

CHAPTER II

FATHER AND SON

Upcott's father, to come straight to the point, was a loathly drunkard; and his mother was a saint of that order whose martyrdom is the smiling martyrdom of life.

The churches were then full of petty bickerings; and around the Book then, as always, was seething all manner of talk quite by the point. One fancies, reading the records of the time, that to the disputants there must have come moments when, withdrawn from the tumult and pondering alone, they looked inwards on themselves with doubting, even with sardonic eye. But Mrs. Upcott, thanks to her clarity of mind and capacity for retaining hold of the main issue, was little troubled with what one might call party-religion. With her melting grey eyes she read the old heart-finding sentences at dusk, by the low lamplight, when Upcott lay snoring in bed, the pigs grunting in the sty; and there would be a peaceful gleam on her face as she read. That gleam of calm would fade suddenly at times, the eyes harden, the form, once lissome, be drawn up stately, in a blending of pain and dignity at a grunt of part-awakening in the room above and a thick voice as of a somnabulist crying out, "Moll!

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