeed, into a wrestle of conscience as sensitive as it was profound, as tenacious as it was scrupulous. He had watched an unsatisfactory marriage, had realised the silent resolve of the north-countryman to stand by his own people, of the man sprung from the poor to cling to the poor: he had become familiar with the veins of melancholy by which both character and life were crossed. That glittering prince of circumstance as he had once foreseen him, was still enshrined in memory and fancy; but the real man was knit to the cripple's inmost heart.

Another observer, perhaps, might have wondered at Ancrum's sense of difference and disillusion. For David after all had made a mark. As he sat talking to Ancrum of the new buildings behind the printing-office where he now employed from two to three hundred men, of the ups and downs of his profit-sharing experiences, of this apprentices' school for the sons of members of the 'house,' imitated from one of the same kind founded by a great French printing firm, and the object just now of a passionate energy of work on David's part—or as he diverged into the history of an important trade dispute in Manchester, where he had been appointed arbitrator by the unanimous voice of both sides—as he told these things, it was not doubtful even for Ancrum that his power and consideration were spreading in his own town.

But, substantially, Ancrum was right. Hard labour and natural gift had secured their harvest; but that vivid personal element in success which captivates and excites the bystander seemed, in David's case, to have been replaced by something austere, which pointed attention and sympathy rather to the man's work than to himself. When he was young there had been intoxication for such a spectator as Ancrum in the magical rapidity and ease with which he seized opportunity and beat down difficulty. Now that he was mature, he was but one patient toiler the more at the eternal puzzles of our humanity.

Ancrum let him talk awhile. He had always felt a certain interest in David's schemes, though they were not of a quality and sort with which a mind like his naturally concerned itself. But his interest now could not hold out so long as once it could.

'Ah, that will do—that will do, dear fellow!' he said, interrupting and touching David's hand with apologetic affection. 'I seem to feel your pulse beating 150 to the minute, and it tires me so I can't bear myself. Gossip to me. How is Sandy?'

David laughed, and had as usual a new batch of 'Sandiana' to produce. Then he talked of Louie's coming and of the invitation which had been sent to Reuben Grieve.

'I shall come and sit in a corner and look at *her*,' said Ancrum, nodding at Louie's name. 'What sort of a life has she been leading all these years? Neither you nor I can much imagine. But what beauty it used to be! How will John stand seeing her again?'

David smiled, but did not think it would affect John very greatly. He was absorbed in the business of Grieve & Co., and no less round, roseate, and trusty than he had always been.

'Well, good night—good night!' said Ancrum, and seemed to be looking at the clock uneasily. 'Come again, Davy, and I dare say I shall struggle up to you.'

At that moment the door opened, and, in spite of a hasty shout from Ancrum, which she did not or would not understand, Mrs. Elsley, his landlady, came into the room, bearing his supper. She put down the tray, seemed to invite David's attention to it by her

indignant look, and flounced out again like one bursting with forbidden speech.

'Ancrum, this is absurd!' cried David, pointing to the tea and morsel of dry bread which were to provide this shrunken invalid with his evening meal. 'You *can't* live on this stuff now, you know—you want something more tempting and more nourishing. Do be rational!'

Ancrum sprang up, hobbled with unusual alacrity across the room, and, laying hold of David, made a feint of ejecting his visitor.

'You get along and leave me to my wittles!' he said with the smile of a schoolboy; 'I don't spy on you when you're at your meals.'

David crossed his arms.

'I shall have to send Lucy down every morning to housekeep with Mrs. Elsley,' he said firmly.

'Now, David, hold your tongue! I couldn't eat anything else if I tried. And there are two boys down with typhoid in Friar's Yard—drat 'em!—and scarcely a rag on 'em: don't you understand? And besides, David, if *she* comes, I shall want a pound or two, you see?'

He did not look at his visitor's face nor let his own be seen. He simply pushed David through the door and shut it.

'Sandy, they're just come!' cried Lucy in some excitement, hugging the child to her by way of a last pleasant experience before the advent of her sister-in-law. Then she put the child down on the sofa and went out to meet the new-comers.

Sandy sucked a meditative thumb, putting his face to the window, and surveyed the arrival which was going on in the front garden. There was a great deal of noise and talking; the lady in the grey cloak was scolding the cabman, and 'Daddy' was taking her bags and parcels from her, and trying to make her come in. On the steps stood a little girl looking frightened and tired. Sandy twisted his head round and studied her carefully. But he showed no signs of running out to meet her. She might be nice, or she might be nasty. Sandy had a cautious philosophical way with him towards novelties. He remained perfectly still with his cheek pressed against the glass.

The door opened. In came Louie, with Lucy looking already flushed and angry behind her, and David, last of all, holding Cécile by the hand.

