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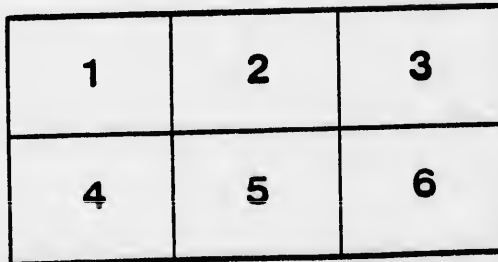
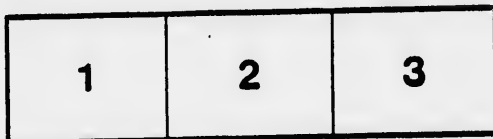
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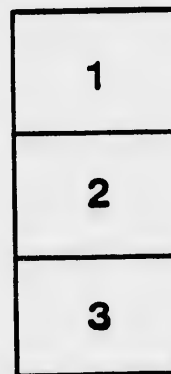
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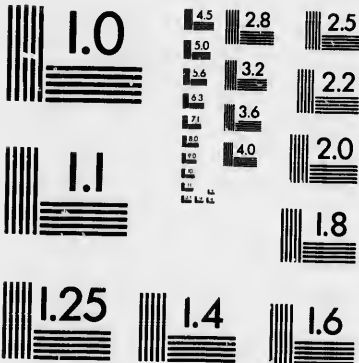
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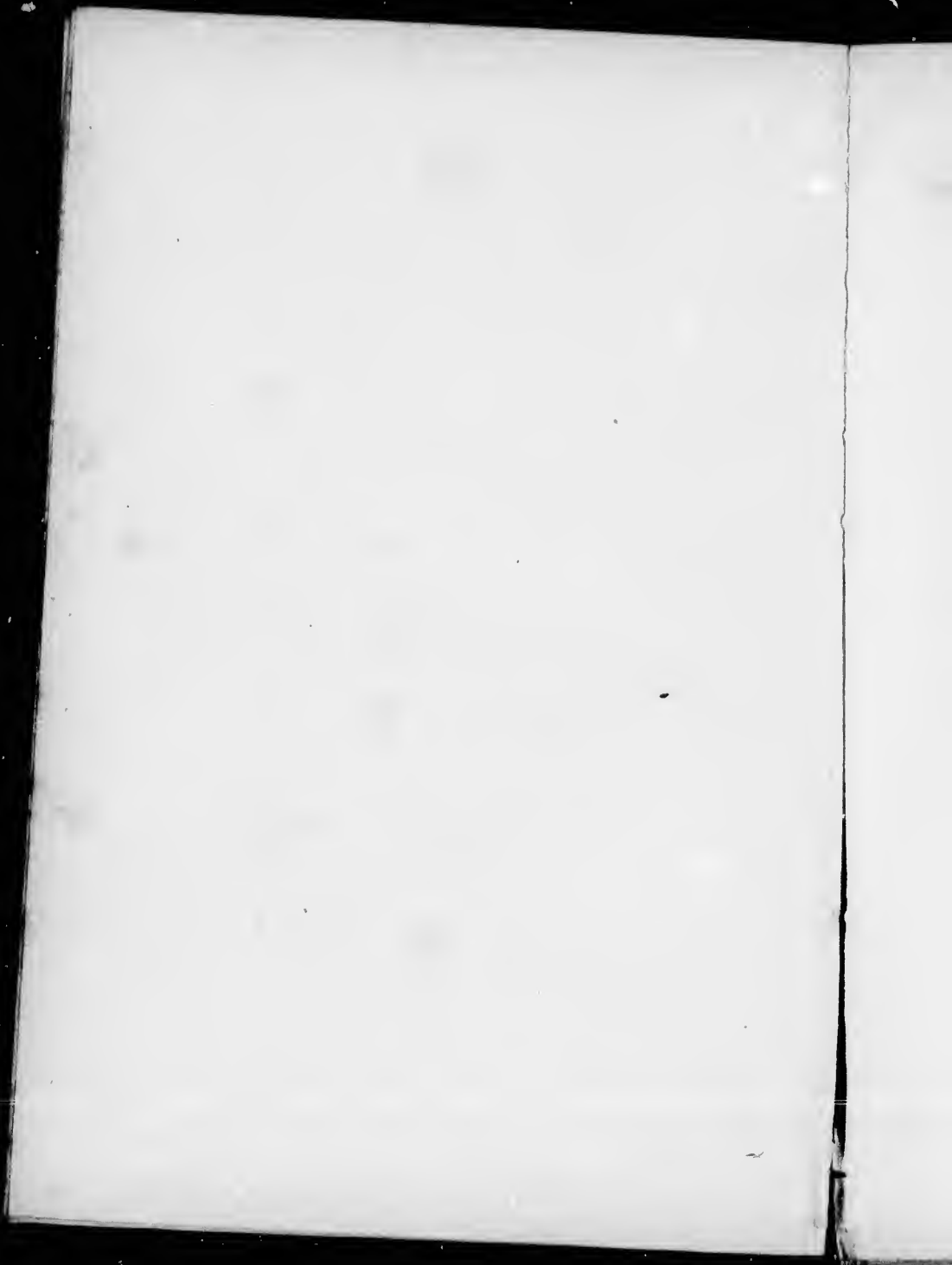
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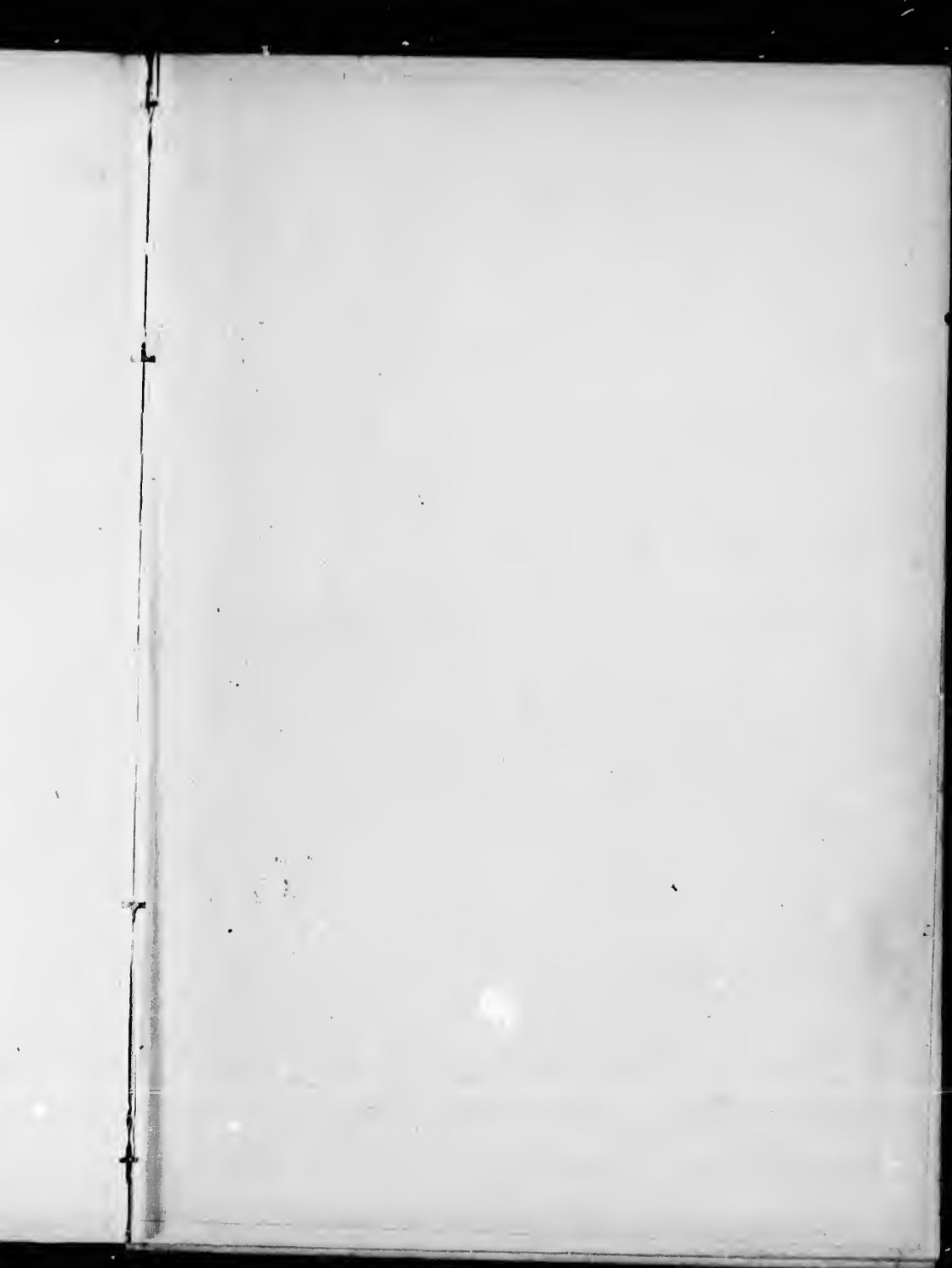
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“HAWORTH’S.”







CHRISTIAN MURDOCH.

"HAWORTH'S."

BY

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT,

AUTHOR OF "THAT LASS O' LOWRIE'S."



TORONTO:
BELFORDS, CLARKE & CO.
1879.

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"HAWORTH'S."

CHAPTER I.

TWENTY YEARS.

TWENTY years ago ! Yes, twenty years ago this very day, and there were men among them who remembered it. Only two, however, and these were old men whose day was passed and who would soon be compelled to give up work. Naturally upon this occasion these two were the centre figures in the group of talkers who were discussing the topic of the hour.

"Aye," said old Tipton, "I 'member it as well as if it wur yesterday, fur aw it's twenty year' sin'. Eh ! but it wur cowl ! Th' cowdest neet i' th' winter, an' th' winter wur a bad un. Th' snow wur two foot deep. Theer wur a big rush o' work, an' we'd had to keep th' foires goin' arter medneet. Theer wur a chap workin' then by th' name o' Bob Latham,—he's dead long sin'—an' he went to th' foundry door to look out. Yo' know how some chaps is about seein' how cowl it is, or how hot, or how heavy th' rain's comin' down. Well, he wur one o' them soart, an' he mun go an' tak' a look out at th' snow.

"'Coom in, tha foo',' sez I to him. 'Whatten tha stickin' tha thick yed out theer fur, as if it wur midsummer, i'stead o' being cowl enow to freeze th' tail off a brass jackass. Coom in wi' tha.'

"'Aye,' he sez, a-chatterin' his teeth, 'it is cowl, sure-ly. It's enow to stiffen a mon.'

" 'I wish it ud stiffen thee,' I sez, 'so as we mought set thee up as a monymment at th' front o' th' 'Sylum.'"

"An' then aw at onct I heard him gie a jump an' a bit o' a yell, like, under his breath. 'God-a-moighty!' he sez.

"Summat in' th' way he said it it soart o' wakkened me.

" 'What's up?' I sez.

" 'Coom here,' sez he. 'Theer's a dead lad here.'

"An' when I getten to him, sure enow I thowt he wur reet. Drawed up i' a heep nigh th' door theer *wur* a lad lyin' on th' snow, an' th' stiff look on him mowt ha' gi'en ony mon a turn.

"Latham wur bendin' ower him, wi' his teeth chatterin'.

" 'Blast thee!' I sez, 'why dost na tha lift him?'

"Betwixt us we did lift him, an' carry him into th' Works an' laid him down nigh one o' the furnaces, an' th' fellys coom crowdin' round to look at him. He wur a lad about nine year' owd, an' strong built; but he looked more than half clemmed, an' arter we'st rubbed him a good bit an' getten him warmed enow to coom round i' a manner, th' way he set up an' stared round were summat queer.

" 'Mesters,' he sez, hoarse an' shaky, 'ha' ony on yo' getten a bit o' bread?'

"Bob Latham's missus had put him up summat to eat, an' he browt it an' gie it to him. Well, th' little chap a'most snatched it, an' crammed it into his mouth i' great mouthfuls. His honds trembled so he could scarce howd th' meat an' bread, an' in a bit us as wur standin' lookin' on seed him soart o' choke, as if he wur goin' to cry; but he swallyed it down, an' did na.

" 'I havn't had nowt to eat i' a time,' sez he.

" 'How long?' sez I.

"Seemt like he thowt it ower a bit afore he answered, an' then he sez:

" 'I think it mun ha' been four days.'

" 'Wheer are yo' fro?' one chap axed.

" 'I coom a long way,' he sez. 'I've bin on th' road three week.' An' then he looks up sharp. 'I run away fro' th' Union,' he sez.

"That wur th' long an' short on it—he had th' pluck to run away fro' th' Union, an' he'd had th' pluck to stond out agen clemmin' an' freezin' until flesh an' blood ud howd out no longer, an' he'd fell down at the foundry door.

" 'I seed th' loight o' th' furnaces,' he sez, 'an' I tried to run; but I went blind an' fell down. I thowt,' he sez, as cool as a cucumber, 'as I wur decin'.

"Well, we kep him aw neet an' took him to th' mester i' th' mornin', an' th' mester gie him a place, an' he stayed. An' he's bin i' th' foundry fro' that day to this, an' how he's worked an' gotten on yo' see for yoresens—fro' been' at ivvery one's beck an' call to buyin' out Flixton an' settin' up for hissen. It's the 'Haworth Iron Works' fro' to-day on, an' he will na mak' a bad mester, eyther."

"Na, he will na," commented another of the old ones. "He's a pretty rough chap, but he'll do—will Jem Haworth."

There was a slight confused movement in the group.

"Here he cooms," exclaimed an outsider.

The man who entered the door-way—a strongly-built fellow, whose handsome clothes sat rather ill on his somewhat uncouth body—made his way through the crowd with small ceremony. He met the glances of the workmen with a rough nod, and went straight to the managerial desk. But he did not sit down; he stood up, facing those who waited as if he meant to dispose of the business in hand as directly as possible.

"Well chaps," he said, "here we are."

A slight murmur, as of assent, ran through the room.

"Aye, mester," they said, "here we are."

"Well," he said, "you know why, I suppose. We're taking a fresh start, and I've something to say to you. I've had my say here, for some time; but I've not had my way, and now

the time's come when I *can* have it. Hang me, but I'm going to have the biggest place in England, and the best place, too. 'Haworth's sha'n't be second to none. I've set my mind on that. I said I'd stand here some day,"—with a blow on the desk,—“and here I am. I said I'd make my way, and I've done it. From to-day on, this here's 'Haworth's,' and to show you I mean to start fair and square, if there's a chap ere that's got a grievance, let that chap step out and speak his mind to Jem Haworth himself. Now's his time.” And he sat down.

There was another stir and murmur, this time rather of consultation; then one of them stepped forward.

“Mester,” he said, “I'm to speak fur 'em.”

Haworth nodded.

“What I've gotten to say,” said the man, “is said easy. Them as thowt they'd gotten grievances is willin' to leave the settlin' on 'em to Jem Haworth.”

“That's straight enough,” said Haworth. “Let 'em stick to it and there's not a chap among 'em sha'n't have his chance. Go into Greyson's room, lads, and drink luck to 'Haworth's.' Tipton and Harrison, you wait a bit.”

Tipton and Harrison lingered with some degree of timidity. By the time the room had emptied itself, Haworth seemed to have fallen into a reverie. He leaned back in his chair, his hands in his pockets, and stared gloomily before him. The room had been silent five minutes before he aroused himself with a start. Then he leaned forward and beckoned to the two, who came and stood before him.

“You two were in the place when I came,” he said. “You”—to Tipton—“were the fellow as lifted me from the snow.”

“Aye, mester,” was the answer, “twenty year' ago, to-neet.”

“The other fellow——”

“Dead! Eh! Long sin'. Ivvery chap as wur theer, dead an' gone, but me an' him,” with a jerk toward his comrade.

Haworth put his hand in his vest pocket and drew forth a crisp piece of paper, evidently placed there for a purpose.

"Here," he said with some awkwardness, "divide that between you."

"Betwixt us two!" stammered the old man. "It's a ten-pun-note, mester!"

"Yes," with something like shamefacedness. "I used to say to myself when I was a youngster that every chap who was in the Works that night, should have a five-pound note to-day. Get out, old lads, and get as drunk as you please. I've kept my word. But—" his laugh breaking off in the middle—"I wish there'd been more of you to keep it up together."

Then they were gone, chuckling in senile delight over their good luck, and he was left alone. He glanced round the room—a big, handsome one, well filled with massive office furniture, and yet wearing the usual empty, barren look.

"It's taken twenty years," he said, "but I've done it. It's *done*—and yet there isn't as much of it as I used to think there would be."

He rose from his chair and went to the window to look out, rather impelled by restlessness than any motive. The prospect, at least, could not have attracted him. The place was closed in by tall and dingy houses, whose slate roofs shone with the rain which drizzled down through the smoky air. The ugly yard was wet and had a deserted look, the only living object which caught his eye was the solitary figure of a man who stood waiting at the iron gates.

At the sight of this man, he started backward with an exclamation.

"The devil take the chap!" he said. "There he is again."

He took a turn across the room, but he came back again and looked out once more, as if he found some irresistible fascination in the sight of the frail, shabby clad figure.

"Yes," he said, "It's him, sure enough. I never saw another fellow with the same, done-for look. I wonder what he wants."

He went to the door and opening it spoke to a man who chanced to be passing.

"Floxham, come in here," he said. Floxham was a well-oiled and burly fellow, plainly fresh from the engine-room. He entered without ceremony, and followed his master to the window. Haworth pointed to the man at the gate.

"There's a chap," he said, "that I've been ruuning up against, here and there, for the last two months. The fellow seems to spend his time wandering up and down the streets. I'm hanged if he don't make me think of a ghost. He goes against the grain with me somehow. Do you know who he is, and what's up with him?"

Floxham glanced toward the gate-way, and then nodded his head dryly.

"Aye," he answered. "He's the inventin' chap as has bin thirty year' at work at some contrapshun, an' hasn't browt it to a head yet. He lives i' our street, an' me an' my missis hes been noticin' him fur a good bit. He'll noan finish th' thing he's at. He's on his last legs now. He took the contrapshun to 'Merica thirty year' ago, when he first gotten th' idea into his head, an' he browt it back a bit sin' a'most i' the same fix he took it. Me an' my misses think he's a bit soft i' the yed."

Haworth pushed by him to get nearer the window. A slight moisture started out upon his forehead.

"Thirty year'!" he exclaimed. "By the Lord Harry!"

There might have been something in his excitement which had its effect upon the man who stood outside. He seemed, as it were to awaken slowly from a fit of lethargy. He glanced up at the window, and moved slowly forward.

"He's made up his mind to come in," said Floxham.

"What does he want?" said Haworth, with a sense of physical uneasiness. "Confound the fellow!" trying to shake off the feeling with a laugh. "What does he want with me—to day?"

"I can out go an' turn him back," said Floxham.

"No," answered Haworth. "You can go back to your work. I'll hear what he has to say. I've naught else to do just now."

Floxham left him, and he went back to the big arm-chair behind the table. He sat down, and turned over some papers, not rid of the uneasiness even when the door opened, and his visitor came in. He was a tall, slender man who stooped and was narrow-chested. He was gray, hollow-eyed and haggard. He removed his shabby hat and stood before the table a second, in silence.

"Mr. Haworth?" he said, in a gentle, absent-minded voice. "They told me this was Mr. Haworth's room."

"Yes," he answered, "I'm Haworth."

"I want—" a little hoarsely, and faltering—"to get some work to do. My name is Murdoch. I've spent the last thirty years in America, but I'm a Lancashire man. I went to America on business—which has not been successful—yet. I—I have worked here before,"—with a glance around him,— "and I should like to work here again. I did not think it would be necessary, but—that doesn't matter. Perhaps it will only be temporary. I must get work."

In the last sentence his voice faltered more than ever. He seemed suddenly to awaken and bring himself back to his first idea, as if he had not intended to wander from it.

"I—I must get work," he repeated.

The effect he produced upon the man he appealed to was peculiar. Jem Haworth almost resented his frail appearance. He felt it an uncomfortable thing to confront just at this hour of his triumph. He had experienced the same sensation, in a less degree, when he rose in the morning and looked out of his window upon the murky sky and falling rain. He would almost have given a thousand pounds for clear, triumphant sunshine.

And yet, in spite of this, he was not quite as brusque as usual when he made his answer.

"I've heard of you," he said. "You've had ill luck."

Stephen Murdoch shifted his hat from hand to hand.

"I don't know," he replied, slowly. "I've not called it that yet. The end has been slow, but I think it's sure. It will come some——"

Haworth made a rough gesture.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "Haven't you given the thing up yet?"

Murdoch fell back a pace, and stared at him in a stunned way.

"Given it up!" he repeated. "Yet?"

"Look here!" said Haworth. "You'd better do it, if you hav'n't. Take my advice, and have done with it. You're not a young chap, and if a thing's a failure, after thirty year's work——" he stopped, because he saw the man trembling nervously. "Oh, I didn't mean to take the pluck out of you," he said bluntly, a moment later. "You must have had plenty of it to begin with, egad, or you'd never have stood it this long."

"I don't know that it was pluck,"—still quivering. "I've lived on it so long that it would not give *me* up. I think that's it."

Haworth dashed off a couple of lines on a slip of paper, and tossed it to him.

"Take that to Greyson," he said, "and you'll get your work, and if you have anything to complain of, come to me."

Murdoch took the paper, and held it hesitatingly.

"I—perhaps I ought not to have asked for it to-day," he said, nervously. "I'm not a business man, and I didn't think of it. I came in because I saw you. I'm going to London to-morrow, and shall not be back for a week."

"That's all right," said Haworth. "Come then."

He was not sorry to see his visitor turn away, after uttering a few simple words of thanks. It would be a relief to see the door close after him. But when it had closed, to his dis-

comfiture it opened again. The thin, poorly clad figure reappeared.

"I heard in the town," said the man, his cheek flushing faintly, "of what has happened here to-day. Twenty years have brought you better luck than thirty have brought me."

"Yes," answered Haworth, "my luck's been good enough, as luck goes."

"It seems almost a folly"—falling into the meditative—"for me to wish you good luck in the future." And then, pulling himself together again as before: "It is a folly; but I wish it, nevertheless. Good luck to you!"

The door closed, and he was gone.

CHAPTER II.

THIRTY YEARS.

A LITTLE later, there stood at a window in one of the cheapest of the respectable streets, a woman whom the neighbors had become used to seeing there. She was a small person, with a repressed and watchful look in her eyes, and she was noticeable, also, to the Lancashire mind, for a certain slightly foreign air, not easily described. It was in consequence of inquiries made concerning this foreign air, that the rumor had arisen that she was a "'Merican," and it was possibly a result of this rumor that she was regarded by the inhabitants of the street with a curiosity not unmingled with awe.

"Aye," said one honest matron. "Hoo's a 'Merican, fur my mester heerd it fro' th' landlord. Eh! I would like to ax her summat about th' Blacks an' th' Indians."

But it was not easy to attain the degree of familiarity warranting the broaching of subjects so delicate and truly "'Merican." The stranger and her husband lived a simple and secluded life. It was said the woman had never been

known to go out ; it seemed her place to stand or sit at the window and watch for the man when he left the house on one of his mysterious errands in company with the wooden case he carried by its iron handle.

