

Becky met him at the door, and read a trouble in his face.

"What is it, Davy?" she asked, catching hold of his arm.

"Oh, Becky, lassy, they say as Tom is a thief!" And then he passed in and stood by Tom's side by the hearth.

"I'd best be going, I suppose," Tom said. But David laid his hand on his shoulder. "Tom," he said, "I won't ask you if it's true or false, only stay with us. Don't leave your home."

And so Tom stayed moping in the chimney corner, shunning every one. Mr. Horn came in now and then and talked to him, trying to lead him to speak of his temptation and fall, and to bring him to repentance, but he only met with sullen silence.

David always treated Tom as he had ever done, and Becky did the same for David's sake, but she was not sorry when one day a letter came for Tom, and he announced that he had heard of a place, and that he must go the next day. She was glad, even though the little store they had begun to lay by had to be spent to pay his expenses to London, where his new employment lay. What that employment was, neither David or Becky rightly understood, but they both believed it would turn out well, and when soon after they had a cheerful letter from Tom describing his London doings, they both were hopeful and glad, and only Mr. Horn distrusted Tom's bright schemes for the future.

And Mr. Horn's forebodings proved true, for before six months were past a letter came from Tom begging David to send him some help, as he was in great need and did not know what he should do unless they could help him. Again the little store was emptied, and though it gave Becky's heart just a short pang to see their hard-earned savings go, still she did not say a word, for she knew that David's heart was sore for Tom. Then there was a long silence, and then another letter, saying he had been ill, and was very poor; and again the store was emptied. And so matters went on for more than two years, and Becky began to think that the little money box getting heavy, was a sure sign that one of Tom's neatly written begging letters was coming, but still in her love for David she never said a word.

With the exception of their anxieties for Tom, things had gone pleasantly with those two. And now to add to their joy, there was a cradle by the hearth, with a blue-eyed baby in it who promised to be a second David, and who was called Job.

More than two years had passed since Tom left Westbeach, when one day late in April, David was just going out after their simple, noontide meal, and Becky was busy with her household work, when a sudden exclamation from David made her look round.

"Why, Becky!" he cried, "whoever do you think is coming up the street? It's our Tom, as we have not seen these two years!"

But there was no answering joy in Becky's face. "Davy, old man," she said, "Davy."

Her voice stopped him just as he was going to shout to Tom, who was yet at some distance, and he turned again into the house.

"Ay, Becky?" She took hold of his arm and drew him to the cradle, where the two-months-old baby slept so quietly. "Davy," she said, and there was a tremor in her voice. "I'd never have