

wretched little lad who had just come to the factory, and worked near him; and once again, as I was leaving the building on a rainy night, I came upon him on the stone steps at the door bending down with an almost pathetic clumsiness to pin the woollen shawl of a poor little mite, who, like so many others, worked with her shiftless father and mother to add to their weekly earnings. It was always the poorest and least cared for of the children whom he seemed to befriend, and very often I noticed that even when he was kindest, in his awkward man fashion, the little waifs were afraid of him, and showed their fear plainly.

The factory was situated on the outskirts of a thriving country town near Manchester, and at the end of the lane that led from it to the more thickly populated part there was a path crossing a field to the pretty church and church yard, and this path was a short cut homeward for me. Being so pretty and quiet, the place had a sort of attraction for me, and I was in the habit of frequently passing through it on my way, partly because it was pretty and quiet, perhaps, and partly, I have no doubt, because I was inclined to be weak and melancholy at the time, my health being broken down under hard study.

It so happened that in passing here one night, and glancing in among the graves and marble monuments as usual, I caught sight of a dark figure sitting upon a little mound under a tree and resting its head upon its hands, and in this sad-looking figure I recognized the muscular outline of Surly Tim.

He did not see me at first, and I was almost inclined to think it best to leave him alone; but as I half turned away he stirred with something like a faint moan, and then lifting his head and saw me standing in the bright clear moonlight.

"Who's ther?" he said. "Dost ta want owt?"

"It is only Doncaster, Hibblethwaite," I returned, as I sprang over the low stone wall to join him. "What is the matter old fellow? I thought I heard you groan just now."

"Yo' mought ha' done, Mester," he answered heavily. "Happen tha did. I dunnot know mysen. Nowts th' matter though, as I knows on, on'y I'm a bit out o' soarts."

He turned his head aside alightly and began to pull at the blades of grass on the mound, and all at once I saw that his hand was trembling nervously.

It was almost three minutes before he spoke again.

"That un belongs to me," he said suddenly at last, pointing to a longer mound at his feet. "An' this little un," signifying with an indescribable gesture the small one upon which he sat.

"Poor fellow," I said, "I see now." "A little lad o' mine," he said, slowly and tremulously. "A little lad o' mine an'—his mother."

"What?" I exclaimed, "I never knew that you were a married man, Tim."

He dropped his head upon his hand again, still pulling nervously at the grass with the other.

"Th' law says I beant, Mester," he answered in a painful, strained fashion. "I conna tell nysen what God-a'-moighty 'ud say about it."

"I don't understand," I faltered; "you don't mean to say the poor girl never was your wife, Hibblethwaite."

"That's what th' law says," slowly: "I thowt different nysen, an' so did the poor lass. That's what's the matter, Mester; that's th' trouble."

The other nervous hand went up to his bent face for a minute and hid it, but I did not speak. There was so much of strange grief in his simple movement that I felt words would be out of place. It was not my dogged, inexplicable "hand" who was sitting before me in the bright moonlight on the baby's grave; it was a man with a hidden history of some tragic sorrow long kept secret in his homely breast—perhaps a history very few of us could read aright. I would not question him, though I fancied he meant to explain himself. I knew that if he was willing to tell me the truth it was best that he should choose his own time for it, and so I let him alone.

And before I had waited very long he broke the silence himself, as I had thought he would.

"It wur welly about six years ago I com here," he said, "more or less, welly about six year. I wur a quiet chap then, Mester, an' had na many friends, but I had more than I ha' now. Happen I wur better nater'd, but just as loike I wur loighter-hearted—but that's nowt to do wi' it."

"I had na been here more than a week when ther comes a young woman to moind a loom i' th' next room to me, an' this young woman bein' pretty an' modest takes my fancy. She wur na loike th' rest o' the wenches—loud talkin' an' slattern i' her ways; she wur just quiet loike and nowt else. First time I seed her I says to mysen, 'Theer's a lass 'at's seed trouble;' an' come now every toime I seed her afterward I says to mysen, 'Theer's a lass 'at's seed trouble.' It wur i' her eye—she had a soft loike brown eye, Mester—an' it wur i' her voice—her voice wur soft loike, too—I sometimes thowt it wur plain to be seed even i' her dress. If