This morning she waited as usual, though the case had not gone out,—rather to the disappointment of those interested, whose conjectures concerning its contents were varied and ingenious. When, at last, the tall, stooping figure turned the corner, she went to the door and stood in readiness to greet its crossing the threshold.

Stephen Murdoch looked down at her with a kindly, absent smile.

"Thank you, Kitty," he said. "You are always here, my dear."

There was a narrow, hard, horse-hair sofa in the small room into which they passed, and he went to it and laid down upon it, panting a little in an exhausted way, a hectic red showing itself on his hollow cheeks.

"Everything is ready, Kitty?" he said at last.

"Yes, all ready."

He lay and looked at the fire, still breathing shortly.

"I never was as certain of it before," he said. "I have thought I was certain, but—I never felt as I do now. And yet—I don't know what made me do it—I went into Haworth's this morning and asked for—for work."

His wife dropped the needle she was holding.

"For work !" she said.

"Yes—yes," a little hastily. "I was there and saw Haworth at a window, and there have been delays so often that it struck me I might as well—not exactly depend on it——" He broke off and buried his face in his hands. "What am I saying?" he cried. "It sounds as if I did not believe in it."

His wife drew her chair nearer to him. She was used to the task of consoling him ; it had become a habit. She spoke in an even, unemotional voice.

"When Hilary comes——" she began.

"It will be all over then," he said, "one way or the other. He will be here when I come back."

"Yes."

"I may have good news for him," he said. "I don't see"—faltering afresh—"how it can be otherwise. Only I am so used to discouragement that—that I can't see the thing fairly. It has been—a long time, Kitty."

"This man in London," she said, "can tell you the actual truth about it?"

"He is the first mechanic and inventor in England," he answered, his eye sparkling feverishly. "He is a genius. If he says it is a success, it is one."

The woman rose, and going to the fire bent down to stir it. She lingered over it for a moment or so before she came back.

"When the lad comes," he was saying, as if to himself, "we shall have news for him."

Thirty years before, he had reached America, a gentle, unpractical Lancashire man, with a frail physique and empty pockets. He had belonged in his own land to the better class of mechanics; he had a knack of invention which somehow had never as yet brought forth any decided results. He had done one or two things which had gained him the reputation among his employers of being "a clever fellow," but they had always been things which had finally slipped into stronger or shrewder hands, and left his own empty. But at last there had come to him what seemed a new and wonderful thought. He had labored with it in secret, he had lain awake through long nights brooding over it in the darkness.

And then some one had said to him:

"Why don't you try America? America's the place for a thinking, inventing chap like you. It's fellow's like you who are appreciated in a new country. Capitalists are not so slow in America. Why don't you carry your traps out there?"

It was more a suggestion of boisterous good-fellowship than anything else, but it awakened new fancies in Stephen Murdoch's mind. He had always cherished vaguely grand visions of the New World, and they were easily excited.

"I only wonder I never thought of it," he said to himself.

He landed on the strange shore with high hopes in his breast, and a little unperfected model in his shabby trunk.

This was thirty years ago, and to-day he was in Lancashire again, in his native town, with the same little model among his belongings.

During the thirty years, interval he had lived an unsettled, unsuccessful life. He had labored faithfully at his task, but he had not reached the end which had been his aim. Sometimes he had seemed very near it, but it had always evaded him. He had drifted here and there bearing his work with him, earning a scant livelihood by doing anything chance threw in his way. It had always been a scant livelihood,—though after the lapse of eight years, in one of his intervals of hopefulness, he had married. On the first night they spent in their new home he had taken his wife into a little bare room, set apart from the rest, and had shown her his model.

"I think a few weeks will finish it," he said.

The earliest recollections of their one child centered themselves round the small room and its contents. It was the one touch of romance and mystery in their narrow, simple life. The few spare hours the struggle for daily bread left the man were spent there; sometimes he even stole hours from the night, and yet the end was always one step further. His frail body grew frailer, his gentle temperament more excitable, he was feverishly confident and utterly despairing by turns. It was in one of his hours of elation that his mind turned again to his old home. He was sure at last that a few days' work would complete all, and then only friends were needed.

"England is the place, after all," he said. "They are more steady there, even if they are not so sanguine,—and there are

men in Lancashire I can rely upon. We'll try Old England once again."

The little money hard labor and scant living had laid away for an hour of need, they brought with them. Their son had remained to dispose of their few possessions. Between this son and the father there existed a strong affection, and Stephen Murdoch had done his best by him.

"I should like the lad," he used to say, "to have a fairer chance than I had. I want him to have what I have lacked."

As he lay upon the horse-hair sofa he spoke of him to his wife.

"There are not many like him," he said. "He'll make his way. I've sometimes thought that may be——" But he did not finish the sentence, the words died away on his lips and he lay—perhaps thinking over them as he looked at the fire.

CHAPTER III.

"NOT FINISHED."

THE next morning he went upon his journey, and a few days later the son came. He was a tall young fellow with a dark, strongly cut face, deep-set black eyes and an unconventional air. Those who had been wont to watch his father, watched him in his turn with quite as much interest. He seemed to apply himself to the task of exploring the place at once. He went out a great deal and in all sorts of weather. He even presented himself at "Haworth's," and making friends with Floxham got permission to go through the place and look at the machinery. His simple directness of speech at once baffled and softened Floxham, to whom the general rudeness of ordinary youth was obnoxious as it is to every elderly and orthodox Briton.

"My name's Murdoch," he had said. "I'm an American

and I'm interested in mechanics. If it isn't against your rules I should like to see your machinery."

Floxham pushed his cap off his forehead and looked him over.

"Well, I'm dom'd," he remarked.

It had struck him at first that this might be "check." And then he had recognized that it was not.

Murdoch looked slightly bewildered.

"If there is any objection ——" he began.

"Well, there is na," said Floxham. "Come on in." And he cut the matter short by turning into the door.

"Did any o' yu' chaps see that felly as coom to look at th' machinery?" he said afterward to his comrades. "He's fro' 'Merica, an' danged if he has na more head-fillin' than you'd think fur. He goes round wi' his hands i' his pockits lookin' loike a foo', an' axin' questions as ud stump an owd un. He's that inventin' chap's lad. I dunnot go much wi' inventions mysen, but th' young chap's noan sich a foo' as he looks."

Between mother and son but little had been said on the subject which reigned supreme in the mind of each. It had never been their habit to speak freely on the matter. On the night of Hilary's arrival, as they sat together, the woman had said :

"He went away three days ago. He will be back at the end of the week. He hoped to have good news for you."

They had said little beyond this, but both had sat silent for some time afterward, and the conversation had become desultory and lagged somewhat until they separated for the night.

The week ended with fresh gusts of wind and heavy rains. Stephen Murdoch came home in a storm. On the day fixed for his return, his wife scarcely left her seat at the window for an hour. She sat looking out at the driving rain with a pale and rigid face ; when the night fell and she rose to close the shutters, Hilary saw that her hands shook.

She made the small room as bright as possible, and set the

evening meal upon the table and then sat down and waited again by the fire, cowering a little over it, but not speaking.

"His being detained is not a bad sign," said Hilary.

Half an hour later they both started from their seats at once. There was a loud summons at the door. It was Hilary who opened it, his mother following closely.

A great gust of wind blew the rain in upon them, and Stephen Murdoch, wet and storm-beaten, stepped in from the outer darkness, carrying the wooden case in his hands.

He seemed scarcely to see them. He made his way past them and into the lighted room with an uncertain step. The light appeared to dazzle him. He went to the sofa weakly and threw himself upon it; he was trembling like a leaf; he had aged ten years.

"I—I——" And then he looked up at them as they stood before him waiting. "There is naught to say," he cried out, and burst into wild, hysterical weeping, like that of a woman.

In obedience to a sign from his mother, Hilary left the room. When after the lapse of half an hour, he returned, all was quiet. His father lay upon the sofa with closed eyes, his mother sat near him. He did not rise nor touch food, and only spoke once during the evening. Then he opened his eyes and turned them upon the case which still stood where he had placed it.

"Take it away," he said in a whisper. "Take it away."

The next morning Hilary went to Floxham.

"I want work," he said. "Do you think I can get it here?"

"What soart dost tha want?" asked the engineer, not too encouragingly. "Th' gentlemanly soart as tha con do wi' kid gloves an' an eye-glass on?"

"No," answered Murdoch, "not that sort."

Floxham eyed him keenly.

"Would tha tak' owt as was offert thee?" he demanded.

"I think I would."

"Aw reet then! I'll gie thee a chance. Coom tha wi' me to th' engine room, an' see how long tha'lt stick to it."

It was very ordinary work he was given to do, but he seemed to take quite kindly to it; in fact the manner in which he applied himself to the rough tasks which fell to his lot gave rise to no slight dissatisfaction among his fellow-workmen, and caused him to be regarded with small respect. He was usually a little ahead of the stipulated time, he had an equable temper, and yet, despite this and his civility, he seemed often more than half oblivious of the existence of those around him. A highly flavored joke did not awaken him to enthusiasm, and perhaps chiefest among his failings was noted the fact that he had no predilection for "sixpenny," and at his midday meal, which he frequently brought with him and ate in any convenient corner, he sat drinking cold water and eating his simple fare over a book.

"Th' chap is na more than haaf theer," was the opinion generally expressed.

Since the night of his return from his journey, Stephen Murdoch had been out no more. The neighbors watched for him in vain. The wooden case stood unopened in his room,—he had never spoken of it. Through the long hours of the day he lay upon the sofa, either dozing or in silent wakefulness, and at length instead of upon the sofa he lay upon the bed, not having strength to rise.

About three months after he had taken his place at Haworth's, Hilary came home one evening to find his mother waiting for him at the door. She shed no tears, there was in her face only a kind of hopeless terror.

"He has sent me out of the room," she said. "He has been restless all day. He said he must be alone."

Hilary went upstairs. Opening the door he fell back a step. The model was in its old place on the work-table and near it stood a tall, gaunt, white figure.

His father turned toward him. He touched himself upon

the breast. "I always told myself," he said, incoherently and hoarsely, "that there was a flaw in it—that something was lacking. I have said that for thirty years, and believed the day would come when I should remedy the wrong. To-night I *know*. The truth has come to me at last. There was no remedy. The flaw was in me," touching his hollow chest,—
"in *me*. As I lay there I thought once that perhaps it was not real—that I had dreamed it all and might awake. I got up to see—to touch it. It is there! Good God!" as if a sudden terror grasped him. "Not finished!—and I——"

He fell into a chair and sank forward, his hand falling upon the model helplessly and unmeaningly.

Hilary raised him and laid his head upon his shoulder. He heard his mother at the door, and cried out loudly to her.

"Go back!" he said. "Go back! You must not come in."

CHAPTER IV.

JANEY BRIARLEY.

A WEEK later Hilary Murdoch returned from the Broxton grave-yard in a drizzling rain, and made his way to the bare, cleanly swept chamber upstairs.

Since the night on which he had cried out to his mother that she must not enter, the table at which the dead man had been wont to sit at work had been pushed aside. Some one had thrown a white cloth over it. Murdoch went to it and drew this cloth away. He stood and looked down at the little skeleton of wood and steel. It had been nothing but a curse from first to last, and yet it fascinated him. He found it hard to do the thing he had come to do.

"It is not finished," he said to the echoes of the empty room. "It—never will be."

He slowly replaced it in its case, and buried it out of sight

at the bottom of the trunk which, from that day forward, would stand unused and locked.

When he arose, after doing this, he unconsciously struck his hands together as he had seen grave diggers do when they brushed the damp soil away.

The first time Haworth saw his new hand he regarded him with small favor. In crossing the yard one day at noon, he came upon him disposing of his unceremonious midday meal and reading at the same time. He stopped to look at him.

"Who's that?" he asked one of the men.

The fellow grinned in amiable appreciation of the rough tone of the query.

"That's th' 'Merican," he answered. "An' a soft un he is."

"What's that he's reading?"

"Summat about engineerin', loike as not. That's his crack."

In the rush of his new plans and the hurry of the last few months, Haworth had had time to forget the man who had wished him "good luck," and whose pathetic figure had been a shadow upon the first glow of his triumph. He did not connect him at all with the young fellow before him. He turned away with a shrug of his burly shoulders.

"He doesn't look like an Englishman," he said. "He hasn't got backbone enough."

Afterward when the two accidentally came in contact, Haworth wasted few civil words. At times his domineering brusqueness excited Murdoch to wonder.

"He's a queer fellow, that Haworth," he said reflectingly to Floxham. "Sometimes I think he's out of humor with me."

With the twelve-year-old daughter of one of the workmen, who used to bring her father's dinner, the young fellow had struck up something of a friendship. She was the eldest of

twelve, a mature young person whose business-like air had attracted him.

She had assisted her mother in the rearing of her family from her third year, and had apparently done with the follies of youth. She was stunted with much nursing and her small face had a shrewd and careworn look. Murdoch's first advances she received with some distrust, but after a lapse of time they progressed fairly and, without any weak sentiment, were upon excellent terms.

One rainy day she came into the yard enveloped in a large shawl, evidently her mother's, and also evidently very much in her way. Her dinner-can, her beer-jug and her shawl were more than she could manage.

"Eh! I *am* in a mess," she said to Hilary, stopping at the door-way with a long-drawn breath. "I dunnot know which way to turn—what wi' th' beer and what wi' th' dinner. I've gotten on mother's Sunday shawl as she had afore she wur wed, an' th' eends keep a-draggin' an' a-draggin', an' th' mud'll be th' ruin on em. Th' pin mother put in it is na big enew, an' it's gotten loose."

There was perhaps not much sense of humor in the young man. He did not seem to see the grotesqueness of the little figure with its mud-bedraggled maternal wrappings. He turned up the lapel of his coat and examined it quite seriously.

"I've got a pin here that will hold it," he said. "I picked it up because it was such a large one."

Janey Brairley's eyes brightened.

"Eh!" she ejaculated, "that theer's a graidely big un. Some woman mun ha' dropped it out o' her shawl. Wheer did tha foind it?"

"In the street."

"I thowt so. Some woman's lost it. Dost tha think tha con pin it reet, or mun I put tha beer down and do it mysen?"

He thought he could do it and bent down to reach her level. It was at this moment that Haworth approached the door

with the intention of passing out. Things had gone wrong with him, and he was in one of his worst moods. He strode down the passage in a savage hurry, and, finding his way barred, made no effort to keep his temper.

"Get out of the road," he said, and pushed Murdoch aside slightly with his foot.

It was as if he had dropped a spark of fire into gunpowder. Murdoch sprang to his feet, white with wrath and quivering.

"D——n you!" he shrieked. "D——n you! I'll kill you!" and he rushed upon him.

As he sprang upon him, Haworth staggered between the shock and his amazement. A sense of the true nature of the thing he had done broke in upon him.

When it was all over he fell back a pace, and a grim surprise, not without its hint of satisfaction, was in his face.

"The devil take you," he said. "You *have* got some blood in you, after all."

CHAPTER V.

THE BEGINNING OF A FRIENDSHIP.

THE next morning, when he appeared at the Works, Murdoch found he had to make his way through a group of the "hands" which some sufficiently powerful motive had gathered together,—which group greeted his appearance with signs of interest. "Theer he is," he heard them say. And then a gentleman of leisure, who was an outsider leaning against the wall, enjoying the solace of a short pipe, exerted himself to look round and add his comment.

"Well," he remarked, "he may ha' done it, an' I wunnot stick out as he did na; but if it wur na fur the circumstantyal evidence I would na ha' believed it."

Floxham met him at the entrance with a message.

"Haworth's sent fur thee," he said.

"Where is he?"—coolly enough under the circumstances. The engineer chuckled in sly exultation.

"He's in the office. He didna say nowt about givin' thee th' bag; but tha may as well mak' up thy moind to it. Tha wert pretty cheeky, tha knows, considerin' he wur th' mester."

"Look here," with some heat; "do you mean to say you think I was in the wrong? Am I to let the fellow insult me and not resent it—touch me with his foot as if I were a dog?"

"Tha'rt particular, my lad," dryly. "An' tha does na know as much o' th' mester koind as most folk." But the next instant he flung down the tool he held in his hand. "Dom thee!" he cried. "I loike thy pluck. Stick to it, lad,—mesters or no mesters."

As Murdoch crossed the threshold of his room, Jem Haworth turned in his seat and greeted him with a short nod not altogether combative. Then he leaned forward, with his arms upon the table before him.

"Sit down," he said. "I'd like to take a look at the chap who thought he could thrash Jem Haworth."

But Murdoch did not obey him.

"I suppose you have something to say to me," he said, "as you sent for me."

He did not receive the answer he was prepared for. Jem Haworth burst into a loud laugh.

"By George! you're a plucky chap," he said, "if you are an American."

Murdoch's blood rose again.

"Say what you have to say," he demanded. "I can guess what it is; but, let me tell you, I should do the same thing again. It was no fault of mine that I was in your path——"

"If I'd been such a fool as not to see that," put in Haworth, with a smile grimmer than before, "do you think I couldn't have smashed every bone in your body?"

Then Murdoch comprehended how matters were to stand between them.

"Getten th' bag?" asked Floxham when he went back to his work.

"No."

"Tha hannot?" with animation. "Well dang *me*!"

At the close of the day, as they were preparing to leave their work, Haworth presented himself in the engine-room, looking perhaps a trifle awkward.

"See here," he said to Murdoch, "I've heard something to-day as I've missed hearing before, somehow. The inventing chap was your father?"

"Yes."

He stood in an uneasy attitude, looking out of the window as if he half expected to see the frail, tall figure again.

"I saw him once, poor chap," he said, "and he stuck to me, somehow. I'd meant to stand by him if he'd come here. I'd have liked to do him a good turn."

He turned to Murdoch suddenly and with a hint of embarrassment in his off-hand air.

"Come up and have dinner with me," he said. "It's devilish dull spending a chap's nights in a big place like mine. Come up with me now."

The visit was scarcely to Murdoch's taste, but it was easier to accept than to refuse. He had seen the house often, and had felt some slight curiosity as to its inside appearance.

There was only one other house in Broxton which approached it in size and splendor, and this stood empty at present, its owner being abroad. Broxton itself was a sharp and dingy little town, whose inhabitants were mostly foundry hands. It had grown up around the Works and increased with them. It had a small railway station, two or three public houses much patronized, and wore, somehow, an air of being utterly unconnected with the outside world which much belied it. Motives of utility, a desire to be on the spot, and a general disregard

for un-business-like attractions had led Haworth to build his house on the outskirts of the town.

"When I want a spree," he had said, "I can go to Manchester or London, and I'm not particular about the rest of it. I want to be nigh the place."

It was a big house and a handsome one. It was one of the expressions of the man's success, and his pride was involved in it. He spent money on it lavishly, and, having completed it, went to live a desolate life among its grandeurs.

The inhabitants of the surrounding villages, which were simple and agricultural, regarded Broxton with frank distaste, and "Haworth's" with horror. Haworth's smoke polluted their atmosphere. Haworth's hands made weekly raids upon their towns and rendered themselves obnoxious in their streets. The owner of the Works, his mode of life, his defiance of opinion, and his coarse sins, were supposed to be tabooed subjects. The man was ignored and left to his visitors from the larger towns,—visitors who occasionally presented themselves to be entertained at his house in a fashion of his own, and who were a greater scandal than all the rest.

"They hate me," said Haworth to his visitor, as they sat down to dinner; "they hate me, the devil take 'em. I'm not moral enough for 'em—not moral enough!" with a shout of laughter.

There was something unreal to his companion in the splendor with which the great fellow was surrounded. The table was covered with a kind of banquet; servants moved about noiselessly as he talked and laughed; the appointments of the room were rich and in good taste.

"Oh! it's none of my work," he said, seeing Murdoch glance about him. "I wasn't fool enough to try to do it myself. I gave it into the hands of them as knew how."

He was loud-tongued and boastful; but he showed good-nature enough and a rough wit, and it was also plain that he knew his own strength and weaknesses.

"Thirty years your father was at work on that notion of his?" he said once during the evening.

Murdoch made an uneasy gesture of assent.

"And it never came to aught?"

"No."

"He died?"

"Yes."

He thrust his hands deep in his pockets, and gave the young fellow a keen look.

"Why don't you take the thing up yourself?" he said. "There may be something in it, after all, and you're a long-headed chap."

Murdoch started from his chair. He took an excited turn across the room before he knew what he was doing.

"I never will," he said, "so help me God! The thing's done with and shut out of the world."

When he went away, Haworth accompanied him to the door. At the threshold he turned about.

"How do you like the look of things?" he demanded.

"I should be hard to please if I did not like the look of them," was the answer.

"Well, then, come again. You're welcome. I have it all to myself. I'm not favorite enow with the gentry to bring any on 'em here. You're free to come when th' fit takes you."

CHAPTER VI.

MISS FFRENCH.

It was considered, after this, a circumstance illustrative of Haworth's peculiarities that he had taken to himself a *protégé* from among the "hands;" that said *protégé* was an eccentric young fellow who was sometimes spoken of as being scarcely as bright as he should be; that he occasionally dined or

supped with Haworth; that he spent numberless evenings with him, and that he read his books, which would not have been much used otherwise.

Murdoch lived his regular, unemotional life, in happy ignorance of these rumors. It was true that he gradually fell into the habit of going to Haworth's house, and also of reading his books. Indeed, if the truth were told, these had been his attraction.

"I've no use for 'em," said Haworth, candidly, on showing him his library. "Get into 'em, if you've a fancy for 'em."

His fancy for them was strong enough to bring him to the place again and again. He found books he had wanted, but never hoped to possess. The library, it may be admitted, was not of Jem Haworth's selection, and, indeed, this gentleman's fancy for his new acquaintance was not a little increased by a certain shrewd admiration for an intellectual aptness which might be turned to practical account.

"You tackle 'em as if you were used to 'em," he used to say. "I'd give something solid myself if I could do the same. There's what's against me many a time—knowing nought of books, and having to fight my way rough and ready."

From the outset of this acquaintance, Murdoch's position at the Works had been an easier one. It became understood that Haworth would stand by him, and that he must be treated with a certain degree of respect. Greater latitude was given him, and better pay, and though he remained in the engine-room, other and more responsible work frequently fell into his hands.

He went on in the even tenor of his way, uncommunicative and odd as ever. He still presented himself ahead of time, and labored with the unnecessary, absorbed ardor of an enthusiast, greatly to the distaste of those less zealous.

"Tha gets into it as if tha war doin fur thyself," said one of these. "Happen"—feeling the sarcasm a strong one—"happen tha'rt fond on it?"

"Oh yes,"—unconsciously—"that's it, I suppose. I'm fond of it."

The scoffer bestowed upon him one thunderstruck glance, opened his mouth, shut it, and retired in disgust.

"Theer's a chap," he said, jerking his thumb over his shoulder, on returning to his companions, "theer's a chap as says he's fond o' work—fond on it!" with dramatic scorn. "Blast his eyes! Fond on it!"

With Floxham he had always stood well, though even Floxham's regard was tempered with a slight private contempt for peculiarities not easily tolerated by the practical mind.

"Th' chap's gotten gumption enow, i' his way," he said to Haworth. "If owt breaks down or gets out o' gear, he's aw theer; but theer is na a lad on th' place as could na cheat him out o' his eye-teeth."

