

petition ; but he had not, during the months it was in process of erection, any idea of the deeper wrong that was to follow.

But it was bad enough to see the edifice growing as rapidly as unstinted money and labour could produce it ; and it soon became an almost intolerable eyesore to him. Aske never appeared in the new enterprise. A man from Halifax, called Sykes, was the nominal proprietor ; but Burley knew well whose money and power was behind him. And Sykes, too, was a blustering, hectoring fellow, whose manner was especially offensive to Jonathan—a very Mordecai passing his mill-gates.

When the new mill-building was completed it was filled with machinery and looms of the best description ; and such high wages were offered to first-class hands as speedily robbed Burley of most of his fine workers. Almost every day there was some irritation of this kind ; and the rivalry between the two masters—Burley and Sykes—soon began to infect all their hands ; so that the “letting out” every night was a turbulent scene of ill words, too often ending in blows. And it was not many weeks before a spirit of hatred and quarrelling entered every cottage, and in some cases separated friends and families.

At this point Aske's real motive was manifested. One morning a large body of men were observed at work upon the stream. They were engaged in building a lock. Burley was naturally very indignant. Sykes, in his insolent way, said “their machinery would at times need more water than the ordinary ‘run’ would afford ; and in such circumstances they would be obliged to ‘lock’ the water for a supply.”

“That will allow you at any time to shut off my supply of water, and so virtually to stop my mill. It is an outrage ! You have no right to ‘lock’ a mill-stream,” said Burley, passionately, “and I will appeal to the law to protect me.”

“And if the law orders me to remove the ‘lock’ I will do it. Not till,” answered Sykes, turning on his heel indifferently.

But going to law was a remedy as bad as the disease ; and Burley began to perceive that it was exactly what Aske had been driving him to. For Aske knew well that he had no right to “lock” a mill-stream ; and he knew also that the law would not sustain him in such an act ; but all the same, during the trial of the case—which might be indefinitely prolonged—Burley could be effectually and permanently crippled in business.

Months of terrible anxiety followed. Burley, deprived of reliable water-power, found himself unable to fill orders with any degree of punctuality. The prosecution of his case took all his spare time and money. He was going to financial ruin at a frightful pace. Every small loss paved the way for a great one ; and he foresaw that when his verdict was gained he would be a ruined man. True, he could then sue Aske for damages ; but weary and impoverished, how would he be able to go through another prolonged litigation.