Louie was in the midst of denunciations of the cabman, who had, according to her, absorbed into his system, or handed over to an accomplice on the way, a bandbox which had *certainly* been put in at St. Pancras, and which contained Cécile's best hat. She was red and furious, and David felt himself as much attacked as the cabman, for to the best of his ability he had transferred them and their packages, at the Midland station, from the train to the cab.

In the midst of her tirade, however, she suddenly stopped

short and looked round the room she had just entered—Lucy's low comfortable sitting-room, with David's books overflowing into every nook and corner, the tea-table spread, and the big fire which Lucy had been nervously feeding during her time of waiting for the travellers.

'Well, you've got a fire, anyway,' she said, brusquely. 'I thought you'd have a bigger house than this by now.'

'Oh, thank you, it's quite big enough!' cried Lucy, going to the tea-table and holding herself very straight. 'Quite big enough for anything *we* want! Will you take your tea?'

Louie threw herself into an armchair and looked about her.

'Where's the little boy?' she inquired.

'I'm here,' said a small solemn voice from behind the sofa, 'but I'm not *your* boy.'

And Sandy, discovered with his back to the window, replaced the thumb which he had removed to make the remark, and went on staring with portentous gravity at the new-comers. Cécile had nervously disengaged herself from David and was standing by her mother.

'Why, he's small for his age!' exclaimed Louie; 'I'm sure he's small for his age. Why, he's nearly five!'

'Come here, Sandy,' said David, 'and let your aunt and cousin look at you.'

Sandy reluctantly sidled across the room so as to keep as far as possible from his aunt and cousin, and fastened on his father's hand. He and the little girl looked at one another.

'Go and kiss her,' said David.

Sandy most unwillingly allowed himself to be put forward. Cécile with a little patronising woman-of-the-world air stooped and kissed him first on one cheek and then on the other. Louie only looked at him. Her black eyes—no less marvellous than of yore, although now the brilliancy of them owed something to art as well as nature, as Lucy at once perceived—stared him up and down, taking stock minutely.

'He's well made,' she said grudgingly, 'and his colour isn't bad. Cécile, take your hat off.'

The child obeyed, and the mother with hasty fingers pulled her hair forward here, and put it back there. 'Look at the thickness of it,' she said, proudly pointing it out to David. 'They'd have given me two guineas for it in the Rue de la Paix the other day. Why didn't that child have your hair, I wonder?' she added, nodding towards Sandy.

'Because he preferred his mother's, I suppose,' said David, smiling at Lucy, and wondering through his discomfort what Sandy could possibly be doing with his coat-tail. He seemed to be elaborately scrubbing his face with it.

'What are you doing with my coat, villain?' he said, lifting his son in his arms.

Sandy found his father's ear, and with infinite precaution whispered vindictively into it:

'I've wiped *them* kisses off anyhow.'

David suppressed him, and devoted himself to the travellers and their tea.

Every now and then he took a quiet look at his sister. Louie was in some ways more beautiful than ever. She carried herself magnificently, and as she sat at the tea-table—restless always—she fell unconsciously into one fine attitude after another, no doubt because of her long practice as a sculptor's model. All the girl's awkwardness had disappeared; she had the insolent ease which goes with tried and conscious power. But with the angularity and thinness of first youth had gone also that wild and startling radiance which Montjoie had caught and fixed in the Mænad statue—the one enduring work of a ruined talent, now to be found in the Luxembourg by anyone who cares to look for it. Her beauty was less original; it had taken throughout the second-rate Parisian stamp; she had the townswoman's pallor, as compared with the moorland red and white of her youth; and round the eyes and mouth in a full daylight were already to be seen the lines which grave the history of passionate and selfish living.

But if her beauty was less original, it was infinitely more finished. Lucy beside her stumbled among the cups, and grew more and more self-conscious; she had felt much the same at Benet's Park beside Lady Venetia Danby; only here there was a strong personal animosity and disapproval fighting with the disagreeable sense of being outshone.

She left almost all the talk to her husband, and employed herself in looking after Cécile. David, who had left his work with difficulty to meet his sister, did his best to keep her going on indifferent subjects, wondering the while what it was that she had come all this way to say to him, and perfectly aware that her sharp eyes were in every place, taking a depreciatory inventory of his property, his household, and his circumstances.

Suddenly Louie said something to Cécile in violent French. It was to the effect that she was to hold herself up and not stoop like an idiot.

The child, who was shyly eating her tea, flushed all over, and drew herself up with painful alacrity. Louie went on with a loud account of the civility shown her by some gentlemen on the Paris boat and on the journey from Dover. In the middle of it she stopped short, her eye flamed, she bent forward with the rapidity of a cat that springs, and slapped Cécile smartly on the right cheek.

'I was watching you!' she cried. 'Are you never going to obey me—do you think I am going to drag a hunchback about with me?'