His reputation for being a "queer chap" was greatly increased by the simplicity and seclusion of his life. The house in which he lived with his mother had the atmosphere of a monastic cell. As she had devoted herself to her husband, the woman devoted herself to her son, watching him with a hungry eye. He was given to taking long stretches of walks, and appearing in distant villages, book in hand, and with apparently no ulterior object in view. His holidays were nearly all spent out-of-doors in such rambles as these. The country people began to know his tall figure and long stride, and to regard him with the friendly toleration of strength for weakness.

"They say i' Broxton," it was said among them, "as his feyther deed daft, and it's no wonder th' young chap's gotten queer ways. He's good-natured enow, though i' a simple road."

His good-nature manifested itself in more than one way which called for comment. To his early friendship for Janey he remained faithful. The child interested him, and the sentiment developed as it grew older.

It was quite natural that, after a few months acquaintance, he should drop in at the household of her parents on Saturday afternoon, as he was passing. It was the week's half-holiday and a fine day, and he had nothing else to do. These facts, in connection with that of the Briarley's cottage presenting itself, were reasons enough for going in.

It occurred to him, as he entered the narrow strip of garden before the door, that the children of the neighborhood must have congregated to hold high carnival. Groups made dirt pies; clusters played "bobber and kibbs;" select parties settled differences of opinions with warmth of feeling and elevation of voice; a youth of tender years, in corduroys which shone with friction, stood upon his head in one corner, calmly but not haughtily presenting to the blue vault of heaven a pair of ponderous, brass-finished clogs.

"What dost want?" he demanded, without altering his position. "Th' missis isn't in."

"I'm going to see Janey," explained Murdoch.

He found the little kitchen shining with the Saturday "cleaning up." The flagged floor as glaringly spotless as pipe-clay and sandstone could make it, the brass oven-handles and tin pans in a condition to put an intruder out of countenance, the fire replenished, and Janey sitting on a stool on the hearth enveloped in an apron of her mother's, and reading laboriously aloud.

"Eh! dear me!" she exclaimed. "It's yo'—an' I am na fit to be seen. I wur settin' down to rest a bit. I've been doin' th' cleanin' aw day, an' I wur real done fur."

"Never mind that," said Murdoch. "That's all right enough."

He cast about him for a safe position to take—one in which he could stretch his legs and avoiding damaging the embarrassing purity of the floor. Finally he settled upon a small print-covered sofa and balanced himself carefully upon its extreme

edge and the back of his heels, notwithstanding Janey's civil protestations.

"Dunnot yo' moind th' floor," she said. "Yo' needn't. Set yo' down comfortable."

"Oh, I'm all right," answered Murdoch, with calm good cheer. "This is comfortable enough. What's that you are reading?"

Janey settled down upon her stool with a sigh at once significant of relief and a readiness to indulge in friendly confidence.

"It's a book I geetin fro' th' Broxton Chapel Sunday Skoo'. Its' the Mem-m-e-m-o-i-r-s——"

"Memoirs," responded Murdoch.

"Memoyers of Mary Anne Gibbs."

Unfortunately her visitor was not thoroughly posted on the subject of the Broxton Chapel literature. He cast about him mentally, but with small success.

"I don't seem to have heard of it before," was the conclusion he arrived at.

"Hannot yo'? Well it's a noice book, an' theer's lots more like it in the skoo' libery—aw about Sunday skoo' scholars as has consumption an' th' loike an' reads th' boible to foak an' dees. They aw on 'em dee."

"Oh," doubtfully, but still with respect. "It's not very cheerful, is it?"

Janey shook her head with an expression of mutual resignation.

"Eh no! they're none on 'em cheerful—but they're noice to read. This here un now—she had th' asthma an' summat wrong wi' her legs, an' she knowed aw the boible through aside o' th' hymn bhok, an' she'd sing aw th' toime when she could breathe fur th' asthma, an' tell foak as if they did na go an' do likewise they'd go to burnin' hell wheer th' fire is na quenched an' th' worms dyeth not."

"It can't be very pleasant for the friends," was her com-

panion's comment. But there was nothing jocose about his manner. He was balancing himself seriously on the edge of the hard little sofa and regarding her with a speculative interest.

"Where's your mother?" he asked next.

"Hoo's gone to th' chapel," was the answer. "Theer's a mothers' meetin' in th' vestry, an' hoo's gone theer an' takken th' babby wi' her. Th' rest o' th' childer is playin' out at th' front."

He glanced out of the door.

"Those—those are not all yours?" he said, thunderstruck.

"Aye, they are—they. Eh!" drawing a long breath, "but is na there a lot on 'em? Theer's eleven an' I've nursed 'em nigh ivvery one."

He turned toward the door again.

"There seems to be a great many of them," he remarked.

"You must have had a great deal to do."

"That I ha'. I've wished mony a time I'd been a rich lady. Theer's that daughter o' Ffrench's now. Eh! I'd like to ha' bin her."

"I have never heard of her before," he answered. "Who is she, and why do you choose her?"

"Cos she's so hansum. She's that theer grand she looks loike she thowt ivvery body else wur dirt. I've seen women as wur bigger, an' wore more cloas at onct, but I nivver seed none as grand as she is. I nivver seed her but onct. She coom her' wi' her feyther fur two week' afore he went to furrin parts, an' she wur caught i' th' rain one day an' stopped in here a bit. She dropped her hankcher an' mother's gotten it yet. It's nigh aw lace. Would yo' loike to see it?" hospitably.

"Yes," feeling his lack of enthusiasm something of a fault.

"I—dare say I should."

From the depths of a drawer which she opened with a vigorous effort and some skill in retaining her balance, she produced

something pinned up in a fragment of old linen. This she bore to her guest and unpinning it, displayed the handkerchief.

"Tha can tak' it in thy hond an' smell it," she said graciously

"It's gotten scent on it."

Murdoch took it in his hand, scarcely knowing what else to do. He knew nothing of women and their finery. He regarded the fragrant bit of lace and cambric seriously, and read in one corner the name "Rachel Ffrench," written in delicate letters. Then he returned it to Janey.

"Thank you," he said, "It is very nice."

Janey bore it back perhaps with some slight inward misgivings as to the warmth of its reception, but also with a tempering recollection of the ways of "men-foak." When she came back to her stool, she changed the subject.

"We've bin havin' trouble lately," she said. "Eh! but I've seed a lot o' trouble i' my day."

"What is the trouble now?" Murdoch asked.

"Feyther. It's allus him. He's gotten in wi' a bad lot an' he's drinkin' agen. Seems loike neyther mother nor me can keep him straight fur aw we told him Haworth'll turn him off. Haworth's not goin' to stand his drink an' th' lot he goes wi'. I would na stand it mysen."

"What lot does he go with?"

"Eh!" impatiently, "a lot o' foo's as stand round th' publics an' grumbles at th' mesters an' th' wages they get. An' feyther's one o' these soft uns as believes aw they hears an' has na gotten gumption to think for hissen. I've looked after him ivver sin' I wur three."

She became even garrulous in her lack of patience, and was in full flow when her mother entered returning from the chapel, with a fagged face, and a large baby on her hip.

"Here, tak' him, Jane Ann," she said; "but tak' off thy apron furst, or tha'lt tumble ower it an' dirty his clean bishop wi' th' muck tha's gotten on it. Eh! I *am* tired. Who's this here?" signifying Murdoch.

"It's Mester Murdoch," said Janey, dropping the apron and taking the child, who made her look top-heavy. "Sit thee down, mother. Yo' needn't moind him. He's a workin' mon hissen."

When Murdoch took his departure, both accompanied him to the door.

"Coom in sometime when th' mester's here," said Mrs. Briarley. "Happen yo' could keep him in a neet an' that ud be summat."

Half way up the lane he met Haworth in his gig, which he stopped.

"Wheer hast tha been?" he asked, dropping into dialect, as he was prone to do.

"To Briarley's cottage, talking to the little girl."

Haworth stared at him a moment, and then burst into a laugh.

"Tha'rt a queer chap," he said. "I can no more than half make thee out. If thy head was not so level, I should think tha wert a bit soft."

"I don't see why," answered Murdoch, undisturbed. "The child interests me. I am not a Lancashire man, remember, and she is a new species."

"Get in," said Haworth, making room for him on the seat.

Murdoch got in, and as they drove on it occurred to him to ask a question.

"Who's Ffrench?"

"Ffrench?" said Haworth. "Oh, Ffrench is one o' th' nobs here. He's a chap with à fancy for being a gentleman-manufacturer. He's spent his brass on his notions, until he has been obliged to draw in his horns a bit. He's never lived much in Broxton, though he's got a pretty big style here. The Continent's the place for him, but he'll turn up here again some day when he's hard up enow. There's his place now."

And as he spoke they drove sharply by a house standing

closed among the trees, and having an air of desolateness, in spite of the sun-light.

CHAPTER VII.

THE "WHO'D HA' THOWT IT?"

"It's the queerest thing i' th' world," said Mrs. Briarley to her neighbors, in speaking of her visitor,— "it's th' queerest thing i' th' world as he should be a workin' mon. I should ha' thowt he'd ha' wanted to get behind th' counter i' a draper's shop or summat genteel. He'd be a well-lookin' young chap i' a shiny cloth coat an' wi' a blue neck-tie on. Seems loike he does na think enow o' hissen. He'll coom to our house an' set down an' listen to our Janey talkin', an' tell her things out o' books, as simple as if he thowt it wur nowt but what any chap could do. Theer's where he's a bit soft. He knows nowt o' settin' hissen up."

From Mrs. Briarley Murdoch heard numberless stories of Haworth, presenting him in a somewhat startling light.

"Eh! but he's a rare un, is Haworth," said the good woman. "He does na care fur mon nor devil. The carryin's on as he has up at th' big house un mak' a decent body's hair stand o' eend. Afore he built th' house, he used to go to Lunnun an' Manchester fur his sprees, but he has 'em here now, an' theer's drink an' riotin' an' finery an' foak as owt to be shamt o' their-sens. I wonder he's na feart to stay on th' place alone after they're gone."

But for one reason or another the house was quiet enough for the first six months of Murdoch's acquaintance with its master. Haworth gave himself up to the management of the Works. He perfected plans he had laid at a time when the power had not been in his own hands. He kept his eye on his own interests sharply. The most confirmed shirkers on the

place found themselves obliged to fall to work, however reluctantly. His bold strokes of business enterprise began to give him wide reputation. In the lapse of its first half year, "Haworth's" gained for itself a name.

At the end of this time, Murdoch arrived at the Works one morning to find a general tone of conviviality reigning. A devil-may-care air showed itself among all the graceless. There was a hint of demoralization in the very atmosphere.

"Where's Haworth?" he asked Floxham, who did not seem to share the general hilarity. "I've not seen him."

"No," was the engineer's answer, "nor tha will na see him yet a bit. A lot o' foo's coom fro' Lunnon last neet. He's on one o' his speers, an' a noice doment they'll ha' on it afore they're done."

The next morning Haworth dashed down to the Works early in his gig, and spent a short time in his room. Before he left he went to the engine-room, and spoke to Murdoch.

"Is there aught you want from the house—aught in the way o' books, I mean?" he said, with a touch of rough bravado in his manner.

"No," Murdoch answered.

"All right," he returned. "Then keep away, lad, for a day or two."

During the "day or two," Broxton existed in a state of ferment. Gradually an air of disreputable festivity began to manifest itself among all those whose virtue was assailable. There were open "speers" among these, and their wives, with the inevitable baby in their arms, stood upon their door-steps bewailing their fate, and retailing gossip with no slight zest.

"Silks an' satins, bless yo'," they said. "An' paint an' feathers; th' brazent things, I wonder they are na shamt to show their faces! A noice mester Haworth is to ha' men under him!"

Having occasion to go out late one evening, Murdoch

encountered Janey, clad in the big bonnet and shawl, and hurrying along the street.

"Where am I goin'?" she echoed sharply in reply to his query. "Why, I'm goin' round to th' public's to look fur feyther—*theer's* wheer I'm goin'. I hannot seed him sin' ay-leet this mornin', an' he's gotten th' rent an' th' buryin'-club money wi' him."

"I'll go with you," said Murdoch.

He went with her, making the round of half the public-houses in the village, finally ending at a jovial establishment bearing upon its whitened window the ambiguous title "WHO'D HA' THOWT IT?"

There was a sound of argument accompanied by a fiddle, and an odor of beer supplemented by tobacco. Janey pushed open the door and made her way in, followed by her companion.

An uncleanly, loud-voiced fellow stood unsteadily at a table, flourishing a clay pipe and making a speech.

"Th' workin' mon," he said. "There's too much talk o' th' workin' mon. Is na it bad enow to *be* a workin' mon, wi'out havin' th' gentry remindin' yo' on it fro' year eend to year eend? Le's ha' less jaw-work an' more paw-work fro' th' gentry. Le's ha' fewer liberys an' athyneums, an' more wage—an' holidays—an'—an' beer. Le's *pro-gress*—tha's wha' I say—an' I'm a workin' mon."

"Ee-er! Ee-er!" cried the chorus. "Ee-er!"

In the midst of the pause following these acclamations, a voice broke in suddenly with startling loudness.

"Ee-er! Ee-er!" it said.

It was Mr. Briarley, who had unexpectedly awakened from a beery nap, and, though much surprised to find out where he was, felt called upon to express his approbation.

Janey hitched her shawl into a manageable length and approached him.

"Tha'rt here?" she said. "I knowed tha would be."

Tha'lt worrit th' loife out on us afore tha'rt done. Coom on home wi' me afore tha'st spent ivvery ha'penny we've gotten."

Mr. Briarley roused himself so far as to smile at her blandly.

"It's Zhaney," he said, "it's Zhaney. Don' intrup th' meetin', Zhaney. I'll be home dreckly. Mus' na intrup th' workin' mon. He's th' backbone 'n' sinoo o' th' country. I ha' a sup more beer."

Murdoch bent over and touched his shoulder.

"You had better come home," he said.

The man looked round at him blankly, but the next moment an exaggerated expression of enlightenment showed itself on his face.

"Iss th' 'Merican," he said. "Iss Murdoch." And then, with sudden bibulous delight: "Gi' us a speech 'bout 'Merica."

In a moment there was a clamor all over the room. The last words had been spoken loudly enough to be heard, and the idea presented itself to the members of the assembly as a happy one.

"Aye," they cried. "Le's ha' a speech fro' th' 'Merican. Le's hear summat fro' 'Merica. Theer's wheer th' laborin mon has his dues."

Murdoch turned about and faced the company.

"You all know enough of me to know whether I am a speech-making man or not," he said. "I have nothing to say about America, and if I had I should not say it here. You are not doing yourselves any good. The least fellow among you has brains enough to tell him that."

There was at once a new clamor, this time one of dissatisfaction. The speech-maker with the long clay, who was plainly the leader, expressed himself with heat and scorn.

"He's a noice chap—he is," he cried. "He'll ha' nowt to do wi' us. He's th' soart o' workin' mon to ha' aboot, to play th' pianny an' do paintin' i' velvet. 'Merica be danged! He's more o' th' gentry koind to-day than Haworth. Haworth *does*

take a decent spree now an' then ; but this heer un — Ax him to tak' a glass o' beer an' see what he'll say."

Disgust was written upon every countenance, but no one proffered the hospitality mentioned. Mr. Briarley had fallen asleep again, murmuring suggestively, "Aye, le's hear summat fro' 'Merica. Le's go to 'Merica. Pu-r on thy bonnet, lass, pur—it on."

With her companion's assistance, Janey got him out of the place and led him home.

"Haaf th' rent's gone," she said, when she turned out his pockets, as he sat by the fire. "An' wheer's th' buryin' money to coom fro'?"

Mr. Briarley shook his head mournfully.

"Th' buryin' money," he said. "Aye, i'deed. A noice thing it is fur a poor chap to ha' to cut off his beer to pay for his coffin by the week,—wasting good brass on summat he may nivver need as long as he lives. I dunnot loike th' thowt on it, eyther. It's bad enow to ha' to get into th' thing at th' eend, wi'out ha'in' it lugged up at th' door ivvery Saturday, an' payin' fur th' ornymantin' on it be inches."

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. FFRENCH.

It was a week before affairs assumed their accustomed aspect. Not that the works had been neglected, however. Each morning Haworth had driven down early and spent an hour in his office and about the place, reading letters, issuing orders and keeping a keen look-out generally.

"I'll have no spreeing here among *you* chaps," he announced. "Spree as much as you like when th' work's done, but you don't spree in *my* time. Look sharp after 'em, Kendal."

The day after his guests left him he appeared at his usual time, and sent at once for Murdoch.

On his arrival he greeted him, leaning back in his chair, his hands thrust into his pockets.

"Well, lad," he said, "it's over."

Almost unconsciously, Murdoch thrust his hands into *his* pockets also, but the action had rather a reflective than a defiant expression.

"It's lasted a pretty long time, hasn't it?" he remarked.

Haworth answered him with a laugh.

"Egad! You take it cool enough," he said.

Suddenly he got up and began to walk about, his air a mixture of excitement and braggadocio. After a turn or two he wheeled about.

"Why don't you say summat?" he demanded, sardonically. "Summat moral. You don't mean to tell me you've not got pluck enow?"

"I don't see," said Murdoch, deliberately,— "I don't see that there's anything to say. Do you?"

The man stared at him, reddening. Then he turned about and flung himself into his chair again.

"No," he answered. "By George! I don't."

They discussed the matter no further. It seemed to dispose of itself. Their acquaintance went on in the old way, but there were moments afterwards when Murdoch felt that the man regarded him with something that might have been restrained or secret fear—a something which held him back and made him silent or unready of speech. Once, in the midst of a conversation taking a more confidential tone than usual, to his companion's astonishment he stopped and spoke bluntly:

"If I say aught as goes against the grain with you," he said, "speak up, lad. Blast it!" striking his fist hard against his palm, "I'd like to show my clean side to you."

It was at this time that he spoke first of his mother.

"When I ran away from the poor-house," he said, "I left

her there. She's a soft-hearted body—a good one too. As soon as I earned my first fifteen shillin' a week, I gave her a house of her own—and I lived hard to do it. She lives like a lady now, though she's as simple as ever. She knows naught of the world, and she knows naught of me beyond what she sees of me when I go down to the little country-place in Kent with a new silk gown and a lace cap for her. She scarce ever wears 'em, but she's as fond of 'em as if she got 'em from Buckingham Palace. She thinks I'm a lad yet, and say my prayers every night and the catechism on Sundays. She'll never know aught else, if I can help it. That's why I keep her where she is."

When he had said that he intended to make "Haworth's" second to no place in England, he had not spoken idly. His pride in the place was a passion. He spent money lavishly but shrewdly; he paid his men well, but ruled them with an iron hand. Those of his fellow-manufacturers who were less bold and also less keen-sighted, regarded him with no small disfavor.

"He'll have trouble yet, that Haworth fellow," they said.

But "Haworth's" flourished and grew. The original works were added to, and new hands, being called for, flocked into Broxton with their families. It was Jem Haworth who built the rows of cottages to hold them, and he built them well and substantially, but as a sharp business investment and a matter of pride rather than from any weakness of regarding them from a moral stand-point.

"I'll have no poor jobs done on my place," he announced. "I'll leave that to the gentlemen manufacturers."

It was while in the midst of this work that he received a letter from Gerard Ffrench, who was still abroad.

Going into his room one day Murdoch found him reading it and looking excited.

"Here's a chap as would be the chap for me," he said, "if brass were iron—that chap Ffrench."

"What does he want?" Murdoch asked.

"Naught much," grimly. "He's got a notion of coming back here, and he'd like to go into partnership with me. That's what he's drivin' at. He'd like to be a partner with Jem Hawcith."

"What has he to offer?"

"Cheek, and plenty on it. He says his name's well known, and he's got influence as well as practical knowledge. I'd like to have a bit of talk with him."

Suddenly he struck his fist on the table before him.

"I've got a name that's enow for me," he said. "The day's to come yet when I ask any chap for name or money or aught else. Partner be damned! This here's 'Haworth's.'"

CHAPTER IX.

"NOT FOR ONE HOUR."

THE meetings of the malcontents continued to be held at the "Who'd a thowt it" and were loud voiced and frequent, but notwithstanding a frequency and noisiness resulted principally in a disproportionate consumption of beer and tobacco and in some differences of opinion, decided in a gentlemanly manner with the assistance of "backers" and a ring.

Having been rescued from these surroundings by Murdoch on several convivial occasions, Briarley began to anticipate his appearance with resignation if not cheerfulness, and to make preparations accordingly.

"I mun lay a sup in reet at th' start," he would say. "Theer's no knowin' how soon he'll turn up if he drops in to see the women. Gi' me a glass afore these chaps, Mary. They con wait a bit."

"Why does tha stand it, tha foo'?" some independent spirit

would comment. "Con th' chap *carry* thee whoam if tha does na want to go?"

But Briarley never rebelled. Resistance was not his forte. If it were possible to become comfortably drunk before he was sought out and led away he felt it a matter for mild self-gratulation, but he bore defeat amiably.

"Th' missis wants me," he would say unsteadily but with beaming countenance, on catching sight of Murdoch or Janey. "Th' missis has sent to ax me to go an'—an' set wi' her a bit. I mun go, chaps. A man munna neglect his fam'ly."

In response to Mrs. Briarley's ratings and Janey's querulous appeals, it was his habit to shed tears copiously and with a touch of ostentation.

"I'm a poor chap, missus," he would say. "I'm a poor chap. Yo' munnot be hard on me. I nivver wur good enow fur a woman loike yoursen. I should na wonder if I had to join th' teetotals after aw. Tha knows it allus rains o' Whit-Saturday, when they ha' their walk, an' that theer looks as if th' Almighty wur on th' teetotal soide. It's noan loike he'd go to so mich trouble if he wur na."

At such crises as these "th' women foak," as he called his wife and Janey, derived their greatest consolation from much going to chapel.

"If it wur na fur th' bit o' comfort I get theer," said the poor woman, "I should na know whether I wur standin' on my head or my heels—betwixt him, an' th' work, an' th' childer."

"Happen ye'd loike to go wi' us," said Janey to Murdoch, one day. "Yo'll be sure to hear a good sermon."

Murdoch went with them, and sat in a corner of their free seat—a hard seat, with a straight and unrelenting back. But he was not prevented by the seat from being interested and even absorbed by the doctrine. He had an absent-minded way of absorbing impressions, and the unemotional tenor of his life had left him singularly impartial. He did not finally decide that the sermon was good, bad, or indifferent, but he pondered

it and its probable effects deeply, and with no little curiosity. It was a long sermon, and one which "hit straight from the shoulder." It displayed a florid heaven and a burning hell. It was literal, and well garnished with telling and scriptural quotations. Once or twice during its delivery Murdoch glanced at Janey and Mrs. Briarley. The woman, during intervals of eager pacifying of the big baby, lifted her pale face and listened devoutly. Janey sat respectable and rigorous, her eyes fixed upon the pulpit, her huge shawl folded about her, her bonnet slipping backward at intervals and requiring to be repeatedly re-arranged by a smart hustling somewhere in the region of the crown.

The night was very quiet when they came out into the open air. The smoke-clouds of the day had been driven away by a light breeze, and the sky was bright with stars. Mrs. Briarley and the ubiquitous baby joined a neighbor and hastened home, but Murdoch and Janey lingered a little.

"My father is buried here," Murdoch had said, and Janey had answered with sharp curiousness,—

"Wheer's th' place? I'd loike to see it. Has tha gotten a big head-stone up?"

