

*George.* It's better than sulking, though.

*Jem.* So people say. I can't see it. I don't think one can reckon in that way with sins. They are all bad, and temper in a man is dreadful. Yet the hasty folk as good as tell you that temper is noble and sulkiness mean. As if a sin could be anything but downright bad.

*George.* Well, but a sulky fellow is a sort of brute, isn't he? Holds his tongue and looks black all day.

*Jem.* While the passionate fellow conducts himself like a wild beast.

*George.* Oh come, come, Jem! That's hard language.

*Jem.* So it is. But, George, sulkiness and passion are own brothers. Sulkiness doesn't go to the lengths of passion, I'll confess. I've known passion turn into the blind fury of murder. Temper in a man is an awful thing.

*George.* Aye, in a man. But then a grown-up man should know how to hold himself in.

*Jem.* If he hasn't begun to 'hold himself in,' as you call it, while he is little he has a poor chance as he grows bigger. A passionate man is an awful creature in a house.

*George.* You may say so. I have a cousin married to one. He's got no other fault as far as one can see, but the children go in terror of him when he looks black.

*Jem.* Does he drink?

*George.* Not a bit of it. It's just passion. Over in a minute, but that minute's a downright bad one. He's ashamed of himself directly after, but he says he's too old to mend now.

*Jem.* And Sammy's too young! What is the exact age, George, for beginning to cure a bad temper?

*George.* Now you're at your jokes, Jem.

*Jem.* I don't call it a joking matter.

*George.* No, no, you're right there.

*Jem.* Did you ever hear Mrs. Macdonough tell how her brother was killed in the Indian mutiny?

*George.* By those heathen savages, I suppose. I knew she had a brother killed out there.

*Jem.* Not a bit of it. While, as you say, the Indian savages were murdering all the English they could get hold of, two Christian men, comrades in the same regiment, quarrelled inside the fort at Lucknow, and the one shot the other dead—Mrs. Macdonough's brother was the victim. He was riding-master of the 7th Cavalry Regiment, and a most respectable man.

*George.* That was dreadful. What did they quarrel about?

*Jem.* They were bosom friends, it seems. But the wives of the two had words one morning, just about the drawing up of a curtain, I've heard tell, and Richard, as Mrs. Macdonough calls him, said a cutting thing to the other man, who had a temper, and in a minute the deed was done, and one man lay a corpse.

*George.* The women would fret over that, I should think.

*Jem.* Yes, they were nigh distracted, especially the murderer's wife, for she was a violent tempered woman too, and excited her husband into his fit of fury.

*George.* Was the man hung?

*Jem.* Poor chap—no. They say he lay hiding his face all that day speechless and wretched. His temper had taken a life and ruined two families. No one could get a word out of him.

*George.* What was the end of it all?

*Jem.* Perhaps as good an end as could be. In those days of the siege they could not bring any man to justice, whatever his crime. Men, women, and children were all shut up together in the fort at Lucknow surrounded by the mutineers, and hardly able to keep them at bay. The unhappy murderer had to take his turn to defend the fort with the rest. He behaved most gallantly, they say, but very soon his lifeless body was brought in—he was shot dead at his post by the enemy.

*George.* Well, it was best so, as you say. He could never be happy again after killing his friend.

*Jem.* A moment's indulgence of temper—that was all.

*George.* I hope Sammy will cure himself in time. I'll try and keep him in. I