

used somehow to associate Mary Andrew's pale innocent face with everything I did. Every blow I drove into a coal-seam with my sharp pick used to be industry for Mary's sake. Of an evening when I washed off the black and tidied up my hair, it used to be so that she might not be ashamed of me if we met; and even every time I made my head ache with some calculations out of my arithmetic—ten times as difficult because I had no one to help me—I used to strive and try on till I conquered, because it was all for Mary's sake.

Not that I dared to have told her so, I thought, but somehow the influence of Mary used to lift me up more and more, till I should no more have thought of going to join the other pitmen in a public-house than of trying to fly.

It was about this time that I got talking to a young fellow about my age who worked in my shift. John Kelsey his name was, and I used to think it a pity that a fine clever fellow like he was, handsome, stout, and strong, should be so fond of his low habits, dog-fighting and wrestling, so popular amongst our men, who enjoyed nothing better than getting over to Sheffield or Rotherham for what they called a day's sport, which generally meant unfitness for work during the rest of the week.

"Well," said John, "your ways seem to pay you," and he laughed and went away; and I thought no more of it till about a month after, when I found out that I was what people who make use of plain simple language call in love, and I'll tell you how I found it out.

I was going along one evening past old Andrews' house, when the door opened for a moment as if some one was coming out, but, as if I had been seen, it was closed directly. In that short moment, though, I had heard a laugh, and that laugh I was sure was John Kelsey's.

I felt on fire for a few moments, as I stood there unable to move, and then as I dragged myself away the feeling that came over me was one of blank misery and despair. I could have leaned my head up against the first wall I came to and cried like a child; but that feeling passed off to be succeeded by one of rage. For, as the blindness dropped from my eyes, I saw clearly that not only did I dearly love Mary Andrews—love her with all a strong man's first love, such a love as one would feel who had till now made his sole companions of his books—but that I was forestalled, that John Kelsey was evidently a regular visitor there, and, for aught I knew to the contrary, was her acknowledged lover.

I did not like playing the spy; but, with a faint feeling of hope on me that I might have been mistaken, I walked back past the house, and there was no mistake, John Kelsey's head was plainly enough to be seen upon the blind, and I went home in despair.

How I looked forward to the next Sunday, half resolved to boldly tell Mary of my love, and to ask her whether there was any truth in that which I imagined, though I almost felt as if I should not dare.

Sunday came at last, and somehow I was rather late when I entered the great schoolroom, one end of which was devoted to the girls, the other to the boys. At the first glance I saw that Mary was in her place; at the second all the blood in my body seemed to rush to my heart, for there, standing talking to the superintendent, was John Kelsey, and the next minute he

had a class of the youngest children placed in his charge, and he was hearing them read.

"He has done this on account of what I said to him," was my first thought, and I felt glad; but directly after I was in misery, for my eyes rested upon Mary Andrews, and that explained all—it was for her sake he had come.

I don't know how that afternoon passed, nor anything else, only that as soon as the children were dismissed I saw John Kelsey go up to Mary's side and walk home with her; and then I walked out up the hillside, wandering here and there amongst the mouths of the old, unused pits half full of water, and thinking to myself that I might just as well be down there in one of them, for there was no more hope or pleasure for me in this world.

Time slipped on, and I could plainly see one thing that troubled me severely; John was evidently making an outward show of being a hardworking fellow, striving hard for improvement, so as to stand well in old Andrews' eyes, while I knew for a fact that he was as drunken and dissipated as any young fellow that worked in the pit.

I could not tell Andrews this, nor I could not tell Mary. If she loved him it would grieve her terribly, and be dishonorable as well, and perhaps he might improve. I can tell him though, I thought, and I made up my mind that I would; and meeting him one night, evidently hot and excited with liquor, I spoke to him about it.

"If you truly love that girl, John," I said, "you'll give up this sort of thing."

He called me a meddling fool, said he had watched me, that he knew I had a hankering after her myself, but she only laughed at me; and one way and another so galled me that we fought. I went home that night bruised, sore, and ashamed of my passion; while he went to the Andrews' and said he had had to thrash me for speaking insultingly about Mary.

I heard this afterwards, and I don't know how it was but I wrote to her telling her it was false, and that I loved her too well ever to have acted so.

When next we met I felt that she must have read my letter and laughed at me. At all events, John Kelsey did, and I had the mortification of seeing that old Andrews evidently favoured his visits.

John still kept up his attendance at the school, but he was at the far end; and more than once when I looked up it was to find Mary Andrews with her eyes fixed on me. She lowered them though directly, and soon after it seemed to me that she turned them upon John.

It seems to me that a man never learns till he is well on in life how he should behave towards the lady of his choice, and how much better it would be if he would go and, in a straightforward, manly fashion, tell her of his feelings. I was like the rest, I could not do it; but allowed six months to pass over my head—six weary, wretched months—till Christmas came on, cold and bitter as was my heart.

It was Christmas Eve, and in a dreamy, listless way I was sitting over my breakfast before starting for work, when I heard a sound, and knew what it meant before there were shrieks in the village, and women running out and making for the pit's mouth a quarter of a mile away. I tell you I turned sick with horror, for I knew that at least twenty men would be down on