She was somewhat disappointed to find there was none, and that nothing but the sod covered the long mound, but she appeared to comprehend the state of affairs at once.

"I s'pose tha'lt ha' one after a bit," she said, "when tha'rt not so short as tha art now. Ivverybody's short i' these toimes."

She seated herself upon the stone coping of the next grave, her elbow on her knee, a small, weird figure in the uncertain light.

"I allus did loike a big head-stone," she remarked, reflectively. "Theer's summat noice about a big white un wi' black letters on it. I loike a white un th' best, an' ha' th' letters cut deep, an' th' name big, an' a bit o' poetry at th' eend ;

'Stranger, a moment linger near,
 An' hark to th' one as moulders here;
 Thy bones, loike mine, shall rot i' th' ground,
 Until th' last awful trumpet's sound;
 Thy flesh, loike mine, fa' to decay,
 For mon is made to pass away.'

Summat loike that. But yo' see it ud be loike to cost so much. What wi' th' stone an' paint an' cuttin', I should na wonder if it would na coom to th' matter o' two pound,—an' then theer's th' funeral."

She ended with a sigh, and sank for a moment into a depressed reverie, but in the course of a few moments she roused herself again.

"Tell me summat about thy feyther," she demanded.

Murdoch bent down and plucked a blade of grass with a rather uncertain grasp.

"There isn't much to tell," he answered. "He was unfortunate, and had a hard life—and died."

Janey looked at his lowered face with a sharp, unchildish twinkle in her eye.

"Would tha moind me axin thee summat?" she said.

"No."

But she hesitated a little before she put the question.

"Is it—wur it true—as he wur na aw theer—as he wur a bit—a bit soft i' th' yed?"

"No, that is not true."

"I'm glad it is na," she responded. "Art tha loike him?"

"I don't know."

"I hope tha art na, if he did na ha' luck. Theer's a great deal i' luck." Then, with a quick change of subject,—“How did tha loike th' sermont?”

"I am not sure," he answered, "that I know that either. How did you like it yourself?"

"Ay," with an air of elderly approval, "it wur a good un. Mester Hixon allus gies us a good un. He owts wi' what he's gotten to say. I loike a preacher as owts wi' it."

A few moments later, when they rose to go home, her mind seemed suddenly to revert to a former train of thought.

"Wur their money i' that thing thy feyther wur tryin' at?" she asked.

"Not for him, it seemed."

"Ay; but their mought be fur thee. Tha mayst ha' more in thee than he had, an' mought mak' summat on it. I'd niver let owt go as had money i' it. Tha'dst make a better rich mon than Haworth."

After leaving her Murdoch did not go home. He turned his back upon the village again and walked rapidly away from it, out on the country road and across field paths, and did not turn until he was miles from Broxton.

Of late he had been more than usually abstracted. He had been restless, and at times nervously unstrung. He had slept ill, and spent his days in a half-conscious mood. More than once, as they worked together, Floxham had spoken to him amazed.

"What's up wi' thee, lad?" he had said. "Art dazed, or has tha takken a turn an' been on a spree?"

One night, when they were together, Haworth had picked up from the floor a rough but intricate-looking drawing, and, on handing it to him, had been bewildered by his sudden change of expression.

"Is it aught of yours?" he had asked.

"Yes," the young fellow had answered; "it's mine."

But, instead of replacing it in his pocket, he had torn it slowly into strips, and thrown it, piece by piece, into the fire, watching it as it burned.

It was not Janey's eminently practical observations which had stirred him to-night. He had been drifting toward this feverish crisis of feeling for months, and had contested its approach inch by inch. There were hours when he was overpowered by the force of what he battled against, and this was one of them.

It was nearly midnight when he returned, and his mother met him at the door with an anxious look. It was a look he had seen upon her face all his life ; but its effect upon himself had never lessened from the day he had first recognized it, as a child.

"I did not think you would wait for me," he said. "It is later than I thought."

"I am not tired," she answered.

She had aged a little since her husband's death, but otherwise she had not changed. She looked up at her son just as she had looked at his father,—watchfully, but saying little.

"Are you going to bed?" she asked.

"I am going upstairs," he replied. But he did not say that he was going to bed.

He bade her good night shortly afterward, and went to his room. It was the one his father used before his death, and the trunk containing his belongings stood in one corner of it.

For a short time after entering the room he paced the floor restlessly and irregularly. Sometimes he walked quickly, sometimes slowly; once or twice he stopped short, checking himself as he veered toward the corner in which stood the unused trunk.

"I'm in a queer humor," he said aloud. "I am thinking of it as if—as if it were a temptation to sin. Why should I?"

He made a sudden resolute movement forward. He knelt down, and, turning the key in the lock, flung the trunk-lid backward.

There was only one thing he wanted, and he knew where to find it. It lay buried at the bottom, under the unused garments, which gave forth a faint, damp odor as he moved them. When he rose from his knees he held the wooden case in his hand. After he had carried it to the table and opened it, and the model stood again before him, he sat down and stared at it with a numb sense of fascination.

"I thought I had seen the last of it," he said; "and here it is."

Even as he spoke he felt his blood warm within him, and flush his cheek. His hand trembled as he put it forth to touch and move the frame-work before him. He felt as if it were a living creature. His eye kindled, and he bent forward.

"There's something to be done yet," he said. "It's *not* a blunder, I'll swear!"

He was hot with eagerness and excitement. The thing had haunted him day and night for weeks. He had struggled to shake off its influence, but in vain. He had told himself that the temptation to go back to it and ponder over it was the working of a morbid taint in his blood. He had remembered the curse it had been, and had tried to think of that only; but it had come back to him again and again, and—here it was.

He spent an hour over it, and in the end his passionate eagerness had rather grown than diminished. He put his hand up to his forehead and brushed away drops of moisture; his throat was dry, and his eyes were strained.

"There's something to be brought out of it yet," he said, as he had said before. "It *can* be done, I swear!"

The words had scarcely left his lips before he heard behind him a low, but sharp cry—a miserable ejaculation, half uttered.

He had not heard the door open, nor the entering footsteps; but he knew what the cry meant the moment he heard it. He turned about and saw his mother standing on the threshold. If he had been detected in the commission of a crime, he could not have felt a sharper pang than he did. He almost staggered against the wall and did not utter a word. For a moment they looked at each other in a dead silence. Each wore in the eyes of the other a new aspect. She pointed to the model.

"It has come back," she said. "I knew it would."

The young fellow turned and looked at it a little stupidly.

"I—didn't mean to hurt you with the sight of it," he said. "I took it out because—because——"

She stopped him with a movement of her head.

"Yes, I know," she said. "You took it out because it has haunted you and tempted you. You could not withstand it. It is in your blood."

He had known her through all his life as a patient creature, whose very pains had bent themselves and held themselves in check, lest they should seem for an hour to stand in the way of the end to be accomplished. That she had, even in the deepest secrecy, rebelled against fate, he had never dreamed.

She came to the table and struck the model aside with one angry blow.

"Shall I tell you the truth?" she cried, panting. "*I have never believed in it for an hour—not for one hour!*"

He could only stammer out a few halting words.

"This is all new to me," he said. "I did not know——"

"No, you did not know," she answered. "How should you, when I lived my whole life to hide it? I have been stronger than you thought. I bore with him, as I should have borne with him if he had been maimed or blind—or worse than that. *I* did not hurt him—he had hurt enough. I knew what the end would be. He would have been a happy man and I a happy woman, if it had not been for *that*, and there it is again. I tell you," passionately, "there is a curse on it!"

"Are you think," he said, "that it has fallen upon me."

She burst into wild tears.

"I have told myself it would," she said. "I have tried to prepare myself for its coming some day; but I did not think it would show itself so soon as this."

"I don't know why," he said slowly. "I don't know—what there is in *me* that I should think I might do what he left undone. There seems a kind of vanity in it."

"It is not vanity," she said; "it is worse. It is what has

grown out of my misery and his. I tell you it is in your blood."

A flush rose to his face, and a stubborn look settled upon him.

"Perhaps it is," he answered. "I have told myself that, too."

She held her closed hand upon her heart, as if to crush down its passionate heavings.

"Begin as he began," she cried, "and the end will come to you as it came to him. Give it up now—now!"

"Give it up!" he repeated after her.

"Give it up," she answered, "or give up your whole life, your youth, your hope,—all that belongs to it."

She held out her hands to him in a wild, unconsciously theatrical gesture. The whole scene had been theatrical through its very incongruousness, and Murdoch had seen this vaguely, and been more shaken by it than anything else.

Before she knew what he meant to do, he approached the table, and replaced the model in its box, the touch of stubborn desperateness on him yet. He carried the case back to the trunk, and shut it once more.

"I'll let it rest a while," he said; "I'll promise you that. If it is ever to be finished by me, the time will come when it will see the light again, in spite of us both."

CHAPTER X.

CHRISTIAN MURDOCH.

As he was turning into the gate of the Works the next morning, a little lad touched him upon the elbow.

"Mester," he said, "sithee, Mester,—stop a bit."

He was out of breath, as if he had been running, and he held in his hand a slip of paper.

"I thowt I should na ketch thee," he said, "tha'rt so long-legged. A woman sent the that," and he gave him the slip of paper.

Murdoch opened and read the words written upon it.

"If you are Stephen Murdoch's son, I must see you. Come with the child."

There was no signature—only these words, written irregularly and weakly. He had never met with an adventure in his life, and this was like an episode in a romance.

"If you are Stephen Murdoch's son, I must see you."

He could scarcely realize that he was standing in the narrow, up-hill street, jostled by the hands shouting and laughing as they streamed past him through the gates to their work.

And yet, somehow he found himself taking it more coolly than seemed exactly natural. This morning, emotion and event appeared less startling than they would have done even the day before. The strange scene of the past night had, in a manner, prepared him for anything which might happen.

"Who sent it?" he asked of the boy.

"Th' woman as lodges i' our house. She's been theer three days, and she's gotten to th' last, mother says. Con tha coom? She's promist me a shillin' if I browt thee."

"Wait here a minute," said Murdoch.

He passed into the Works and went to Floxham.

"I've had a message that calls me away," he said. "If you can spare me for an hour——"

"I'll mak' out," said the engineer.

The lad at the gate looked up with an encouraging grin when he saw his charge returning.

"I'd loike to mak' th' shillin'," he said.

Murdoch followed him in silence. He was thinking of what was going to happen to himself scarcely as much as of the dead man in whose name he was called upon. He was brought

near to him again as if it were by a fate. "If you are Stephen Murdoch's son," had moved him strongly.

Their destination was soon reached. It was a house in a narrow but respectable street, occupied chiefly by a decent class of workmen and their families. A week before he had seen in the window of this same house a card bearing the legend "Lodgings to Let," and now it was gone. A clean, motherly woman opened the door for them.

"Tha'st earnt tha' shillin', has tha, tha young nowt?" she said to the lad, with friendly severity. "Coom in, Mester. I wur feart he'd get off on some of his marlocks an' forget aw about th' paper. She's i' a bad way, poor lady, an' th' lass is na o' much use. Coom upstairs."

She led the way to the second floor, and her knock being answered by a voice inside, she opened the door. The room was comfortable and of good size, a fire burned on the grate, and before it sat a girl with her hands clasped upon her knee.

She was a girl of nineteen, dark of face and slight of figure to thinness. When she turned her head slowly to look at him, Murdoch was struck at once with the peculiar steadiness of her large black eyes.

"She is asleep," she said in a low, cold voice.

There was a sound as of movement in the bed.

"I am awake," some one said. "If it is Stephen Murdoch's son, let him come here."

Murdoch went to the bedside and stood looking down at the woman who returned his gaze. She was a woman whose last hours upon earth were passing rapidly. Her beauty was now only something terrible to see; her breath came fast and short; her eyes met his with a look of anguish.

"Send the girl away," she said to him.

Low as her voice was, the girl heard it. She rose without turning to right or left and went out of the room.

Until the door closed the woman still lay looking up into

her visitor's face, but as soon as it was shut she spoke laboriously.

"What is your name?" she asked.

He told her.

"You are like your father," she said, and then closed her eyes and lay so for a moment. "It is a mad thing I am doing," she said, knitting her brows with weak fretfulness, and still lying with closed eyes. "I—I do not know—why I should have done it—only that it is the last thing. It is not that I am fond of the girl—or that she is fond of me," she opened her eyes with a start. "Is the door shut?" she said. "Keep her out of the room."

"She is not here," he answered, "and the door is closed."

The sight of his face seemed to help her to recover herself.

"What am I saying?" she said. "I have not told you who I am."

"No," he replied, "not yet."

"My name was Janet Murdoch," she said. "I was your father's cousin. Once he was very fond of me."

She drew from under her pillow a few old letters.

"Look at them," she said; "he wrote them."

But he only glanced at the superscription and laid them down again.

"I did not know," she panted, "that he was dead. I hoped he would be here. I knew that he must have lived a quiet life. I always thought of him as living here in the old way."

"He was away from here for thirty years," said Murdoch.

"He only came back to die."

"He!" she said, "I never thought of that. It—seems very strange. I could not imagine his going from place to place—or living a busy life—or suffering much. He was so simple and so quiet."

"I thought of him," she went on, "because he was a good man—a good man—and there was no one else in the world. As the end came I grew restless—I wanted to—to try——"

But there her eyes closed and she forgot herself again.

"What was it you wanted to try to do?" he asked gently.

She roused herself, as before, with a start.

"To try," she said,—“to try to do something for the girl.”

He did not understand what she meant until she had dragged herself up upon the pillow and leaned forward touching him with her hand; she had gathered all her strength for the effort.

"I am an outcast," she said—"an outcast!"

The simple and bare words were so terrible that he could scarcely bear them, but he controlled himself by a strong effort.

A faint color crept up on her cheek.

"You don't understand," she said.

"Yes," he answered slowly, "I think I do."

She fell back upon her pillows.

"I won't tell you the whole story," she said. "It is an ugly one, and she will be ready enough with it when her turn comes. She has understood all her life. She has never been a child. She seemed to fasten her eyes upon me from the hour of her birth, and I have felt them ever since. Keep her away," with a shudder. "Don't let her come in."

A sudden passion of excitement seized upon her.

"I don't know why I should care," she cried. "There is no reason why she should not live as I have lived—but she will not—she will not. I have reached the end and she knows it. She sits and looks on and says nothing, but her eyes force me to speak. They forced me to come here—to try—to make a last effort. If Stephen Murdoch had lived——"

She stopped a moment.

"You are a poor man," she said.

"Yes," he answered. "I am a mechanic."

"Then—you cannot—do it."

She spoke helplessly, wildly.

"There is nothing to be done. There is no one else. She will be all alone."

Then he comprehended her meaning fully.

"No," he said, "I am not so poor as that. I am not a poorer man than my father was, and I can do what he would have done, if he had lived. My mother will care for the girl, if that is what you wish."

"What I wish!" she echoed. "I wish for nothing—but I must do something for her—before—before—before——"

She broke off, but began again.

"You are like your father. You make things seem simple. You speak as if you were undertaking nothing."

"It is not much to do," he answered, "and we could not do less. I will go to my mother and tell her that she is needed here. She will come to you."

She turned her eyes on him in terror.

"You think," she whispered, "that I shall die soon—*soon!*"

He did not answer her. He could not. She wrung her hands and dashed them open upon the bed, panting.

"Oh," she cried, "my God! It is over! I have come to the end of it—the end! To have only one life—and to have done with it—and lie here! To have lived—and loved—and triumphed, and to know it is over! One may defy all the rest, the whole world, but not this. It is *done!*"

Then she turned to him again, desperately.

"Go to your mother," she said, "Tell her to come. I want some one in the room with me. I won't be left alone with *her*. I cannot bear it."

On going out he found the girl sitting at the head of the stairs. She rose and stood aside to let him pass, looking at him unflinchingly.

"Are you coming back again?" she demanded.

"Yes," he answered, "I am coming back again."

In half an hour he re-ascended the staircase, bringing his mother with him. When they entered the room in which the

dying woman lay, Mrs. Murdoch went to the bed and bent over her.

"My son has brought me to do what I can for you," she said, "and to tell you that he will keep his promise."

The woman looked up. For a moment it seemed that she had half forgotten. A change had come upon her in the intervening half-hour.

"His promise," she said. "Yes, he will keep it."

At midnight she died. Mother and son were in the room, the girl sat in a chair at the bedside. Her hands were clasped upon her knee; she sat without motion. At a few minutes before the stroke of twelve, the woman awoke from the heavy sleep in which she had lain. She awoke with a start and a cry, and lay staring at the girl, whose steady eyes were fixed upon her. Her lips moved, and at last she spoke.

"Forgive me!" she cried. "Forgive me!"

Murdoch and his mother rose, but the girl did not stir.

"For what?" she asked.

"For—" panted the woman, "for——"

But the sentence remained unfinished. The girl did not utter a word. She sat looking at the dying woman in silence—only looking at her, not once moving her eyes from the face which, a moment later, was merely a mask of stone which lay upon the pillow, gazing back at her with a fixed stare.

CHAPTER XI.

MISS FFRENCH RETURNS.

THEY took the girl home with them, and three days later the Ffrenchs returned. They came entirely unheralded, and it was Janey who brought the news of their arrival to the Works.

"They've coom," she said, in passing Murdoch on her way to her father. "Mester Ffrench an' her. They rode through

th' town this mornin' i' a kerridge. Nobody knowed about it till they seed 'em."

The news was the principal topic of conversation through the day, and the comments made were numerous and varied. The most general opinions were that Ffrench was in a "tight place," or had "getten some crank i' hond."

"He's noan fond enow o' th' place to ha' coom back fur nowt," said Floxham. "He's a bit harder up than common, that's it."

In the course of the morning Haworth came in. Murdoch was struck with his unsettled and restless air; he came in awkwardly, and looking as if he had something to say, but though he loitered about some time, he did not say it.

"Come up to the house to-night," he broke out at last. "I want company."

It occurred to Murdoch that he wished to say more, but, after lingering for a few minutes, he went away. As he crossed the threshold, however, he paused uneasily.

"I say," he said, "Ffrench has come back."

"So I heard," Murdoch answered.

When he presented himself at the house in the evening, Haworth was alone as usual. Wines were on the table, and he seemed to have drunk deeply. He was flushed, and showed still the touch of uneasiness and excitement he had betrayed in the morning.

"I'm glad you've come," he said. "I'm out of soarts—or something."

He ended with a short laugh, and turned about to pour out a glass of wine. In doing so his hand trembled so that a few drops fell upon it. He shook them off angrily.

"What's up with me?" he said.

He drained the glass at a draught, and filled it again.

"I saw Ffrench to-day," he said. "I saw them both."

"Both!" repeated Murdoch, wondering at him.

"Yes. She is with him."

"She !" and then remembering the episode of the hankerchief, he added, rather slowly, "You mean Miss Ffrench?"

Haworth nodded.

He was pushing his glass to and fro with shaking hands, his voice was hoarse and uncertain.

"I passed the carriage on the road," he said, "and Ffrench stopped it to speak to me. He's not much altered. I never saw her before. She's a woman now—and a handsome woman, by George!"

The last words broke from him as if he could not control them. He looked up at Murdoch, and as their eyes met he seemed to let himself loose.

"I may as well make a clean breast of it," he said. "I'm—I'm hard hit. I'm hard hit."

Murdoch flinched. He would rather not have heard the rest. He had had emotion enough during the last few days, and this was of a kind so novel that he was overwhelmed by it. But Haworth went on.

"It's a queer thing," he said. "I can't quite make it out. I—I feel as if I must talk—about it—and yet there's naught to say. I've seen a woman that's—that's taken hold on me."

He passed his hands across his lips, which were parched and stiff.

"You know the kind of a fellow I've been," he said. "I've known women enough, and too many; but there's never been one like this. There's always been plenty like the rest. I sat and stared at this one like a blockhead. She set me trembling. It came over me all at once. I don't know what Ffrench thought. I said to myself, 'Here's the first woman that ever held me back.' She's one of your high kind, that's hard to get nigh. She's got a way to set a man mad. She'll be hard to get at, by George!"

Murdoch felt his pulse start. The man's emotion had communicated itself to him, so far at least.

"I don't know much of women," he said. "I've not been thrown among them; I——"

"No," said Haworth, roughly, "they're not in your line, lad. If they were, happen I shouldn't be so ready to speak out."

Then he began and told his story more minutely, relating how, as he drove to the Works, he had met the carriage, and Ffrench had caught sight of him and ordered the servant to stop; how he had presented his daughter, and spoken as if she had heard of him often before; how she had smiled a little, but had said nothing.

"She's got a way which makes a man feel as if she was keeping something back, and sets him to wondering what it is. She's not likely to be forgot soon; she gives a chap something to think over."

He talked fast and heatedly, and sometimes seemed to lose himself. Now and then he stopped, and sat brooding a moment in silence, and then roused himself with a start, and drank more wine and grew more flushed and excited. After one of these fitful reveries, he broke out afresh.

"I—wonder what folk'll say to her of me. They won't give me an over good name, I'll warrant. What a fool I've been! What a d—— fool I've been all my life! Let them say what they like. They'll make me black enough; but there is plenty would like to stand in Jem Haworth's shoes. I've never been beat yet. I've stood up and held my own,—and women *like* that. And as to th' name," with rough banter, "it's not chaps like you they fancy, after all."

"As to that," said Murdoch coldly, "I've told you I know nothing of women."

He felt restive without knowing why. He was glad when he could free himself and get out into the fresh night air; it seemed all the fresher after the atmosphere he had breathed in-doors.

The night was bright and mild. After cold un-spring-like weather had come an ephemeral balminess. The moon was

at full, and he stepped across the threshold into a light as clear as day.

He walked rapidly, scarcely noting the road he passed over until he had reached the house which stood alone among its trees,—the house Haworth had pointed out a few month's before. It was lighted now and its lights attracted his attention.

"It's a brighter-looking place than it was then," he said.

He never afterward could exactly recall how it was that at this moment he started, turned, and for a breath's space came to a full stop.

He had passed out of the shadow of the high boundary wall into the broad moonlight which flooded the gate-way. The iron gates were open, and a white figure stood in the light—the figure of a tall young woman who did not move.

He was so near that her dress almost touched him. In another moment he was hurrying along the road again, not having spoken, and scarcely understanding the momentary shock he had received.

"That," he said to himself,—“that was she!”

When he had reached home and opened the door of the little parlor, the girl Christian Murdoch was sitting alone by the dying fire in the grate. She turned and looked at him curiously.

"Something," she said, "has happened to you. What is it?"

"I don't know," he answered, "that anything has happened to me—anything of importance."

She turned to the fire again and sat gazing at it, rubbing the back of one hand slowly with the palm of the other as it lay on her knee.

"Something has happened to *me*," she said. "To-day I have seen some one I know."

"Some one you know?" he echoed. "Here?"

She nodded her head.

"Some one I know," she repeated, "though I do not know her name. I should like to know it."

"*Her* name," he said. "Then it is a woman?"

"Yes, a woman—a young woman. I saw her abroad—four—five times."

She began to check off the number of times on her fingers.

"In Florence once," she said. "In Munich twice; in Paris—yes, in Paris twice again."

"When and how?" he asked.

As he spoke, he thought of the unruffled serenity of the face he had just seen.

