

brother defiantly. Hugh blushed like a girl, and fumbled his cap — but sat speechless.

“When we were children you had all the best of it,” Stephen continued. “You’ve had all the best of it all along. You’ve got the best of it now.” Hugh dropped his eyes to his boots, a picture of guilt and discomfort. “We both cared — a good deal — for — Mother. You were her favorite. I was willing. You were the kid — and, believe it or not, I was willing. And I was good to you — for years.”

“God — yes — very,” Hugh said heartily, lifting his troubled eyes to Stephen’s.

“We came to Deep Dale. My heart was sorer than yours. I’d known Mother longer; I missed her more than you did; I needed her more. Well — you had all the fat of it — at Oxshott: there was none of it I grudged you, none — but I was a boy too, and I wanted my share; and I didn’t get it. I had clothes, and food, and servants, and saw a future open up before me, a future of wealth and power. But I wanted love too. I had more brains in my toe than you had in your carcass — and Uncle Dick saw it. He began to take interest in me, to talk to me, to draw me out, he took no end of pains over my education, and before long to plan my future as his ultimate successor at ‘Bransby’s’ — but he loved you. And I would have given my poor little hide to have had just half of that love. All my life — ever since I can remember — every day of it, I’ve wanted some one to love me — and no one ever has really — Mother — did half; since she died, no one.”

The fire hissed and flamed in the hearth, and Stephen