

demned criminal, despised by the rulers of the land, the scorn of all. Yet the poor thief knew him for God in that poor condition, and called Him Lord.

*George.* I heard a sermon about that once. The preacher asked us if we should have had such faith in his place.

*Jem.* Aye, he believed and repented, and was forgiven. But a chance of showing such faith as that, in a dying moment, is given to none else. We, in a Christian country, are taught to see God in the dying Saviour from our childhood.

*George.* I suppose we are worse off, then, if we don't believe.

*Jem.* Yes, because we have the light, and yet don't walk in it.

*George.* But, Jem, you don't say there can't be death-bed repentances now?

*Jem.* God forbid! Who am I to shorten the arms of the Lord? But it's sad work, trusting to it.

*George.* A many do. I've heard them say they would enjoy themselves while they were young, and when they got sick or old it would be time enough to turn to God.

*Jem.* We won't say much now about the sort of enjoyment such folk get, even in this life. It's the folly of counting on repentance, as a thing they can reckon upon having any minute, that startles me.

*George.* Can't a man repent at any minute?

*Jem.* God may grant repentance to the wickedest sinner at any minute, I grant you. He is all-powerful. But when He puts into men's hearts the feeling that He ought to be worshipped, that they have to repent of their sins and amend their lives, and they steadily turn to, and try to stifle those thoughts, saying to themselves, or even aloud, 'We'll do that by-and-by when we've had our fill of this world.' Then they can't expect Him to listen to them, when they cry to Him on their death-beds.

*George.* But He listened to the robber.

*Jem.* Perhaps the robber had never seen the Lord before, never had the call before; his sins might have been committed out of the darkness of a heathen heart.

*George.* I wish folk would take to and

think of these things. I know how they really do put the matter. Here's a man, they say—a robber—a deal worse than I've ever been, and yet the Lord forgave him at the last, so there's hope for all.

*Jem.* Forgetting the many calls they've had to repentance, and the way in which they have turned their backs on their Lord. George, have you ever heard speak of the Laceys?

*George.* That bad lot that used to live in the tumble-down house in Blair's Alley?

*Jem.* Yes. No one seems to care to live in the place since *she* died.

*George.* The children say they see her ghost at the window still.

*Jem.* Poor soul! I don't wonder they get up such stories. It's a pitiful tale.

*George.* I've often heard folks say that they were as bad a lot as need be, root and branch, mother and all.

*Jem.* Yes. They were given up to all kinds of wickedness. No decent people would let their children go along with the young Laceys. It was no use speaking to Mrs. Lacey, the parson tried that on many times. She just told him to let her be. And so it went on till she fell ill.

*George.* Aye. Some one told me that your missis was very good to her, then.

*Jem.* It was just after our baby died, and my poor girl had a very soft heart for all sick folk. She'd take Janet Lacey a bit of pudding or a plate of fruit out of the garden, and tidy her room for her, when other folk wouldn't go nigh the place. Those great girls of hers were out all day after their own pleasure, and never looked after her; and now and again she'd try to get her to listen to a word of reading. But the poor soul was as hard as a flint.

*George.* They say she worked to the last?

*Jem.* Yes. She wasn't idle. The children said their mother was a miser, and they were always robbing her when they found the opportunity. At last she got so weak she had to take to her bed. My wife looked after her altogether then, and won her over to let the parson in. After a while the poor soul seemed to lend an ear to his words. She really tried to repent, but (mind, I'm only