"Years ago, the first time," she answered, without the least change of tone, "in a church in Florence. I went in because I was wet and cold and hungry, and it was light and warm there. I was a little thing, and left to ramble in the streets. I liked the streets better than my mother's room. I was standing in the church, looking at the people and trying to feel warm, when a girl came in with a servant. She was handsome and well dressed, and looked almost like a woman. When she saw me she laughed. I was such a little thing, and so draggled and forlorn. That was why she laughed. The next year I saw her again, at Munich. Her room was across the street and opposite mine, and she sat at the window, amusing herself by playing with her dog and staring at me. She had forgotten me but I had not forgotten her; and she laughed at me again. In Paris it was the same thing. Our windows were opposite each other again. It was five years after, but that time she knew me, though she pretended she did not. She drove past the house to-day, and I saw her. I should like to know her name."

"I think I can tell you what it is," he said. "She is a Miss Ffrench. Her father is a Broxton man. They have a place here."

"Have they?" she asked. "Will they live here?"

"I believe so," he answered.

She sat for a moment rubbing her hand slowly as before, and then she spoke.

"So much the worse," she said,— "so much the worse for me."

She went up to her room when she left him. It was a little room in the second story, and she had become fond of it. She often sat alone there. She had been sitting at its window when Rachel Ffrench had driven by in the afternoon. The window was still open she saw as she entered, and a gust of wind passing through it had scattered several light articles about the floor. She went to pick them up. They were principally loose papers, and as she bent to raise the first one she discovered that it was yellow with age and covered with a rough drawing of some mechanical appliance. Another and another presented the same plan—drawn again and again, elaborately and with great pains at times, and then hastily as if some new thought had suggested itself. On several were written dates and on others a few words.

She was endeavoring to decipher some of these faintly written words when a fresh gust of rising wind rushed past her as she stood and immediately there fell upon her ear a slight ghostly rustle. Near her was a small unused closet whose door had been thrown open and as she turned towards it there fluttered from one of the shelves a sheet of paper yellower than the rest. She picked it up and read the words written upon the back of the drawing. They had been written twenty-six years before.

"To-day the child was born. It is a boy. By the time he is a year old my work will be done."

The girl's heart began to beat quickly. The papers rustled again and a kind of fear took possession of her.

"*He* wrote it," she said aloud. "The man who is dead—who is *dead*; and it was not finished at all."

She closed the window, eager to shut out the wind; then

she closed the door and went back to the papers. Her fancies concerning Stephen Murdoch had taken very definite shape from the first. She knew two things of him ; that he had been gentle and unworldly, and that he had cherished throughout his life a hope which had eluded him until death had come between him and his patient and unflagging labor.

The sight of the yellow faded papers moved her to powerful feeling. She had never had a friend ; she had stood alone from her earliest childhood, and here was a creature who had been desolate too—who must have been desolate, since he had been impelled to write the simple outcome of his thoughts again and again upon the paper he wrought on, as if no human being had been near to hear. It was this which touched her most of all. There was scarcely a sheet upon which some few words were not written. Each new plan bore its date, and some hopeful or weary thought. He had been tired often but never faithless to his belief. The end was never very far off. A few days, one more touch would bring it,—and then he had forgotten all the past.

"I can afford to forget it," he said once. "It only seems strange now that it should have lasted so long when so few steps remain to be taken."

These words had been written on his leaving America. He was ready for his departure. They were the last record. When she had read them, Christian pushed the papers away and sat gazing into space with dilated eyes.

"He died," she said. "He is *dead*. Nothing can bring him back ; and it is forgotten."

CHAPTER XII.

GRANNY DIXON.

THE next time Janey brought her father's dinner to the Yard she sought out Murdoch in a dejected mood. She found him

reading over his lunch in the sunshine, and she sat down opposite to him, folding her arms on her lap.

"We're i' trouble again at our house," she said. "We're allus i' trouble. If it is na one thing, it's another."

Murdoch shut his book and leaned back upon his pile of lumber to listen. He always listened.

"What is it this time?" he asked.

"This toime?" querulously. "This is th' worst o' th' lot. Granny Dixon's come back."

"Granny Dixon?"

Janey shook her head.

"Tha knows nowt about her," she said. "I nivver tow'd thee nowt. She's my feyther's grandmother an' she's ower ninety years owd, an' she's gotten money. If it wur na fur that no one ud stand her, but"—with a sigh—"foak conna turn away brass."

Having relieved herself of this sentiment she plunged into the subject with fresh asperity.

"Theer's no knowin' how to tak' her," she said. "Yo mun shout at th' top o' yore voice to mak' her hear. An' she wun not let nowt go by. She mun hear aw as is goin'. She's out wi' Mester Hixon at th' chapel because she says she conna hear him an' he does it a-purpose. When she wur out wi' ivverybody else she used to say she wur goin' to leave her brass to him, an' she invited him to tea ivvery neet fur a week, an' had him set by her chair an' talk. It wur summer toime an' I've seed him set an' shout wi' th' sweat a-pourin' down his face an' his neck-tie aw o' one soide, an' at th' eend o' a week he had a quinsy, as wur nigh bein' th' eend o' him. An' she nivver forgive him. She said as he wur an impident chap as thowt hissen too good for his betters."

Murdoch expressed his sympathy promptly.

"I wish tha'd coom up an' talk to her some day thysen," said Janey. "It ud rest us a bit," candidly. "Yo're gotten th' kind o' voice to mak' folk hear, though yo' dunnot speak so

loud, an' if yo' get close up to her ear an' say things slow, yo'd get used to it i' toime."

"I'll come some day," answered Murdoch, speculating with some doubt as to the possible result of the visit.

Her mind relieved, Janey rose to take her departure. Suddenly, however, a new idea presented itself to her active mind.

"Has tha seen Miss Ffrench yet?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered.

"What does tha think on her?"

He picked up his book and re-opened it.

"I only saw her for an instant," he said. "I hadn't time to think anything."

On his way from his work a few days later, he stopped at the Briarley cottage. It was swept and garnished; there were no traces of the children about. Before he reached the house, there had been borne to him the sound of a voice reading at its highest and shrillest pitch, and he had recognized it as Janey's.

As he entered, that young person rose panting from her seat, in her eagerness almost dropping the graphically illustrated paper she held in her hand.

"Eh!" she exclaimed. "I *am* glad to see thee! I could na ha' stood it mich longer. She would ha' me read the 'To-be-continyerd' one, an' I've bin at it nigh an hour."

Granny Dixon turned on her sharply.

"What art tha stoppin' fur?" she demanded. "What's th' matter wi' thee?"

Murdoch gave a slight start. The sound was so tremendous that it seemed almost impossible that it should proceed from the small and shriveled figure in the arm-chair.

"What art tha stoppin' fur?" she repeated. "Get on wi' thee."

Janey drew near and spoke in her ear.

"It's Mester Murdoch," she proclaimed; "him as I tow'd yo' on."

The little bent figure turned slowly and Murdoch felt himself transfixed by the gaze of a pair of large keen eyes. They had been handsome eyes half a century before, and the wrinkled and seamed face had had its comeliness too.

"Tha' said he wur a workin' mon," she cried, after a pause. "What did tha tell me that theer fur?"

"He *is* a workin' mon," said Janey. "He's gotten his work-cloas on now. Does na tha see 'em."

"Cloas!" announced the Voice again. "Cloas i'deed! A mon is na made out o' cloas. I've seed workin' men afore i' my day, an' I know 'em."

Then she extended her hand, crooking the forefinger like a claw, in a beckoning gesture.

"Coom tha here," she commanded, "and set thyself down to talk to me."

She gave the order in the manner of a female potentate, and Murdoch obeyed her with a sense of overpowering fascination.

"Wheer art tha fro'?" she demanded.

He made his reply, "From America," as distinct as possible, and was relieved to find that it reached her at once.

"'Merica?" she repeated. "I've heerd o' 'Merica often enow. That's wheer th' blacks live, an' th' Indians. I knowed a young chap as went theer, an' th' Indians scalped him. He went theer because I would na ha' him. It wur when I wur a lass."

She paused a moment and then said the last words over again, nodding her head with a touch of grim satisfaction.

"He went theer because I would na ha' him. It wur when I wur a lass."

He was watching her so intently that he was quite startled a second time when she turned her eyes upon him and spoke again, still nodding.

"I wur a han'some lass," she said. "I wur a han'some lass seventy year' ago."

It was quite plain that she had been. The thing which was

least pleasant about her now was a certain dead and withered suggestion of a beauty of a not altogether sinless order.

The recollection of the fact seemed to enliven her so far that she was inspired to conducting the greater part of the conversation herself. Her voice grew louder and louder, a dull red began to show itself on her cheeks and her eyes sparkled. She had been "a han'some lass, seventy year' ago, an' had had her day -- as theer wur dead folk could tell."

"She'll go on i' that road aw neet, if summat dunnot tak' her off it," said Janey. "She loikes to talk about that theer better than owt else."

But something did happen "to tak' her off it."

"Tha'st gotten some reason i' thee," she announced. "Tha does na oppen tha mouth as if tha wanted to swally folk when tha says what tha'st gotten to say. Theer's no workin' men's ways about thee—cloas or no cloas."

"That's th' way she goes on," said Janey. "She canna bide folk to look soft when they'se shoutin' to her. That was one o' th' things she had agen Mester Hixon. She said he gotten so red i' th' face it put her out o' patience."

"I loike a mon as is na a foo'," proclaimed Granny Dixon. But there her voice changed and grew sharp and tremulous. "Wheer's that flower?" she cried. "Who's gotten it?"

Janey turned toward the door and uttered a shrill little cry of excitement.

"It's Miss Ffrench," she said. "She's—she's standin' at th' door."

It would have been impossible to judge from her expression how long she had been there. She stood upon the threshold with a faint smile upon her lips, and spoke to Janey.

"I want to see your mother," she said.

"I'll—I'll go and tell her," the child faltered. "Will yo' coom in?"

She hesitated a second and then came in. Murdoch had arisen. She did not seem to see him as she passed before

him to reach the chair in which she sat down. In fact she expressed scarcely a shadow of recognition of her surroundings. But upon Granny Dixon had fallen a sudden feverish tremor.

"Who did she say yo' wur?" she cried. "I did na hear her."

The visitor turned and confronted her.

"I am Rachael Ffrench," she answered in a clear, high voice.

The dull red deepened upon the old woman's cheeks, and her eyes gained new fire.

"Yo're a good un to mak' a body hear," she said. "An' I know yo'."

Miss Ffrench made no reply. She smiled incredulously at the fire.

The old woman moved restlessly.

"Ay, but I do," she cried. "I know yo'. Yo're Ffrench fro' head to foot. Wheer did yo' get that?"

She was pointing at a flower at Miss Ffrench's throat—a white, strongly fragrant, hot-house flower. Miss Ffrench cast a downward glance at it.

"There are plenty to be had," she said. "I got it from home."

"I've seen 'em before," said Granny Dixon. "He used to wear 'em i' his button-hole."

Miss Ffrench made no reply and she went on, her tones increasing in volume with excitement.

"I'm talkin' o' Will Ffrench," she said. "He wur thy gran'feyther. He wur dead afore yo' wur born."

Miss Ffrench seemed scarcely interested, but Granny Dixon had not finished.

"He wur a bad un!" she cried. "He wur a devil! He wur a devil out an' out. I knowed him an' he knowed me."

Then she bent forward and touched Miss Ffrench's arm.

"Theer wur na worse un nor a bigger devil nowheer," she said. "An' yo're th' very moral on him."

Miss Ffrench got up and turned toward the door to speak to Mrs. Briarley, who that moment arrived in great haste carrying the baby, out of breath, and stumbling in her tremor at receiving gentlefolk company.

"Your visitor has been talking to me," she remarked, her little smile showing itself again. "She says my grandfather was a devil."

She answered all Mrs. Briarley's terrified apologies with the same little smile. She had been passing by and had remembered that the housekeeper needed assistance in some matter and it had occurred to her to come in. That was all, and having explained herself, she went away as she had come.

"Eh !" fretted Mrs. Briarley, "to think o' that theer owd besom talkin' i' that rood to a lady. That's allus th' way wi' her. She'd mak' trouble anywheer. She made trouble enow when she wur young. She wur na no better than she should be then, an' she's nowt so mich better now."

"What's that tha'rt sayin'?" demanded the Voice. "A noice way that wur fur a lady to go out wi'out so much as sayin' good-day to a body. She's as loike him as two peas—an' he *wur* a devil. Here," to Murdoch, "pick up that theer flower she's dropped."

Murdoch turned to the place she pointed out. The white flower lay upon the flagged floor. He picked it up and handed it to her with a vague recognition of the powerfulness of its fragrance. She took it and sat mumbling over it.

"It's th' very same," she muttered. "He used to wear 'em i' his button-hole when he coom. An' she's the very moral on him."

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. FFRENCH VISITS THE WORKS.

THERE were few men in Broxton or the country surrounding it who were better known than Gerard Ffrench. In the first place, he belonged, as it were, to Broxton, and his family for several generations back had belonged to it. His grandfather had come to the place a rich man and had built a huge house outside the village, and as the village had become a town the Ffrenchs had held their heads high. They had confined themselves to Broxton until Gerard Ffrench took his place. They had spent their lives there and their money. Those who lived to remember the youth and manhood of the present Ffrench's father had, like Granny Dixon, their stories to tell. His son, however, was a man of different mold. There were no evil stories of him. He was a well-bred and agreeable person and lived a refined life. But he was a man with tastes which scarcely belonged to his degree.

"I ought to have been born in the lower classes and have had my way to make," he had been heard to say.

Unfortunately, however, he had been born a gentleman of leisure and educated as one. But this did not prevent him from indulging in his proclivities. He had made more than one wild business venture which had electrified his neighbors. Once he had been on the verge of a great success and again he overstepped the verge of a great loss. He had lost money, but he had never lost confidence in his business ability.

"I have gained experience," he said. "I shall know better next time."

His wife had died early and his daughter had spent her girlhood with a relative abroad. She had developed into beauty so faultless that it had been said that its order belonged rather to the world of pedestals and catalogues than to ordinary young womanhood.

But the truth was that she was not an ordinary young woman at all.

"I suppose," she said at dinner on the evening of her visit to the Briarley cottage,—“I suppose these work people are very radical in their views.”

“Why?” asked her father.

“I went into a cottage this afternoon and found a young workman there in his working clothes, and instead of leaving the room he remained in it as if that was the most natural thing to do. It struck me that he must belong to the class of people we read of.”

“I don't know much of the political state of affairs now,” said Mr. Ffrench. “Some of these fellows are always bad enough, and this Haworth rose from the ranks. He was a foundry lad himself.”

“I met Mr. Haworth, too,” said Miss Ffrench. “He stopped in the street to stand looking after the carriage. He is a very big person.”

“He is a very successful fellow,” with something like a sigh. “A man who has made of himself what he has through sheer power of will and business capacity is a genius.”

“What has he made of himself?” inquired Miss Ffrench.

“Well,” replied her father, “the man is actually a millionaire. He is at the head of his branch of the trade; he leads the other manufacturers; he is a kind of king in the place. People may ignore him if they choose. He does not care, and there is no reason why he should.”

Mr. Ffrench became rather excited. He flushed and spoke uneasily.

“There are plenty of gentlemen,” he said. “We have gentlemen enough and to spare, but we have few men who can make a path through the world for themselves as he has done. For my part, I admire the man. He has the kind of face which moves me to admiration.”

“I dare say,” said Miss French, slowly, “that you would

have admired the young workman I saw. It struck me at the time that you would."

"By the bye," her father asked with a new interest, "what kind of a young fellow was he? Perhaps it was the young fellow who is half American and——"

"He did not look like an Englishman," she interrupted. "He was too dark and tall and unconscious of himself, in spite of his awkwardness. He did not know that he was out of place."

"I have no doubt it was this Murdoch. He is a peculiar fellow, and I am as much interested in him as in Haworth. His father was a Lancashire man,—a half-crazy inventor who died leaving an unfinished model which was to have made his fortune. I have heard a great deal of the son. I wish I had seen him."

Rachel Ffrench made no reply. She had heard this kind of thing before. There had been a young man from Cumberland who had been on the point of inventing a new propelling power, but had, somehow or other, not done it; there had been a machinist from Manchester who had created an entirely new order of loom—which had not worked; and there had been half a dozen smaller lights whose inventions, though less involved, would still have made fortunes—if they had been quite practical. But Mr. Ffrench had mounted his hobby, which always stood saddled and bridled. He talked of Haworth and Haworth's success, the Works and thier machinery. He calculated the expenses and the returns of the business. He even took out his tablets to get at the profits more accurately, and got down the possible cost of various improvements which had suggested themselves.

"He has done so much," he said, "that it would be easy for him to do more. He could accomplish anything if he were a better educated man—or had an educated man as partner. They say," he remarked afterward, "that this Murdoch is not an ignoramus by any means. I hear that he has a positive

passion for books and that he has made several quite remarkable improvements and additions to the machinery at the Works. It would be an odd thing," biting the end of his pencil with a thoughtful air, "it would be a *dramatic* sort of thing if he should make a success of the idea the poor fellow, his father, left incomplete."

Indeed Miss Ffrench was quite prepared for his after-statement that he intended to pay a visit to the Works and their owner the next morning, though she could not altogether account for the slight hint of secret embarrassment which she fancied displayed itself when he made the announcement.

"It's true the man is rough and high-handed enough," he said. He has not been too civil in his behavior to me in times gone by, but I should like to know more of him in spite of it. He is worth cultivating."

He appeared at the Works the following morning, awakening thereby some interest among the shrewder spirits who knew him of old.

"What's he up to now?" they said to each other. "He's gotten some crank i' his yed or he would na be here."

Not being at any time specially shrewd in the study of human nature, it must be confessed that Mr. Ffrench was not prepared for the reception he met with in the owner's room. In his previous rare interviews with Jem Haworth he had been accorded but slight respect. His advances had been met in a manner savoring of rough contempt, his ephemeral hobbies disposed of with the amiable candor of the practical and not too polished mind; he knew he had been jeered at openly at times, and now the man who had regarded him lightly and as if he felt that he held the upper hand, received him almost with a confused, self-conscious air. He even flushed when he got up and awkwardly shook hands. "Perhaps," said his visitor to himself, "events have taught him to feel the lack in himself after all."

"I looked forward, before my return, to calling upon you,"

he said aloud. "And I am glad to have the opportunity at last."

Haworth reseated himself after giving him a chair, and answered with a nod and a somewhat incoherent welcome.

Ffrench settled himself with an agreeable consciousness of being less at a loss before the man than he had ever been in his life.

"What I have seen abroad," he said, "has added to the interest I have always felt in our own manufactures. You know that is a thing I have always cared for most. People have called it my hobby, though I don't think that is quite the right name for it. You have done a great deal since I went away."

"I shall do more yet," said Haworth with effort, "before I've done with the thing."

"You've done a good deal for Broxton. The place has grown wonderfully. Those cottages of yours are good work."

Haworth warmed up. His hand fell upon the table before him heavily.

"It's not Broxton I'm aimin' at," he said. "Broxton's naught to me. I'll have good work or none. It's this place here I'm at work on. I've said I'd set 'Haworth's' above 'em all, and I'll do it."

"You have done it already," answered Ffrench.

"Ay, but I tell you I'll set it higher yet. I've got the money and I've got the will. There's none on 'em can back down Jem Haworth."

"No," said Ffrench, suddenly and unaccountably conscious of a weakness in himself and his position. He did not quite understand the man. His heat was a little confusing.

This," he decided mentally, "is *his* hobby."

He sat and listened with real excitement as Haworth launched out more freely and with a stronger touch of braggadocio.

He had set out in his own line and he meant to follow it in

spite of all the gentlemen manufacturers in England. He had asked for help from none of them, and they had given him none. He'd brought up the trade and he'd made money. There wasn't a bigger place in the country than "Haworth's," nor a place that did the work it did. He'd have naught cheap and he'd have no fancy prices. The chaps that worked for him knew their business and knew they'd lose naught by sticking to it. The knew, too, they'd got a master who looked sharp after 'em and stood no cheek nor no slack dodges.

"I've got the best lot in the trade under me," he said "I've got a young chap in the engine-room as knows more about machinery than half the top-sawyers in England. By George! I wish I knew as much. He's a quiet chap and he's young; but if he knew how to look a bit sharper after himself he'd make his fortune. The trouble is he's too quiet and a bit too much of a gentleman without knowing it. By George! he *is* a gentleman, if he is naught but Jem Haworth's engineer."

"He is proud of the fellow," thought Ffrench. "*Proud* of him, because he *is* a gentleman."

"He knows what's worth knowing," Haworth went on. "And he keeps it to himself till the time comes to use it. He's a chap that keeps his mouth shut. He comes up to my house and reads my books. I've not been brought up to books myself, but there's none of em *he* can't tackle. He's welcome to use aught I've got. I'm not such a fool as to grudge him what all my brass won't buy me."

"I think I've heard of him," said Ffrench. "You mean Murdoch."

"Ay," Haworth answered, "I mean Murdoch; and there's not many chaps like him. He's the only one of the sort I ever run up against."

"I should like to see him," said Ffrench. "My daughter saw him yesterday in one of the workmen's cottages and," with a faint smile, "he struck her as having rather the air of a radical. It was one of her feminine fancies."

There was a moment's halt and then Haworth made his reply as forcibly as ever.

"Radical be hanged," he said. "He's got work o' his own to attend to. He's one of the kind as leaves th' radicals alone. He's a straightforward chap that cares more for his books than aught else. I won't say," a trifle grudgingly, "that he's not a bit too straight in some things."

There was a halt again here which Ffrench rather wondered at; then Haworth spoke again, bluntly and yet lagging a little.

"I—I saw her, Miss Ffrench, myself yesterday. I was walking down the street when her carriage passed."

Ffrench looked at him with an inward start. It was his turn to flush now.

"I think," he said, "that she mentioned it to me."

He even appeared a trifle pre-occupied for some minutes afterward and when he roused himself laughed and spoke nervously. The color did not die out of his face during the remainder of his visit; even after he had made the tour of the Works and looked at the machinery and given a good deal of information concerning the manner in which they were done on the Continent, it was still there and perhaps it deepened slightly as he spoke his parting words.

"Then," he said, "I—we shall have the pleasure of seeing you at dinner to-morrow evening?"

"Yes," Haworth answered, "I'll be there."

CHAPTER XIV.

NEARLY AN ACCIDENT.

It was Rachel Ffrench who received her father's guest the following evening. Mr. Ffrench had been delayed in his return from town and was still in his dressing-room, and accordingly when Haworth was announced, the doors of the drawing-

room being flung open revealed to him only the figure of his host's daughter.

The room was long and stately, and after she had risen from her seat it took Miss Ffrench some little time to make her way from one end to the other. Haworth had unconsciously halted after crossing the threshold, and it was not until she was half-way down the room that he bestirred himself to advance to meet her. He did not know why he had paused at first, and his sudden knowledge that he had done so roused him to a momentary savage anger.

"Dang it!" he said to himself, "Why did I stand there like a fool?"

The reason could not be explained briefly. His own house was a far more splendid affair than Ffrench's, and among his visitors from London and Manchester there were costumes far more gorgeous than that of Miss Ffrench. He was used to the flash of jewels and the gloss of brilliant colors. Miss Ffrench wore no ornaments at all, and her dark purple dress was simple and close-clinging.

A couple of paces from him she stopped and held out her hand.

"My father will be glad to see you," she said. "He was, unfortunately, detained this evening by business. He will be down stairs in a few moments."