Both David and Lucy started forward. Cécile dropped her bread and butter and began to cry in a loud, shrill voice, hitting out meanwhile at her mother with her tiny hands in a frenzy of rage and fear. Sandy, frightened out of his wits, set up a loud howl also, till his mother caught him up and carried him away.

'Louie, the child is tired out!' said David, trying to quiet Cécile and dry her tears. 'What was that for?'
Louie's chest heaved.

'Because she won't do what I tell her,' she said fiercely. 'What am I to do with her when she grows up? Who'll ever look at her twice?'

She scowled at the child who had taken refuge on David's knee, then with a sudden change of expression she held out her arms, and said imperiously:

'Give her to me.'

David relinquished her, and the mother took the little trembling creature on her knee.

'Be quiet then,' she said to her roughly, always in French, 'I didn't hurt you. There! *Veux-tu du gâteau?*'

She cut some with eager fingers and held it to Cécile's lips. The child turned away, silently refusing it, the tears rolling down her cheeks. The mother devoured her with eyes of remorse and adoration, while her face was still red with anger.

'*Dis-moi*, you don't feel anything?' she said, kissing her hungrily. 'Are you tired? Shall I carry you upstairs and put you on the bed to rest?'

And she did carry her up, not allowing David to touch her. When they were at last safe in their own room, David came down to his study and threw himself into his chair in the dark with a groan.

CHAPTER VI

LOUIE and her child entered the sitting-room together when the bell rang for supper-tea. Louie had put on a high red silk dress of a brilliant, almost scarlet, tone, which showed her arms from the elbows and was very slightly clouded here and there with black; Cécile crept beside her, a little pale shadow, in a white muslin frock, adorned, however, as Lucy's vigilant eyes immediately perceived, with some very dainty and expensive embroidery. The mother's dress reminded her of that in which she first saw Louie Grieve; so did her splendid and reckless carriage; so did the wild play of her black eyes, always on the watch for opportunities of explosion and offence. How did they get their dresses? Who paid for them? And now they had come over to beg for more! Lucy could hardly keep a civil tongue in her head at all, as her sister-in-law swept round the room making strong and, to the mistress of the house, cutting remarks on the difference between 'Manchester dirt' and the brightness and cleanliness of Paris. Why, she lorded it over them as though the place belonged to her! 'And she is just a pauper—living on what we give her!' thought Lucy to herself with exasperation.

After supper, at which Louie behaved with the same indefinable insolence—whether as regarded the food or the china, or the shaky moderator lamp, a relic from David's earliest bachelor

days, which only he could coax into satisfactory burning—Lucy made the move, and said to her with cold constraint:

'Will you come into the drawing-room?—David has a pipe in the study after dinner.'

'I want to speak to David,' said Louie, pushing back her chair with noisy decision. 'I'll go with him. He can smoke as much as he likes—I'm used to it.'

'Well, then, come into my study,' said David, trying to speak cheerfully. 'Lucy will look after Cécile.'

To Louie's evident triumph Cécile made difficulties about going with her aunt, but was at last persuaded by the prospect of seeing Sandy in bed. She had already shown signs in her curious frightened way of a considerable interest in Sandy.

Then David led the way to the study. He put his sister into his armchair and stood pipe in hand beside her, looking down upon her. In his heart there was the passionate self-accusing sense that he could not feel pity, or affection, or remorse for the past when she was there; every look and word roused in him the old irritation, the old wish to master her, he had known so often in his youth. Yet he drew himself together, striving to do his best.

'Well, now, look here,' said Louie defiantly, 'I want some money.'

'So I supposed,' he said quietly, lighting his pipe.

Louie reddened.

'Well, and if I do want it,' she said, breathing quickly, 'I've a right to want it. You chose to waste all that money—all my money—on that marrying business, and you must take the consequence. I look upon it this way—you promised to put my money into your trade and give me a fair share of your profits. Then you chucked it away—you made me spend it all, and now, of course, I'm to have nothing to say to your profits. Oh dear, no! It's a trifle that I'm a pauper and you're rolling in money compared to me anyway. Oh! it doesn't matter nothing to nobody—not at all! All the same you couldn't have made the start you did—not those few months I was with you—without my money. Why can't you confess it, I want to know—and behave more handsome to me now—instead of leaving me in that state that I haven't a franc to bless myself with!'

She threw herself back in her chair, with one arm flung behind her head. David stared at her tongue-tied for a while by sheer amazement.

'I gave you everything I had,' he said, at last, with a slow distinctness, 'all your money, and all my own too. When I came back here, I had my new stock, it is true, but it was much of it unpaid for. My first struggle was to get my neck out of debt.'

He paused, shrinking with a kind of sick repulsion from the memory of that bygone year of shattered nerves and anguished effort. Deliberately he let thought and speech of it drop.