

HELEN WITH THE HIGH HAND

CHAPTER I

BEGINNING OF THE IDYLL

IN the Five Towns human nature is reported to be so hard that you can break stones on it. Yet sometimes it softens, and then we have one of our rare idylls of which we are very proud, while pretending not to be. The soft and delicate South would possibly not esteem highly our idylls, as such. Nevertheless they are our idylls, idyllic for us, and reminding us, by certain symptoms, that though we never cry there is concealed somewhere within our bodies a fount of happy tears.

The town park is an idyll in the otherwise prosaic municipal history of the Borough of Bursley, which previously had never got nearer to romance than a Turkish bath. It was once waste ground covered with horrible rubbish-heaps, and made dangerous by the imperfectly-protected shafts of disused coal-pits.