His sense of being at a disadvantage when, after she had led him back to the fire, they were seated, was overwhelming. A great heat rushed over him; the hush of the room, broken only by the light ticking of the clock, was misery. His eye traveled stealthily from the hem of her dark purple gown to the crowning waves of her fair hair, but he had not a word to utter. It made him feel almost brutal.

"But the day'll come *yet*," he protested inwardly, and feeling his weakness as he thought it, "when I'll hold my own. I've done it before, and I'll do it again."

Miss Ffrench regarded him with a clear and direct gaze.

She did not look away from him at all ; she was not at all embarrassed, and though she did not smile, the calmness of her face was quite as perfect in expression.

"My father told me of his visit to your place," she said. "He interested me very much. I should like to see the Works, if you admit visitors. I know nothing of such things."

"Any time you choose to come," he answered, "I'll show you round—and be glad to do it. It's a pretty big place of the kind."

He was glad she had chosen this subject. If she would only go on, it would not be so bad. He would be in his own groove. And she did go on.

"I've seen very little of Broxton," she proceeded. "I spent a few weeks here before going abroad again with my father, and I cannot say I have been very fond of it. I do not like England, and on the Continent one hears unpleasant things of English manufacturing towns. "I think," smiling a little for the first time, "that one always associates them with 'strikes' and squalid people."

"There is not much danger of strikes here," he replied. "I give my chaps fair play and let 'em know who's master."

"But they have radical clubs," she said, "and talk politics and get angry when they are not sober. I've heard that much already."

"They don't talk 'em in *my* place," he answered, dogmatically.

He was not quite sure whether it relieved him or not when Ffrench entered at this moment and interrupted them. He was more at his ease with Ffrench, and yet he felt himself at a disadvantage still. He scarcely knew how the night passed. A feverish unrest was upon him. Sometimes he hardly heard what his entertainer said, and Mr. Ffrench was in one of his most voluble and diffuse moods. He displayed his knowledge of trade and mechanics with gentlemanly ostentation ; he talked of "Trades' Unions" and the master's difficulties ; he

introduced manufacturers' politics and expiated on Continental weakness. He weighed the question of demand and supply and touched on "protective tariff."

"Blast him," said Haworth, growing bitter mentally, "he thinks I'm up to naught else, and he's right."

As her father talked Miss Ffrench joined in but seldom. She listened and looked on in a manner of which Haworth was conscious from first to last. The thought made its way into his mind, finally, that she looked on as if these matters did not touch her at all and she was only faintly curious about them. Her eyes rested on himself with a secret air of watchful interest; he met them more than once as he looked up and she did not turn them away. He sat through it all, full of vengeful resentment, and was at once wretched and happy, in spite of it and himself.

When, at her father's request, she played and sang, he sat apart moody and yet full of clumsy rapture. He knew nothing of the music, but his passion found a tongue in it, nevertheless. If she had played badly he would have taken the lack of harmony for granted, but as she played well he experienced a pleasure, while he did not comprehend.

When it was all over and he found himself out alone in the road in the dark, he was feverish still and his throat was dry.

"I don't seem to have made naught," he said, "at th' first sight." Then he added with dogged exultation, "But I don't look for smooth sailing. I know enough for that. I've seen her and been nigh her, and that's worth setting down—with a chap like me."

At the end of the week a carriage drove up to the gate-way of the Works, and Mr. Ffrench and his daughter descended from it. Mr. Ffrench was in the best of humors; he was in his element as he expatiated upon the size and appointments of the place. He had been expatiating upon them during the whole of the drive.

On their being joined by Haworth himself, Miss Ffrench

decided inwardly that here upon his own domain he was not so wholly objectionable as she had fancied at first—even that he was deserving of a certain degree of approval. Despite the signs of elated excitement, her quick eye detected at once that he was more at his ease. His big frame did not look out of place; he moved as if he was at home, and upon the whole his rough air of authority and the promptness with which his commands were obeyed did not displease her.

"He is master," she said to herself.

She was fond of power and liked the evidence of it in others. She did not object to the looks the men, who were at work, cast upon her as she went from one department to another. Her beauty had never yet failed to command masculine homage from all ranks. The great black fellows at the furnaces exchanged comments as she passed. They would have paused in their work to look at her if they had dared, but they did not dare. The object of their admiration bore it calmly; it neither confounded nor touched her; it did not move her at all.

Mr. Ffrench commented, examined and explained with delightful eloquence.

"We are fortunate in timing our visit so well," he said to his daughter. "They are filling an immense order for the most important railroad in the country. On my honor, I would rather be at the head of such a gigantic establishment than sit on the throne of England! But where is this *protégé* of yours?" he said to Haworth at last. "I should like above all things to see him."

"Murdoch?" answered Haworth. "Oh, we're coming to him after a bit. He's in among the engines."

When they reached the engine-rooms Haworth presented him with little ceremony, and explained the purpose of their visit. They wanted to see the engines and he was the man to make the most of them.

Mr. Ffrench's interest was awakened readily. The mechanic from Cumberland had been a pretentious ignoramus; the

young man from Manchester had dropped his aspirates and worn loud plaids and flaming neck-ties, but this was a less objectionable form of genius.

Mr. Ffrench began to ask questions and make himself agreeable, and in a short time was very well entertained indeed.

Miss Ffrench listened with but slight demonstrations of interest. She did not understand the conversation which was being carried on between her father and Murdoch, and she made no pretense of doing so.

"It is all very clear to *them*," she said to Haworth as they stood near each other.

"It's all clear enough to him," said Haworth, signifying Murdoch with a gesture.

Upon which Miss Ffrench smiled a little. She was not sensitive upon the subject of her father's hobbies, and the coarse frankness of the remark amused her.

But notwithstanding her lack of interest she drew nearer to the engine finally and stood looking at it, feeling at once fascinated and unpleasantly over-powered by its heavy, invariable motion.

It was as she stood in this way a little later that Murdoch's glance fell upon her. The next instant, with the simultaneous cry of terror which broke from the others, he had thrown himself forward and dragged her back by main force, and among the thunderous wheels and rods and shafts there was slowly twisted and torn and ground into shreds a fragment of the delicate fabric of her dress. It was scarcely the work of a second. Her father staggered toward them white and trembling.

"Good God!" he cried. "Good God! What——" the words died upon his bloodless lips.

She freed herself from Murdoch's grasp and stood upright. She did not look at him at all, she looked at her father and lightly brushed with her hand her sleeve at the wrist. Despite her palor it was difficult to realize that she only held herself erect by a terrible effort of self-control.

"Why"—she said—"why did he touch me—in that manner?"

Haworth uttered a smothered oath; Murdoch turned about and strode out of the room. He did not care to remain to hear the explanation.

As he went out into the open air a fellow-workman, passing by, stopped to stare at him.

"What's up wi' thee?" he asked. "Has tha been punsin Haworth o'er again?" The incident referred to being always remembered as a savory and delectable piece of humor.

Murdoch turned to him with a dazed look.

"I—" he stammered. "We—have very nearly had an accident." And went on his way without further explanation.

CHAPTER XV.

"IT WOULD BE A GOOD THING."

Exciting events were not so common in Broxton and its vicinity that this one could remain in the background. It furnished a topic of conversation for the dinner and tea-tables of every family within ten miles of the place. On Murdoch's next visit to the Briarleys', Granny Dixon insisted on having the matter explained for the fortieth time and was manifestly disgusted by the lack of dramatic incident connected with it.

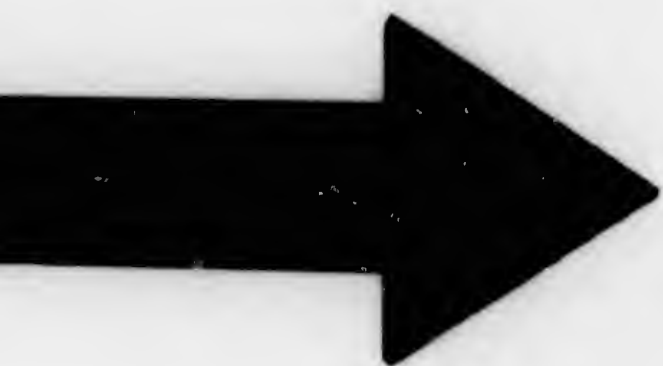
"Tha seed her dress catch i' th' wheel an' dragged her back," she shouted. "Was na theer nowt else? Did na she swoond away, nor nothin'?"

"No," he answered. "She did not know what had happened at first."

Granny Dixon gave him a shrewd glance of examination and then favored him with a confidential remark, presented at the top of her voice.

"I conna bide her," she said,





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"What did Mr. Ffrench say to thee?" asked Janey. "Does tha think he'll gie thee owt fur it?"

"No," answered Murdoch. "He wont do that."

"He owt to," said Janey fretfully. "An' tha owt to tak' it, if he does. Tha does na think enow o' money an' th' loike. Yo'll nivver get on i' th' world if yo' mak' light o' money an' let it slip by yo'."

Floxham had told the story somewhat surlily to his friends, and his friends had retailed it over their beer, and the particulars had thus become common property.

"What did she say?" Floxham had remarked at the first relation. "She said nowt, that's what she said. She did na quoite mak' th' thing out at first, an' she stood theer brushin' th' black off her sleeve. Happen," sardonically, "she did na loike th' notion o' a working chap catchin' howd on her wi'out apologizin'."

Haworth asked Murdoch to spend an evening with him, and sat moody and silent through the greater part of it. At last he said :

"You think you've been devilish badly treated," he said. "But, by the Lord ! I wish I was in your place."

"You wish," repeated Murdoch, "that you were in my place? I don't know that it is a particularly pleasant place to be in."

Haworth leaned forward upon the table and stared across at him gloomily.

"Look here," he said. "You know naught about her. She's hard to get at ; but she'll remember what's happened ; cool as she took it, she'll remember it."

"I don't want her to remember it," returned Murdoch. "Why should it matter? It's a thing of yesterday. It was nothing but chance. Let it go."

"Confound it !" said Haworth, with a restive moroseness. "I tell you I wish I'd been in your place—at twice the risk."

The same day Mr. Ffrench had made a pilgrimage to the

Works for the purpose of setting his mind at rest and expressing his gratitude in a graceful manner. In fact he was rather glad of the opportunity to present himself upon the ground so soon again. But on confronting the hero of the hour, he found that somehow the affair dwindled and assumed an altogether incidental and unheroic aspect. His rather high-flown phrases modified themselves and took a different tone.

"He is either very reserved or very shy," he said afterward to his daughter. "It is not easy to reach him at the outset. There seems a lack of enthusiasm about him, so to speak."

"Will he come to the house?" asked Miss Ffrench.

"Oh yes. I suppose he will come, but it was very plain that he would rather have stayed away. He had too much good taste to refuse point-blank to let you speak to him."

"Good taste!" repeated Miss Ffrench.

Her father turned upon her with manifest irritation.

"Good taste!" he repeated petulantly. "Cannot you see that the poor fellow is a gentleman? I wish you would show less of this nonsensical caste prejudice, Rachel."

"I suppose one necessarily dispenses with a good deal of it in a place like this," she answered. "In making friends with Mr. Haworth, for instance——"

Mr. Ffrench drew nearer to her and rested his elbow upon the mantel with rather an embarrassed expression.

"I wish you to—to behave well to Haworth," he said faltering, "I—a great deal may—may depend upon it."

She looked at him at once, lifting her eyes in a serene glance.

"Do you want to go in the iron trade?" she asked relentlessly.

He blushed scarlet, but she did not move her eyes from his face on that account.

"What—what Haworth needs," he stammered, "is a—a man of education to—to assist him. A man who had studied the scientific features of—of things, might suggest valuable

ideas to him. There is an—an immense field open to a rich, enterprising fellow such as he is—a man who is fearless and—and who has the means to carry out his ventures."

"You mean a man who will try to do new things," she remarked. "Do you think he would?"

"The trouble has been," floundering more hopelessly than ever, "that his lack of cultivation has—well, has forced him to act in a single groove. If—if he had a—a partner who—knew the ropes, so to speak—his business would be doubled—trebled."

She repeated aloud one of his words.

"A partner," she said.

He ran his hand through his hair and stared at her, wishing that he could think of something decided to say.

"Does he know you would like to be his partner?" she asked next.

"N—no," he faltered, "not exactly."

She sat a moment looking at the fire.

"I do not believe he would do it," she said at last. "He is too proud of having done everything single-handed."

Then she looked at her father again.

"If he would," she said, "and there were no rash ventures made, it would be a good thing."

CHAPTER XVI.

"A POOR CHAP AS IS ALLUS I' TROUBLE."

"It was nothing but a chance, after all," Murdoch said to Miss Ffrench, just as he had said to Haworth. "It happened that I was the first to see the danger."

She stood opposite to him upon the hearth in her father's house. Neither of them had sat down. She rested her arm

upon the low mantel and played with a flower she held in her hand. She looked at the flower as she made her reply.

"You think of it very lightly," she said with rather cold deliberateness. He did not regard her furtively as Haworth had done. Raising her eyes suddenly, after she had said this, she met his, which were fixed upon her.

"No," he answered. "Not lightly at all. It was a horrible thing. I shall never forget it."

She shuddered.

"Nor I," she said.

Then she added, rather in the tone of one reluctantly making a confession :

"I have not slept easily through one night since."

"That is very natural," he returned : "but the feeling will wear away."

He would have left her then, but she stopped him with a gesture.

"Wait a moment," she said. "There is something else."

He paused as she bade him. A slight color rose to her cheek.

"When I spoke," she said, "I did not understand at all what had happened—not at all. I was stunned and angry. I thought that if I was too near you, you might have spoken instead of doing as you did." Then with studied coldness and meeting his gaze fully, "It would have been a vile thing to have said—if I had understood."

"Yes," he answered. "It would have been a vile thing, if you had understood ; but you did not, and I realized that when I had time to think over it coolly."

"Then at first," she put it to him, "it made you angry?"

"Yes. I had run some risk, you know, and had had the luck to save your life."

The interview ended here, and it was some time before they met again.

But Murdoch heard of her often ; so often indeed that she

was kept pretty constantly before him. He heard of her from Haworth, from the Briarleys, from numberless sources indeed.

It became her caprice to make a kind of study of the people around her and to find entertainment in it. When she drove through the streets of the little town, past the workmen's cottages, and the Works themselves, she was stared at and commented upon. Her beauty, her dress, her manners roused the beholders either to lavish or grudging acknowledgment. Dirty children sometimes followed her carriage, and on its stopping at any point a small crowd gathered about it.

"She's been here again," shouted Granny Dixon one evening as Murdoch took a seat near her chair.

"Who?" he asked.

"Her. That lass o' Ffrench's—th' one I conna bide. She mak's out she's ta'en a fancy to our Janey. I dunnot believe her," at a louder pitch and with vigorous nods.

"Tha nasty tempert owd body!" cried Mrs. Briarley *sotto voce*. "Get out wi' thee!"

"What art tha sayin'?" demanded her guest. "Dunnot tell me tha wur saying' nowt. I saw thee."

"I—I wur sayin' it wur a bad day for th' wash," faltered the criminal, "an' fur them as had rheumatiz. How's—how's thine, Misses?"

"Tha'rt tellin' a lee," was the rejoinder. "Tha wert sayin' summat ill o' me. I caught thee at it."

Then going back to the subject and turning to Murdoch:

"I dunnot believe her! She cares nowt for nowt at th' top o' th' earth but hersen. She set here to-day gotten 'em to mak' foo's o' theersens because it happen't to suit her. She's gotten nowt better to do an' she wants to pass th' toime—if theer's nowt else at th' back on it. She's Will Ffrench ower again. She conna mak' a foo' o' me."

"He made foo' enow o' thee i' his day," commented Mrs. Briarley, cautiously.

Granny Dixon favored her with a sharper glance than before.

"Tha'rt sayin' summat ill again," she cried. "Howd thy tongue!"

"Eh!" whimpered the poor woman. "A body dare na say theer soul's theer own when hoo's about—hoo's that sharp an' ill-farrant."

A few minutes after Briarley came in. Janey piloted him and he entered with a smile at once apologetic and encouraging.

"He wur theer," said Janey. "But he had na had nowt."

Briarley sidled forward and seated himself upon the edge of a chair; his smile broadened steadily, but he was in a tremendous minority. Granny Dixon transfixed him with her baleful eye, and under its influence the smile was graduated from exhilarated friendliness to gravity, from gravity to gentle melancholy, from melancholy to deepest gloom. But at this stage a happy thought struck him and he beamed again.

"How—how art tha doin', Misses?" he quavered. "I hope tha'rt makin' thysen comfortable."

The reception this polite anxiety met with was not encouraging. Granny Dixon's eye assumed an expression still more baleful.

"Tha'st been at it again," she shouted. "Tha'st been at it again. Tha'll neer get none o' my brass to spend at the ale-house. Mak' sure o' that."

Mr. Briarley turned his attention to the fire again. Melancholy was upon the point of marking him for her own, when the most delicate of tact came to his rescue.

"It is na thy brass we want, Misses," he proclaimed. "It's—it's thy comp'ny." And then clenched the matter by adding still more feebly, "Ay, to be sure it's thy comp'ny, is na it, Sararann?"

"Ay," faltered Mrs. Briarley, "to be sure."

"It's nowt o' th' soart," answered Granny Dixon, in the tone of the last trump. "An dunnot yo' t'reep me down as it is."

Mr. Briarley's countenance fell. Mrs. Briarley shed a few natural tears under cover of the baby; discretion and delicacy forbade either to retort. Their venerable guest having badgered them into submission glared at the fire with the air of one who detected its feeble cunning and defied it.

It was Mr. Briarley who first attempted to recover cheerfulness.

"Tha'st had quality to see thee, Sararann," he ventured. "Our Jane tow'd me."

"Ay," answered Mrs. Briarley, tearfully.

Mr. Briarley fell into indiscreet reverie.

"The chap as gets her," he said, "'ll get a han'some lass. I would na moind," modestly, "I would na moind bein' i' his shoes mysen."

Mrs. Briarley's smothered wrongs broke forth.

"Thee!" she cried out. "Tha brazant nowt! I wonder tha'rt na sham't o' thy face—talkin' i' that rood about a lady, an' afore thy own wife! I wonder tha art na sham't."

Mr. Briarley's courage forsook him. He sought refuge in submissive penitence almost lachrymose.

"I did na mean nowt, Sararann," he protested meekly. "It wur a slip o' th' tongue, lass. I'm—I'm not th' build as a young woman o' that soart ud be loike to tak' up wi'."

"Yo' wur good enow for me onct," replied Mrs. Briarley, sharply. "A noice un yo' are settin' yore wedded wife below other people—as if she wur dirt."

"Ay, Sararann," the criminal faltered, "I wur good enow for yo' but—but—yo——"

But at this point he dropped his head upon his hand, shaking it in mournful contrition.

"I'm a poor chap," he said. "I'm nowt but a poor chap as is allus i' trouble. I'm not th' man yo' ought to ha' had, Sararann."

"Nay," retorted Mrs. Briarley. "That tha'rt not, an' it's a pity tha did na foind that theer out twelve year ago."

Mr. Briarley shook his head with a still deeper depression.

"Ay, Sararann," he answered, "seems loike it is."

He did not recover himself until Murdoch took his departure, and then he followed him deprecatingly to the door.

"Does tha think," he asked, "as that theer's true?"

"That what is true?"

"That theer th' chaps has been talkin' ower."

"I don't know," answered Murdoch, "what they have been talking over."

"They're gotten' it goin' among 'em as Haworth's goin' to tak' Ffrench in partner."

Murdoch looked up the road for a few seconds before he replied. He was thinking over the events of the past week.

"I do not think it is true," he said, after this pause. "I don't think it can be. Haworth is not the man to do it."

But the idea was such a startling one, presented in this form, that it gave him a kind of shock; and as he went on his way naturally thinking over the matter, he derived some consolation from repeating aloud his last words:

"No, it is not likely. Haworth is not the man to do it."

CHAPTER XVII.

A FLOWER.

BUT at last it was evident that the acquaintance between Haworth and Ffrench had advanced with great rapidity. Ffrench appeared at the Works, on an average, three or four times a week, and it had become a common affair for Haworth to spend an evening with him and his daughter. He was more comfortable in his position as guest in these days. Custom had given him greater ease and self-possession. After two visits he had begun to give himself up to feverish enjoy-

ment of the hour. His glances were no longer furtive and embarrassed. At times he reached a desperate boldness.

"There's something about her," he said to Murdoch, "that draws a fellow on and hoids him off both at the same time. Sometimes I nigh lose my head when I'm with her."

He was moody and resentful at times, but he went again and again, and held his own after a manner. On the occasion of the first dinner Mr. Ffrench gave to his old friends, no small excitement was created by Haworth's presence among the guests. The first man who, entering the room with his wife and daughters, caught sight of his brawny frame and rather dogged face, faltered and grew ervous, and would have turned back if he had possessed the courage to be the first to protest. Everybody else lacked the same courage, it appeared, for nobody did protest openly, though there were comments enough made in private, and as much coldness of manner as good breeding would allow.

Miss Ffrench herself was neither depressed nor ill at ease. It was reluctantly admitted that she had never appeared to a greater advantage nor in better spirits.

Before the evening was half over it was evident to all that she was not resenting the presence of her father's new found friend. She listened to his attempts at conversation with an attentive and suave little smile. If she was amusing herself at his expense, she was at the same time amusing herself at the expense of those who looked on, and was delicately defying their opinion.

Jem Haworth went home that night excited and exultant. He lay awake through the night, and went down to the Works early.

"I didn't get the worst of it, after all," he said to Murdoch. "Let 'em grin and sert if they will—'them laughs that wins.' She—she never was as handsome in her life as she was last night, and she never treated me as well. She never says

much. She only *let* a fellow come nigh and talk ; but she treated me well—in her way."

"I'm going to send for my mother," he said afterward, somewhat shamefacedly. "I'm goin' to begin a straight life ; I want naught to stand agin me. And if she's here they'll come to see here. I want all the chances I can get."

He wrote the letter to his mother the same day.

"The old lady will be glad enough to come," he said, when he had finished it. "The finery about her will trouble her a bit at first, but she'll get over it."

His day's work over, Murdoch did not return home at once. His restless habit of taking long rambles across the country had asserted itself with unusual strength, of late. He spent little time in the house. To-night he was later than usual. He came in fagged and mud-splashed. Christian was leaving the room as he entered, but stopped with her hand upon the door.

"We have had visitors," she said.

"Who?" he asked.

"Mr. Ffrench and his daughter. Mr. Ffrench wanted to see you. *She* did not come in, but sat in the carriage outside."

She shut the door and came back to the hearth.

"She despises us all!" she said. "She despises us all!"

He had flung himself into a chair and lay back, clasping his hands behind his head and looking gloomily before him.

"Sometimes I think she does," he said. "But what of that?"

She answered without looking at him.

"To be sure," she said. "What of that?"

After a little she spoke again.

"There is something I have thought of saying to you," she said. "This is it. I am happier here than I ever was before."

"I am very glad," he answered.

"I never thought of being happy," she went on, "or like other women in anything. I—I was different."

She said the words with perfect coldness.

"I was different."

"Different!" he echoed absently, and then checked himself. "Don't say that," he said. "Don't think it. It won't do. Why shouldn't you be as good and happy a woman as any who ever lived?"

She remained silent. But her silence only stirred him afresh.

