

book, yer *Jane Eyre* as yer wor reading—lor, it were fine—the bit as you read to the Gen’ral and me, but she said as it wor a hell-fire book, and she burnt it—I seed her, and so did the Gen’ral—she pushed it between the bars with the poker. She got up in her night-things to do it, and then she got back to bed again, and she panted for near an hour after—didn’t she, Gen’ral?”

“Yes—yes—come along, come along. Look at Bet! she’s going to strike some ’un—look at her; didn’t we say as she’d be in a steaming rage. Come, Cap’n.”

The little boys scuttled downstairs, shouting and tumbling over one another in their flight. Bet stood perfectly still on the landing. The boys were right when they said she would be in a rage; her heart beat heavily, her face was white, and for an instant she pressed her forehead against the door of her mother’s room and clenched her teeth.

The book burnt! the poor book which had given her pleasure, and which she had saved up her pence to buy—the book which had drawn her out of herself, and made her forget her wretched surroundings, committed to the flames—ignominiously destroyed, and called bad names, too. How dared her mother do it? how dared she? The girls were right when they said she was tied to apron-strings—she was, she was! But she would bear it no longer. She would show her mother that she would submit to no leading—that she, Elizabeth Granger, the handsomest newspaper girl in Liverpool, was a woman, and her own mistress.

“She oughtn’t to have done it,” half-groaned Bet.