

"Yes, sir; and the coffee-pot and basin and jug too," I replied.

"Hah! yes."

It was very awkward, for there was only one teacup and saucer, and I did not like to ring for another; so I filled that and passed it to Mr. Rowle, who sat smoking all the while.

"Thankye!" he said, nodding; and he was about to pour it into the saucer when he stopped short. "Hallo!" he said, "where's your'n?"

"I—I have not got another cup," I stammered.

"Worse disasters at sea!" he said. "Never mind; look ye here, I'll have the saucer and you have the cup," and pouring out the tea, he passed me back the cup, and the meal went on.

For the first time since his arrival Mr. Rowle laid down his pipe, and after hewing off a great piece of bread, he proceeded to cut it up in little cubes, all six sides of which he buttered before he ate them, while I contented myself with a modest slice or two, for my appetite was gone.

It was a doleful meal, but he seemed to enjoy it, and after partaking of five or six saucerfuls he nodded at me again, took up and refilled his pipe, and then walked back to the study, where he sat smoking till ten o'clock, when he went up to bed.

I'm afraid that I was a very ignorant boy. Perhaps not so in the ordinary sense of the word ignorant, for I had been fairly educated, and besides being pretty forward with my Latin, I could have written a letter or carried on a decent conversation in French; but, living in a secluded part of the country, I was very ignorant about the matters of ordinary every-day life, and I found it hard to understand how it was that Mr. Blakeford, the lawyer, should be allowed to do just as he pleased in our old house.

The terrible misfortunes that had come, one after the other, had seemed to stun me and take away my breath. One day we seemed to be all so happy together, and I was sitting reading to my invalid mother in the pleasant old room opening on to the lawn. And the next day I was holding my throbbing head in my bedroom, after crying till it ached as if about to split, while I tried again and again to believe that it was all some dreadful dream, that my father had been carried home dead, killed in an instant by a fall from his horse, and that my mother lay beside him in the darkened room, silent too in death, for the shock had been too great for her delicate frame.

All that followed seemed to me dream-like and strange—the darkened house and the rustling sounds of the black dresses that were made for the servants; my own new black things and stiff black hat; the terrible stillness of the place, and the awe with which I used to gaze at the closed room upstairs; and lastly that dreadful darkest day when I was the companion of Mr. Blakeford