"It is a bad beginning," he said. "I know it is because I have tried it. I have said to myself that I was different from other men, too."

He ended with an impatient movement and a sound half like a groan.

"Here I am," he cried, "telling myself it is better to battle against the strongest feeling of my life because I am 'different'—because there is a kind of taint in my blood. I don't begin as other men do by hoping. I begin by despairing, and yet I can't give up. How it will end, God knows!"

"I understand you better than you think," she said.

Something in her voice startled him.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Has my mother——"

He stopped and gazed at her, wondering. Some powerful emotion he could not comprehend expressed itself in her face.

"She does not speak of it often," she said. "She thinks of it always."

"Yes," he answered. "I know that. She is afraid. She is haunted by her dread of it—and," his voice dropping, "So am I."

He felt it almost an unnatural thing that he should speak so freely. He had found it rather a difficult thing to accustom himself to her presence in the house, sometimes he had even been repelled by it, and yet, just at this moment, he felt somehow as if they stood upon the same platform and were near each other.

"It will break loose some day," he cried. "And the day is not far off. I shall run the risk and either win or lose. I fight hard for every day of dull quiet I gain. When I look back over the past I feel that perhaps I am holding a chained devil; but when I look forward I forget, and doubt seems folly."

"In your place," she said, "I would risk my *life* upon it!"

The passion in her voice amazed him. He comprehended even less clearly than before.

"I know what it has cost," she said. "No one better. I am afraid to pass the door of the room where it lies, in the dark. It is like a dead thing, always there. Sometimes I fancy it is not alone and that the door might open and show me some one with it."

"What do you mean?" he said. "You speak as if——"

"You would not understand if I should tell you," she answered a little bitterly. "We are not very good friends—perhaps we never shall be—but I will tell you this again, that in your place I would never give it up—never. I would be true to *him*, if all the world were against me!"

She went away and shortly afterward he left the room himself, intending to go upstairs.

As he reached the bottom of the staircase, a light from above fell upon his face and caused him to raise it. The narrow passage itself was dark, but on the topmost stair his mother stood holding a lamp whose light struck upon him. She did not advance, but waited as he came upward, looking down at him, not speaking. Then they passed each other going their separate ways.

The next day French appeared in the engine-room itself. He had come to see Murdoch, and having seen him he went away in most excellent humor.

"What's he after?" inquired Floxham, when he was gone.

"He wants me at his house," said Murdoch. "He says he needs my opinion in some matter."

He went to the house the same evening, and gave his opinion upon the matter in question, and upon several others also. In fact, Mr. Ffrench took possession of him as he had taken possession of the young man from Manchester, and the Cumberland mechanic, though in this case he had different metal to work upon. He was amiable, generous and talkative. He exhibited his minerals, his plans for improved factories and workmen's dwelling-houses, his little collection of models which had proved impracticable, and his books on mechanics and manufactures. He was as generous as Haworth himself in the matter of his library; it was at his visitor's service whenever he chose.

As they talked Rachel Ffrench remained in the room. During the evening she went to the piano and sitting down played and sung softly as if for no other ears than her own. Once, on her father's leaving the room, she turned and spoke to Murdoch.

"You were right in saying I should outlive my terror of what happened to me," she said. "It has almost entirely worn away."

"I am glad," he answered.

She held in her belt a flower like the one which had attracted Granny Dixon's attention. As she crossed the room shortly afterward it fell upon the floor. She picked it up but, instead of replacing it, laid it carelessly on the table at Murdoch's side.

After he had risen from his chair, when on the point of leaving, he stood near this table and almost unconsciously took the flower up, and when he went out of the house he held it in his fingers.

The night was dark and his mood was pre-occupied. He scarcely thought of the path before him at all, and on passing through the gate he came without any warning upon a figure standing before it. He drew back and would have spoken had he been given the time.

"Hush," said Haworth's voice. "It's me, lad."

"What are you doing here?" asked Murdoch. "Are you going in?"

"No," surlily, "I'm not."

Murdoch said no more. Haworth turned with him and strode along by his side. But he got over his ill-temper sufficiently to speak after a few minutes.

"It's the old tale," he said. "I'm making a fool of myself. I can't keep away. I was there last night, and to-night the fit came upon me so strong that I was bound to go. But when I got there I'd had time to think it over and I couldn't make up my mind to go in. I knew I'd better give her a rest. What did French want of you?"

Murdoch explained.

"Did you see—her?"

"Yes."

"Well," restlessly, "have you naught to say about her?"

"No," coldly. "What should I have to say of her? It is no business of mine to talk her over."

"You'd talk her over if you were in my place," said Haworth. "You'd be glad enow to do it. You'd think of her night and day, and grow hot and cold at the thought of her. You—you don't know her as I do—if you did——"

They had reached the turn of the lane, and the light of the lamp which stood there fell upon them. Haworth broke off his words and stopped under the blaze. Murdoch saw his face darken with bitter passion.

"Curse you!" he said. "Where did you get it?"

Without comprehending him Murdoch looked down at his own hand at which the man was pointing, and saw in it the flower he had forgotten he held.

"This?" he said, and though he did not know why, the blood leaped to his face.

"Ay," said Haworth. "You know well enow what I mean."

Where did you get it? Do think I don't know the look on it?"

"You may, or you may not," answered Murdoch. "That is nothing to me. I took it up without thinking of it. If I had thought of it I should have left it where it was. I have no right to it—nor you either."

Haworth drew near to him.

"Give it here!" he demanded, hoarsely.

They stood and looked each other in the eye. Externally Murdoch was the calmer of the two, but he held in check a fiercer heat than he had felt for many a day.

"No," he answered. "Not I. Think over what you are doing. You will not like to remember it to-morrow. It is not mine to give nor yours to take. I have done with my share of it—there it is." And he crushed it in his hand, and flinging it, exhaling its fragrance, upon the ground, turned and went his way. He had not intended to glance backward, but he was not as strong as he thought. He did look backward before he had gone ten yards, and doing so saw Haworth bending down and gathering the bruised petals from the earth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"HAWORTH & CO."

THE next day, when he descended from his gig at the gates, instead of going to his office, Haworth went to the engine-room.

"Leave your work a bit and come into my place," he said to Murdoch. "I want you."

His tone was off-hand but not ill-humored. There was a hint of embarrassment in it. Murdoch followed him without any words. Having led the way into his office, Haworth shut the door and faced him.

"Can tha guess what I want?" he demanded.

"No," Murdoch answered.

"Well, it's easy told. You said I'd be cooler to-day, and I am. A night gives a man time to face a thing straight. I'd been making a fool of myself before you came up, but I made a bigger fool of myself afterward. There's the end on it."

"I suppose," said Murdoch, "that it was natural enough you should look at the thing differently just then. Perhaps I made a fool of myself too."

"You!" said Haworth, roughly. "You were cool enow."

Later Ffrench came in, and spent an hour with him, and after his departure Haworth made the rounds of the place in one of the worst of his moods.

"Aye," said Floxham to his companion, "that's allus th' road when he shows hissen."

The same day Janey Briarley presented herself to Mr. Ffrench's housekeeper, with a message from her mother. Having delivered her message, she was on her way from the housekeeper's room, when Miss Ffrench, who sat in the drawing-room, spoke through the open door to the servant.

"If that is the child," she said, "bring her here to me."

Janey entered the great room, awe-stricken and overpowered by its grandeur. Miss Ffrench, who sat near the fire, addressed her, turning her head over her shoulder.

"Come here," she commanded.

Janey advanced with something approaching tremor. Miss Ffrench was awe-inspiring anywhere, but Miss Ffrench amid the marvels of her own drawing-room, leaning back in her chair and regarding her confusion with a suggestion of friendly notice, was terrible.

"Sit down," she said, "and talk to me."

But here the practical mind rebelled and asserted itself, in spite of abasement of spirit.

"I haven't gotten nowt to talk about," said Janey, stoutly. "What mun I say?"

"Anything you like," responded Miss Ffrench. "I am not particular. There's a chair."

Janey seated herself in it. It was a big one, in which her small form was lost; and her parcel was a big one, but Miss Ffrench did not tell her to put it down, so she held it on her knee and was almost hidden behind it. In fact, she presented somewhat the appearance of a huge newspaper package, clasped by arms and surmounted by a small, sharp face and an immense bonnet, and with a curious appendage of short legs and big toes.

"I dunnot see," the girl was saying mentally, and with some distaste for her position, "what she wants wi' me."

But as she stared over the top of her parcel, she gradually softened. The child found Miss Ffrench well worth looking at.

"Eh!" she announced, with admiring candor. "Eh! but tha art han'some!"

"Am I?" said Rachel Ffrench. "Thank you."

"Aye," answered Janey, "tha art. I nivver seed no lady loike thee afore, let alone a young woman. I've said so mony a toime to Mester Murdoch."

"Have you?"

"Aye, I'm allus talkin' to him about thee."

"That's kind," said Rachel Ffrench. "I dare say he enjoys it. Who is he?"

"Him!" exclaimed Janey. "Dost na tha know him? Him as was at our house th' day yo' coom th' first toime. Him as dragged thee out o' th' engine."

"Oh!" said Miss French, "the engineer."

"Aye," in a tone of some discomfiture. "He's a engineer, but he is na th' common workin' soart. Granny Dixon says he's gotten gentlefolks' ways."

"I should think," remarked Miss Ffrench, "that Mrs. Dixon knew."

"Aye, she's used to gentlefolk. They've takken notice on her i' her young days. She knowed thy grandfeyther."

She gave me to understand as much," responded Miss Ffrench, smiling pleasantly at the recollection this brought to her mind.

"Yo' see mother an' me thinks a deal o' Mester Murdoch, because he is na one o' th' drinkin' soart," proceued Janey. "He's th' steady koind as is fond o' books an' th' loike. He does na mak' much at his trade, but he knows more than yo'd think for, to look at him."

"That is good news," said Miss Ffrench, cheerfully.

Janey rested her chin upon her parcel, warming to the subject.

"I should na wonder if he gotten to be a rich mon some o' these days," she went on. "He's gotten th' makin's on it in him, if he has th' luck an' looks sharp about him. I often tell him he munn look sharp."

She became so communicative, indeed, that Miss Ffrench found herself well entertained. She heard the details of Haworth's history, the reports of his prosperity and growing wealth, the comments his hands had made upon herself, and much interesting news concerning the religious condition of Broxton and "th' chapel."

It was growing dusk when the interview ended, and when she went away Janey carried an additional bundle.

"Does tha allus dress i' this road?" she had asked her hostess, and the question had suggested to Miss Ffrench a whimsical idea. She took the child upstairs and gave her maid orders to produce all the cast off finery she could find, and then she had stood by and looked on as Janey made her choice.

"She stood theer laughin' while I picked th' things out," said Janey afterward. "I dunnot know what she wur laughin' at. Yo' nivver know whether she's makin' game on you or not."

"I dunnot see as theer wur owt to laugh at," said Mrs. Briarley, indignantly.

"Nay," said Janey, "nor me neyther, but she does na laugh when theer's owt to laugh at—that's th' queer part o' it. She said as I could ha' more things when I coom again. I would na go if it wur na fur that."

Even his hands found out at this time that Howarth was ill at ease. His worst side showed itself in his intercourse with them. He was overbearing and difficult to please. He found fault and lost his temper over trifles, and showed a restless, angry desire to assert himself.

"I'll show you who's master here, my lads," he would say. "I'll ha' no dodges. It's Haworth that's the head o' this concern. Whoever comes in or out, this here's 'Haworth's.' Clap that i' your pipes and smoke it."

"Summat's up," said Floxham. "Summat's up. Mark yo' that."

Murdoch looked on with no inconsiderable anxiety. The intercourse between himself and Haworth had been broken in upon. It had received its first check month's before, and in these days neither was in the exact mood for a renewal of it. Haworth wore a forbidding air. His rough good-fellowship was a thing of the past. He made no more boisterous jokes, no more loud boasts. At times his silence was almost morose. He was not over civil even to Ffrench, who came oftener than ever, and whose manner was cheerful to buoyancy.

Matters had remained in this condition for a couple of months, when, on his way home late one night, Murdoch's attention was arrested by the fact that a light burned in the room used by the master of the Works as his office.

He stopped in the road to look up at it. He could scarcely, at first, believe the evidence of his senses. The place had been closed and locked hours before, when Haworth had left it with Ffrench, with whom he was to dine. It was nearly

midnight, and certainly an unlawful hour for such a light to show itself, but there it burned steadily amid the darkness of the night.

"It doesn't seem likely that those who had reason to conceal themselves would set a light blazing," Murdoch thought. "But if there's mischief at work there's no time to waste."

There was only one thing to do, and he did it, making the best of his way to the spot.

The gate was thrown open, and the door of entrance yielded to his hand. Inside, the darkness was profound, but when he found the passage leading to Haworth's room, he saw that the door was ajar and that the light still burned. On reaching this door he stopped short. There was no need to go in. It was Haworth himself who was in the room—Haworth, who lay with arms folded on the table, and his head resting upon them.

Murdoch turned away, and as he did so the man heard him for the first time. He lifted his head and looked round, speaking loud.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

There was no help for it. Murdoch pushed the door open and stood before him.

"Murdoch," he said. "I saw the light and it brought me up."

Haworth gave him a grudging look.

"Come in," he said.

"Do you want me?" Murdoch asked.

"Aye," he answered dully, "I think I do."

Murdoch stood and looked at him. He did not sit down. A mysterious sense of embarrassment held him in check.

"What is wrong?" he asked in a lowered voice. He hardly knew it for his own.

"Wrong?" echoed Haworth. "Naught. I've—been taking leave of the place—that's all."

"Yo' have been doing *what*?" said Murdoch.

"Taking leave of the place. I've given it up."

His visitor uttered a passionate ejaculation.

"You are mad!" he said.

"Aye," bitterly. "Mad enow."

The next instant a strange sound burst from him,—a terrible sound, forced back at its birth. His struggle to suppress it shook him from head to foot; his hands clinched themselves as if each were a vise. Murdoch turned aside.

When it was over, and the man raised his face, he was trembling still, and white with a kind of raging shame.

"Blast you!" he cried, "if there's ever aught in your face that reminds me o' this, I'll—I'll kill you!"

This Murdoch did not answer at all. There was enough to say.

"You are going to share it with Ffrench?" he said.

"Aye, with that fool. He's been at me from th' start Naught would do him but he must have his try at it. Let him. He shall play second fiddle, by the Lord Harry!"

He began plucking at some torn scraps of paper, and did not let them rest while he spoke.

"I've been over th' place from top to bottom," he said. "I held out until to-night. To-night I give in, and as soon as I left 'em I came here. Ten minutes after it was done I'd have undone it if I could—I'd have undone it. But it's done, and there's an end on it."

He threw the scraps of paper aside and clenched his hand, speaking through his teeth.

"She's never given me a word to hang on," he said, "and I've done it for her. I've give up what I worked for and boasted on, just to be brought nigher to her. She knows I've done it,—she *knows* it, though she's never owned it by a look, —and I'll make that enough."

"If you make your way with her," said Murdoch, "you have earned all you won."

"Aye," was the grim answer. "I've earned it."

And soon after the light in the window went out, and they parted outside and went their separate ways in the dark.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

BEFORE the week's end, all Broxton had heard the news. In the Works, before and after working hours, groups gathered together to talk it over. Haworth was going to "tak' Ffrench in partner." It was hard to believe it, and the general opinion expressed was neither favorable nor complimentary. "Haworth and Ffrench!" said Floxham, in sarcastic mood. "Haworth and Co.,—an' a noice chap Co. is to ha' i' a place. We'n ha' patent silver-mounted back-action puddlin'-rakes afore long, lads, if Co. gets his way."

Upon the occasion of the installation of the new partner, however, there was a natural tendency to conviviality. Not that the ceremony in question was attended with any special manifestation on the part of the individuals most concerned. Ffrench's appearance at the Works was its chief feature, but, the day's labor being at an end, several gentlemen engaged in the various departments scorning to neglect an opportunity, retired to the "Who'd 'a' Thowt it," and promptly rendered themselves insensible through the medium of beer, assisted by patriotic and somewhat involved speeches.

Mr. Briarley, returning to the bosom of his family at a late hour, sat down by his fireside and wept copiously.

"I'm a poor chap, Sararann," he remarked. "I shall ne'er get took in partner by nobody. I'm not i' luck loike some—an' I nivver wur, 'ceptin' when I gotten thee."

"If tha'd keep thy nose out o' th' beer-mug tha'd do well enow," said Mrs. Briarley,

But this did not dispel Mr. Briarley's despondency. He only wept afresh.

"Nay, Sararann," he said, "it is na beer, its misforchin. I allus was misforchnit—'ceptin' when I gotten thee."

"Things is i' a bad way," he proceeded, afterward. "Things is i' a bad way. I nivver seed 'em i' th' reet leet till I heerd Foxy Gibbs mak' his speech to-neet. Th' more beer he gotten th' eleyquenter he wur. Theer'll be trouble wi' th' back-bone an' sinoo, if theer is na summat done."

"What art tha drivin' at?" fretted his wife. "I canna mak' no sense out o' thee."

"Canna th?" he responded. "Canna thee, Sararann? Well, I dunnot wonder. It wur a good bit afore I straightened it out mysen. Happen I hannot gotten things as they mout be yet. Theer wur a good deal o' talk an' a good deal o' beer, an' a man as has been misforchnit is loike to be slow."

After which he fell into a deep and untroubled slumber, and it being found impossible to rouse him, he spent the remainder of the night in Granny Dixon's chair by the fire, occasionally startling the echoes of the silent room by a loud and encouraging "Err-err!"

During the following two weeks, Haworth did not go to the Ffrench's. He spent his nights at his own house in dull and sullen mood. At the Works, he kept his word as regarded Ffrench. That gentleman's lines had scarcely fallen in pleasant places. His partner was gruff and authoritative, and not given to enthusiasm. There were times when only his own good-breeding preserved the outward smoothness of affairs.

"But," he said to his daughter, "one does not expect good manners of a man like that. They are not his *forte*."

At the end of the two weeks there came one afternoon a message to Haworth in his room. Murdoch was with him when it arrived. He read it, and, crushing it in his hand, threw it into the fire.

"They're a nice lot," he said with a short laugh, "coming down on a fellow like that."

And then an oath broke from him.

"I've give up two or three things," he said, "and they're among 'em. It's the last time, and ——"

He took down his overcoat and began to put it on.

"Tell 'em," he said to Murdoch as he went out,— "tell 'em I'm gone home, and sha'n't be back till morning. Keep the rest to yourself."

He went out, shutting the door with a bang. Murdoch stood at the window and watched him drive away in his gig.

He was scarcely out of sight before a carriage appeared, moving at a very moderate pace. It was a bright though cold day, and the top of the carriage was thrown back, giving the occupant the benefit of the sunshine. The occupant in question was Rachael Ffrench, who looked up and bestowed upon the figure at the window a slight gesture of recognition.

Murdoch turned away with an impatient movement after she had passed. "Pooh!" he said angrily. "He's a fool."

By midnight of the same day Haworth had had time to half forget his scruples. He had said to his visitors what he had said to Murdoch, with his usual frankness.

"It's the last time. We've done with each other after this, you know. It's the last time. Make the most on it."

There was a kind of desperate exultation in his humor. If he had dared, he would have liked to fling aside every barrier of restraint and show himself at his worst, defying the world; but fear held him in check, as nothing else would have done, —an abject fear, of consequences.

By midnight the festivities were at their height. He himself was boisterous with wine and excitement. He had stood up at the head of his table and made a blatant speech and roared a loud song, and had been laughed at and applauded.

"Make the most on it," he kept saying. "It'll be over by cock-crow. It's a bit like a chap's funeral."

He had just seated himself after this, and was pouring out a great glass of wine, when a servant entered the room and spoke to him in a low tone.

"A lady, sir, as come in a cab, and——" And then the door opened again, and everyone turned to look at the woman who stood upon the threshold. She was a small woman, dressed in plain country fashion; she had white hair, and a fresh bloom on her cheeks, and her eyes were bright with timorous excitement and joy.

"Jem," she faltered, "it's me, my dear."

Haworth stared at her as if stunned. At first his brain was not clear enough to take in the meaning of her presence, but as she approached him and laid her basket down and took his hand, the truth revealed itself to him.

"It's me, my dear," she repeated, "accordin' to promise. I didn't know you had comp'ny."

She turned to those who sat about the table and made a little rustic courtesy. A dead calm seemed to take possession of one and all. They did not glance at each other, but looked at her as she stood by Haworth, holding his hand, waiting for him to kiss her.

"He's so took by surprise," she said "he doesn't know what to say. He wasn't expecting me so soon," laughing proudly. "That's it. I'm his mother, ladies and gentlemen."

Haworth made a sign to the servant who waited.

"Bring a plate here," he said. "She'll sit down with us."

The order was obeyed, and she sat down at his right hand, fluttered and beaming.

"You're very good not to mind me," she said. "I didn't think of there bein' comp'ny—and gentry, too."

She turned to a brightly dressed girl at her side and spoke to her.

"He's my only son, Miss, and me a widder, an' he's allers been just what you see him now. He was good from the

time he was a infant. He's been a pride an' a comfort to me since the day he were born."

The girl stared at her with a look which was almost a look of fear. She answered her in a hushed voice.

"Yes, ma'am," she said.

"Yes, Miss," happily. "There's not many mothers as can say what I can. He's never been ashamed of me, hasn't Jem. If I'd have been a lady born, he couldn't have showed me more respect than he has, nor been more kinder."

The girl did not answer this time. She looked down at her plate, and her hand trembled as she pretended to occupy herself with the fruit upon it. Then she stole a glance at the rest,—a glance at once guilty, and defiant of the smile she expected to see. But the smile was not there.

The only smile to be seen was upon the face of the little countrywoman who regarded them all with innocent reverence, and was in such bright good spirits that she did not even notice their silence.

"I've had a long journey," she said, "an' I've been pretty flustered, through not bein' used to travel. I don't know how I'd have bore up at first—bein' flustered so—if it hadn't been for everybody bein' so good to me. I'd mention my son when I had to ask anything, an' they'd smile as good-natured as could be, an' tell me in a minute."

The multiplicity of new dishes and rare wines bewildered her, but she sat through the repast simple and unashamed.

"There's some as wouldn't like me bein' so ignorant," she said, "but Jem doesn't mind."

The subject of her son's virtues was an inexhaustible one. The silence about her only gave her courage and eloquence. His childish strength and precocity, his bravery, his good temper, his generous ways, were her themes.

"He come to me in time of trouble," she said, "an' he made it lighter—an' he's been makin' it lighter ever since. Who'd have thought that a simple body like me would ever

have a grand home like this—and it earned and bought by my own son? I beg your pardon, ladies and gentlemen," looking round with happy tears. "I didn't go to do it, an' there's no reason for it, except me bein' took a little by surprise through not bein' exactly prepared for such a grand place an' gentlefolk's comp'ny, as is so good an' understands a mother's feelin's."

When the repast was at an end, she got up and made her little courtesy to them all again. If the gentlefolk would excuse her, she would bid them good night. She was tired and not used to late hours.

To the girl who sat at her side she gave an admiring smile of farewell.

"You're very pretty, my dear," she said, "if I may take the liberty, bein' a old woman. Good night! God bless you!"

When she was gone, the girl lay forward, her face hidden upon her arms on the table. For a few seconds no one spoke; then Haworth looked up from his plate, on which he kept his eyes fixed, and broke the stillness.

