

And the two women ascended the grand staircase. It was the first time the grand staircase had been used with becoming dignity since Mrs. Prockter had used it on her visit of inspection. That staircase and Mrs. Prockter were made for each other.

No sooner had they disappeared than James popped out of his lair, where he had been hiding, and gazed up the staircase like a hunter stalking his prey. The arrival of the page in sixpences put him out of countenance for a moment, especially when the page began to feed the hall-fire in a manner contrary to all James's lifelong notions of feeding fires. However, he passed the time by giving the page a lesson.

Helen tapped at the bedroom door, left Mrs. Prockter to enter, and descended the stairs again.

"Is her up there with him?" James asked, in a whisper.

Helen nodded.

"Ye'd better ask her stop and have something to eat wi' us," said James.

Helen had to reconcile James Ollerenshaw to the new scale of existence at Wilbraham Hall. She had to make him swallow the butler, and the page, and the other servants, and the grand piano — in themselves a heavy repast — without counting the evening