"If there'd been a fellow among you that had dared to show his teeth," he said. "I'd have wrung his cursed neck!"

CHAPTER XX.

MISS FFRENCH MAKES A CALL.

THE following Sunday morning, the congregation of Broxton Chapel was thrown into a state of repressed excitement. Haworth's carriage, with a couple of servants, brought his mother to enjoy Brother Hixon's eloquence. To the presence of the carriage and servants Haworth had held firm. Upon the whole, he would have preferred that she should have presented herself at the door of Broxton Old Church, which was

under the patronage of the county families and honored by their presence; but the little woman had exhibited such uneasiness at his unfolding his plan of securing the largest and handsomest pew for her that he had yielded the point.

"I've always been a chapel-goin' woman, Jem," she had said, "an' I wouldn't like to change. An' I should feel freer where there's not so many gentlefolk."

The carriage and the attending servants she had submitted to with simple obedience. There were no rented pews in Broxton Chapel, and she took her seat among the rest, innocently unconscious of the sensation her appearance had created. Every matron of the place had had time to learn who she was, and to be filled with curiosity concerning her.

Janey Briarley, by whose side she chanced to sit, knew more than all the rest, and took her under her protection at once.

"Tha'st gotten th' wrong hymn-book," she whispered audibly, having glanced at the volume the servant handed to her. "We dunnot use Wesley aw' th' toime. We use Mester Hixon's 'Songs o' Grace.' Tha can look on wi' me."

Her delicate attentions and experience quite won Dame Haworth's motherly heart.

"I never see a sharper little thing," she said, admiringly, afterward, "nor a old-fashioneder. There wasn't a tex' as she didn't find immediate, nor yet a hymn."

"Bless us!" said Mrs. Briarley, laboriously lugging the baby homeward. "An' to think o' her bein' the mistress o' that big house, wi' aw them chaps i' livery at her beck an' call. Why, she's nowt but a common body, Jane Ann. She thanked thee as simple as any other woman moight ha' done! She's noan quality. She'd gotten a silk gown on, but it wur a black un, an' not so much as a feather i' her bonnet. I'd ha' had a feather, if I'd ha' been her—a feather sets a body off. But that's allus the road wi' folk as has brass—they nivver know how to spend it."

"Nay," said Janey, "she is na quality; but she's gotten a noice way wi' her. Haworth is na quality hissen."

"She wur a noice-spoken owd body," commented Mrs. Briarley. "Seemt loike she took a fancy to thee."

Janey turned the matter over mentally, with serious thrift.

"I should na moind it if she did," she replied. "She'll ha' plenty to gi' away."

It was not long before they knew her well. She was a cheerful and neighborly little soul, and through the years of her prosperity had been given to busy and kindly charities.

In her steadfast and loving determination to please her son, she gave up her rustic habit of waiting upon herself, and wore her best gown every day, in spite of pangs of conscience. She rode instead of walked, and made courageous efforts to become accustomed to the size and magnificence of the big rooms, but, notwithstanding her faithfulness, she was a little restless.

"Not bein' used to it," she said, "I get a little lonesome or so—sometimes, though not often, my dear."

She had plenty of time to feel at a loss. Her leisure was not occupied by visitors. Broxton discussed her and smiled at her, rather good-naturedly than otherwise. It was not possible to suspect her of any ill, but it was scarcely to be anticipated that people would go to see her. One person came, however, facing public opinion with her usual calmness,—Rachel Ffrench, who presented herself one day and made her a rather long call.

On hearing the name announced, the little woman rose tremulously. She was tremulous because she was afraid that she could not play her part as mistress of her son's household to his honor. When Miss Ffrench advanced, holding out her gloved hand, she gave her a startled upward glance and dropped a little courtesy.

For a moment she forgot to ask her to be seated. When

she recollected herself, and they sat down opposite to each other, she could at first only look at her visitor in silence.

But Miss Ffrench was wholly at ease. She enjoyed the rapturous wonder she had excited with all her heart. She was very glad she had come.

"It must be very pleasant for Mr. Haworth to have you here," she said.

The woman started. A flush of joy rose upon her withered face. Her comprehension of her son's prosperity had been a limited one. Somehow she had never thought of this. Here was a beautiful, high-bred woman to whom he must be in a manner near, since she spoke of him in this way—as if he had been a gentleman born.

"Jem?" she faltered innocently. "Yes, ma'am. I hope so. He's—he's told me so."

Then she added, in some hurry :

"Not that I can be much comp'ny to him—it isn't that ; if he hadn't been what he is, and had the friends he has, I couldn't be much comp'ny for him. An' as it is, it's not likely he can need a old woman as much as his goodness makes him say he does."

Rachel Ffrench regarded her with interest.

"He is very good," she remarked, "and has a great many friends, I dare say. My father admires him greatly."

"Thank you ma'am," brightly, "though there's no one could help it. His goodness to me is more than I can tell, an' it's no wonder that others sees it in him an' is fond of him accordin'."

"No, it's no wonder," in a tone of gentle encouragement.

The flush upon the withered cheek deepened, and the old eyes lit up.

"He's thirty two year old, Miss," said the loving creature, "an' the time's to come yet when he's done a wrong or said a harsh word. He was honest an' good as a child, an' he's

honest an' good as a man. His old mother can say it from the bottom of her full heart."

"It's a very pleasant thing to be able to say," remarked her visitor.

"It's the grateful pride of my life that I can say it," with fresh tenderness. "An' to think that prosperity goes with it too. I've said to myself that I wasn't worthy of it, because I couldn't never be grateful enough. He might have been prosperous and not what he is. Many a better woman than me has had that grief to bear, an' I've been spared it."

When Miss Ffrench returned to her carriage she wore a reflective look. When she had seated herself comfortably, she spoke aloud:

"No, there are ten chances to one that she will never see the other side at all. There is not a man or woman in Broxton who would dare to tell her. I would not do it myself."

When Haworth returned at night he heard the particulars of the visit, as he had known he should when Ffrench had told him that it was his daughter's intention to call that day.

"The beautifulest young lady my old eyes ever saw, my dear," his mother said again and again. "An' to think of her comin' to see me, as if I'd been a lady like herself."

Haworth spoke but little. He seldom said much in these days. He sat at the table drinking his after-dinner wine, and putting a question now and then.

"What did she say?" he asked.

She stopped to think.

"P'raps it was me that said most," she answered, "though I didn't think so then. She asked a question or so an' seemed to like to listen. I was tellin' her what a son you'd been to me, an' how happy I was an' how thankful I was."

"She's not one that says much," he said, without looking up from the glass on which his eyes had been fixed. "That's her way."

She replied with a question, put timidly.

"You've knowed her a good bit, I dare say, my dear?"

"No," uneasily. "A six-month or so, that's all."

"But it's been long enough for her to find out that what I said to her was true. I didn't tell her what was new to her, my dear. I see that by her smile, an' the kind way she listened. She's got a beautiful smile, Jem, an' a beautiful sweet face."

When they parted for the night, he drew from his pocket a bank-note and handed it to her.

"I've been thinking," he said, awkwardly, "that it would be in your line to give summat now and then to some o' the poor lot that's so thick here. There's plenty on 'em, an' p'r'aps it wouldn't be a bad thing. There's not many that's fond of givin'. Let's set the gentry a fashion."

"Jem!" she said. "My dear! there isn't nothin' that would make me no happier—nothin' in the world."

"It won't do over much good, may be," he returned. "More than half of them don't deserve it, but give it to 'em if you've a fancy for it. I don't grudge it."

There were tears of joy in her eyes. She took his hand and held it, fondling it.

"I might have knowed it," she said, "an' I don't deserve it for holdin' back an' feelin a bit timid, as I have done. I've thought of it again and again, when I've been a trifle lonesome with you away. There's many a poor woman as is hard-worked that I might help, and children, too, may be, me bein' so fond of 'em."

She drew nearer still and laid her hand on his arm.

"I always was fond of 'em," she said, "always—an' I've thought that, sometimes, my dear, there might be little things here as I might help to care for, an' as would be fond of me."

"If there was children," she went on, "I should get used to it quick. They'd take away the—the bigness, an' make me forget it."

But he did not answer or look at her, though she felt his arm tremble.

"I think they'd be fond of me," she said, "them, an'—an' her too, whomsoever she might be. She'd be a lady, Jem, but she wouldn't mind my ways, I dare say, an' I'd do my best with all my heart. I'd welcome her, an' give up my place here to her, joyful. It's a place fitter for a lady such as she would be—God bless her!—than for me." And she patted his sleeve and bent her face that she might kiss his hand.

CHAPTER. XXI.

IN WHICH MRS. BRIARLEY'S POSITION IS DELICATE.

So the poor and hard-worked of the town came to know her well, and it must also be confessed that others less deserving learned to know her also, and proceeded, with much thrift and dexterity, to make hay while the sun shone. Haworth held to his bargain, even going to the length of lavishness.

"Haworth gives it to her?" was said with marked incredibility at the outset. "Na lad, tha canna mak' me believe that?"

Mrs. Haworth's earliest visit was made to the Briarley cottage. She came attired in her simplest gown, the week after her appearance at the Chapel, and her entrance into the household created such an excitement as somewhat disturbed her. The children were scattered with wild hustling and scurry, Janey dragged off her apron in the temporary seclusion offered by the door. Mrs. Briarley, wiping the soap-suds from her arms, hurried forward with apologetic nervousness. She dropped a courtesy, scarcely knowing what words of welcome would be appropriate for the occasion, and secretly speculating on possible results.

But her visitor's demeanor was not overpowering. She dropped a courtesy herself,—a kindly and rustic obeisance. She even looked somewhat timid.

"I'm Mr. Haworth's mother, ma'am," she faltered, "an'—an' thank you kindly," taking the seat offered. "Don't put yourself out, ma'am, for me. There wasn't no need to send the children away,—not at all, me bein' partial to 'em an' also used."

The next instant she gave a timid start.

"Gi' me my best cap!" cried a stentorian voice. "Gi' me my best cap! Wheer is it? Gi' me my best cap!"

Granny Dixon's high basket-backed chair had been placed in the shadow of the chimney-corner for her better enjoyment of her mid-day nap, and suddenly aroused by some unknown cause, she had promptly become conscious of the presence of a visitor and the dire need of some addition to her toilet. She sat up, her small-boned figure trembling with wrath, her large eyes shining.

"Gi' me my best cap!" she demanded. "Gi' it me!"

Mrs. Briarley disappeared into the adjacent room, and came out with the article required in her hand. It was a smart cap with a lace border and blue bows on it.

"Put it on!" shouted Mrs. Dixon. "An' put it on straight!"

Mrs. Briarley obeyed nervously.

"She's my mester's grandmother," she explained plaintively. "Yo' munnot moind her, missus."

Granny Dixon fixed her eyes upon the stranger.

"She gotten it," she proclaimed. "I did na. I'd nivver ha' bowt t' thing i' th' world. Blue nivver were becomin' to me. She gotten it. She nivver had no taste."

"Aye," said Mrs. Briarley, "I did get it fur thee, tha nasty owd piece, but tha't nivver catch me at th' loike again,—givin' thee presents, when I hannot a bit o' finery to my name."

"It allus set me off—red did," cried Mrs. Dixon. "It wur

my fav'rite color when I wur a lass,—an' I wur a good-lookin' lass, too, seventy year ago."

"I'm sure you was ma'am," responded Mrs. Haworth. "I've no doubt on it."

"She canna hear thee," said Mrs. Briarley. "She's deaf as a post—th' ill-tempert owd besom," and proceeded to give a free translation at the top of her lungs.

"She says tha mun ha' been han'some. She says onybody could see that to look at thee."

"Aye," sharply. "She's reet, too. I wur, seventy year ago. Who is she?"

"She's Mester Haworth's mother."

"Mester Haworth's mother?" promptly. "Did na tha tell me he wur a rich mon?"

"Aye, I did."

"Well, then, what does she dress i' that road fur? She's noan quality. She doesna look much better nor thee."

"Eh! bless us!" protested Mrs. Briarley. "What's a body to do wi' her?"

"Don't mind her, ma'am," said Mrs. Haworth. "It don't do no harm. A old person's often sing'lar. It don't trouble me."

Then Janey, issuing from her retirement in comparatively full dress, was presented with due ceremony.

"It wur her as fun thy place i' th' hymn-book," said Mrs. Briarley. "She's a good bit o' help to me, is Jane Ann."

It seemed an easy thing afterward to pour forth her troubles, and she found herself so far encouraged by her visitor's naïve friendliness that she was even more eloquent than usual.

"Theer's trouble ivvery wheer," she said, "an' I dare say tha has thy share, missus, fur aw thy brass."

Politeness forbade a more definite reference to the "goin's-on" which had called forth so much virtuous indignation on

the part of the Broxton matrons. She felt it but hospitable to wait until her guest told her own story of tribulation.

But Mrs. Haworth sat smiling placidly.

"I've seen it in my day," she said; "an' it were heavy enough too, my dear, an' seemed heavier than it were, p'r'aps, through me bein' a young thing an' helpless, but I should be a ungrateful woman if I didn't try to forget now as it had ever been. A woman as has such a son as I have—one that's prospered an' lived a pure, good life an' never done a willful wrong, an' has won friends an' respect everywhere—has enough happiness to help her forget troubles that's past an' gone."

Mrs. Briarley stopped half-way to the ground in the act of picking up Granny Dixon's discarded head-gear. Her eyes were wide open, her jaw fell a little. But her visitor went on without noticing her.

"Though, for the matter of that," she said, "I dare say there's not one on you as doesn't know his ways, an' couldn't tell me of some of his goodness as I should never find out from him."

"Wheer art tha puttin' my cap?" shouted Granny Dixon. "What art tha doin' wi' my cap? Does tha think because I've got a bit o' brass, I can hot th' bake-oven wi' head-dresses?"

Mrs. Briarley had picked up the cap, and was only rescued by this timely warning from the fatal imprudence of putting it in the fire and stirring it violently with the poker.

"Art tha dazedder than common?" shrieked the old woman. "Has tha gone daft? What art tha starin' at?"

"I am no staring at nowt," said Mrs. Briarley, with a start. "I—I were hearin' to the lady here, an' I did na think o' what I wur doin'."

She did not fully recover herself during the whole of her visitor's stay, and, in fact, several times lapsed into the same meditative condition. When Haworth's charitable intentions

were made known to her, she stopped jolting the baby and sat in wild confusion.

"Did tha say as he wur goin' to gi' thee money?" she exclaimed,— "money to gi' away?"

"He said he'd give it without a grudge," said his mother, proudly. "Without a grudge, if it pleased me. That's his way, my dear. It were his way from the time he were a boy, an' worked so hard to give me a comfortable home. He give it, he said, without a grudge."

"Jane Ann," said Mrs. Briarley, standing at the door to watch her out of sight,— "Jane Ann, what dost tha think o' that theer?"

She said it helplessly, clutching at the child on her hip with a despairing grasp.

"Did tha hear her?" she demanded. "She wur talkin' o' Haworth, an' she wur pridin' hersen on th' son he'd been to her, an'—an' th' way he'd lived. Th' cold sweat broke out aw over me. No wonder I wur fur puttin' th' cap i' th' fire. Lord ha' mercy on us!"

But Janey regarded the matter from a more practical standpoint.

"He has na treated *her* ill," she said. "Happen he is na so bad after aw. Did tha hear what she said about th' money?"

CHAPTER XXII.

AGAIN.

"THERE'S a chap," it was said of Murdoch with some disdain among the malcontents,— "theer's a chap as coom heer to work for his fifteen bob a week, an' now he's hand i' glove wi' th' mesters an's gotten a shop o' his own."

The "shop" in question, had, however, been only a very simple result of circumstances. In times of emergency it had

been discovered that "th' 'Merican chap" was an individual of resources. Floxham had discovered this early, and, afterward, the heads of other departments. If a machine or tool was out of order, "Tak' it to th' 'Merican chap an' he'll fettle it," said one to another. And the time had never been when the necessary "fettling" had not been accomplished. In his few leisure moments, Murdoch would go from room to room, asking questions or looking on in silence at the work being carried on. Often his apparently hap-hazard and desultory examinations finally resulted in some suggestion which simplified things astonishingly. He had a fancy for simplifying and improving the appliances he saw in use, and this, too, without any waste of words.

But gradually rough models of these trifles and hastily made drawings collected in the corner of the common work-room which had fallen to Murdoch, and Haworth's attention was drawn toward them.

"What wi' moddles o' this an' moddles o' that," Floxham remarked, "we'll ha' to mak' a flittin' afore long. Theer'll be no room fur us, nor th' engines neyther."

Haworth turned to the things and looked them over one by one, touching some of them dubiously, some carelessly, some without much comprehension.

"Look here," he said to Murdoch, "there's a room nigh mine that's not in use. I don't like to be at close quarters with every chap, but you can bring your traps up there. It'll be a place to stow 'em an' do your bits o' jobs when you're in the humor."

The same day the change was made, and before leaving the Works, Haworth came in to look around. Throwing himself into a chair, he glanced about him with a touch of curiosity.

"They're all your own notions, these?" he said.

Murdoch assented.

"They are of not much consequence," he answered. "They

are only odds and ends that fell into my hands somehow when they needed attention. I like that kind of work, you know."

"Aye," responded Haworth, "I dare say. But most chaps would have had more to say about doin' 'em than you have."

Not long after Ffrench's advent a change was made.

"If you'll give up your old job, and take to looking sharp after the machinery and keeping the chaps that run it up to their work," said Haworth, "you can do it. It'll be a better shop than the other and give you more time. And it'll be a saving to the place in the end."

So the small room containing his nondescript collection became his head-quarters, and Murdoch's position was a more responsible one. He found plenty of work, but he had more time, as Haworth had prophesied, and he had also more liberty.

"Yo're getten on," said Janey Briarley. "Yo're getten more wage an' less work, an' yo're one o' th' mesters, i' a way. Yo' go wi' th' gentlefolk a good bit, too. Feyther says Ffrench mak's hissen as thick wi' yo' as if yo' wur a gentleman yorsen. Yo' had yere supper up theer last neet. Did she set i' th' room an' talk wi' yo'?"

"Yes," he answered. It was not necessary to explain who "she" was.

"Well," said Janey, "she would na do that if she did na think more o' yo' nor if yo' were a common chap. She's pretty grand i' her ways. What did yo' talk about?"

"It would be hard to tell now," he replied. "We talked of several things."

"Aye, but what I wanted to know wur whether she talked to thee loike she'd talk to a gentlemon,—whether she made free with thee or not."

"I have never seen her talk to a gentleman," he said.

"How does she talk to Haworth?"

"I have never seen her talk to him either. We have never been there at the same time."

This was true. It had somehow chanced that they had

never met at the house. Perhaps Rachel French knew why. She had found Broxton dull enough to give her an interest in any novelty of emotion or experience. She disliked the ugly town, with its population of hard-worked and unpicturesque people. She hated the quiet, well-regulated well-bred county families with candor and vivacity. She had no hesitation in announcing her distaste and weariness.

"I detest them all," she once said calmly to Murdoch. "I detest them."

She made the best of the opportunities for enlivenment which lay within her grasp. She was not averse to Haworth's presenting himself again and again, sitting in restless misery in the room with her, watching her every movement, drinking in her voice, struggling to hold himself in check, and failing and growing sullen and silent, and going away, carrying his wretchedness with him.

She never encouraged him to advance by any word or look, but he always returned again, to go through the same self-torture and humiliation, and she always knew he would. She even derived some unexciting entertainment from her father's plans for the future. He had already new methods and processes to discuss. He had a fancy for establishing a bank in the town, and argued the advisability of the scheme with much fervor and brilliancy. Without a bank in which the "hands" could deposit their earnings, and which should make the town a sort of center, and add importance to its business ventures, Broxton was nothing.

The place was growing, and the people of the surrounding villages were drawn toward it when they had business to transact. They were beginning to buy and sell in its market, and to look to its increasing population for support. The farmer would deposit their funds, the shop-keepers theirs, the "hands" would follow their example, and in all likelihood it would prove, in the end, a gigantic success.

Haworth met his enthusiasms with stolid indifference.

Sometimes he did not listen at all, sometimes he laughed a short, heavy laugh, sometimes he flung him off with a rough speech. But in spite of this, there were changes gradually made in the Works,—trifling changes, of which Haworth was either not conscious, or which he disdained to notice. He lost something of his old masterful thoroughness; he was less regular in his business habits; he was prone to be tyrannical by fits and starts.

"Go to Ffrench," he said, roughly, to one of the "hands," on one occasion; and though before he had reached the door he was called back, the man did not easily forget the incident.

Miss Ffrench looked on at all of this with a great deal of interest.

"He does not care for the place as he did," she said to Murdoch. "He does not like to share his power with another man. It is a nightmare to him."

By this time, she had seen Murdoch the oftener of the two. Mr. Ffrench's fancy for him was more enthusiastic than his fancy for the young man from Manchester or the Cumberland mechanic. He also found him useful, and was not chary of utilizing him. In time, the servants of the house ceased to regard him as an outsider, and were surprised when he was absent for a few days.

"We have a fellow at our place whom you will hear of some of these days," Ffrench said to his friends. "He spends his evenings with me often."

"Ffrench has taken a great fancy to thee, lad," Haworth said, drily. "He says you're goin' to astonish us some of these days."

"Does he?" Murdoch answered.

"Aye. He's got a notion that you're holding on to summat on the quiet, and that it'll come out when we're not expecting it."

They were in the little work-room together, and Murdoch, leaning back in his chair with his hands clasped behind his

head, looked before him without replying, except by a slight knitting of his brows.

Haworth laughed harshly.

"Confound him for a fool!" he said. "I'm sick of the chap, with his talk. He'll stir me up some o' these days."

Then he looked up at his companion.

"He has you up there every night or so," he said. "What does he want of you?"

"Never the same thing twice," said Murdoch.

"Do you—always see her?"

"Yes."

The man moved in his seat, a sullen red rising to his forehead.

"What—has she to say?" he asked.

Murdoch turned about to confront him. He spoke in a low voice, and slowly.

"Do you want to know," he said, "whether she treats me as she would treat another man? Is that it?"

"Aye," was the grim answer, "summat o' that sort, lad."

Murdoch left his chair. He uttered half a dozen words hoarsely.

"Come up to the house some night and judge for yourself," he said.

He went out of the room without looking backward. It was Saturday noon, and he had the half-day of leisure before him, but he did not turn homeward. He made his way to the high road and struck out upon it. He had no definite end in view, at first, except the working off of his passionate excitement, but when, after twenty minutes' walk he came within sight of Broxton Chapel and its grave-yard his steps slackened, and when he reached the gate, he stopped a moment and pushed it open and turned in.

It was a quiet little place, with an almost rustic air, of which even the small, ugly chapel could not rob it. The grass grew long upon the mounds of earth and swayed softly in the warm

wind. Only common folk lay there, and there were no monuments and even few slabs. Murdoch glanced across the sunlit space to the grass-covered mound of which he had thought when he stopped at the gate-way.

He had not thought of meeting any one, and at the first moment the sight of a figure standing at the grave-side in the sunshine was something of a shock to him. He went forward more slowly, even with some reluctance, though he had recognized at once that the figure was that of Christian Murdoch.

She stood quite still, looking down, not hearing him until he was close upon her. She seemed startled when she saw him.

"Why did you come here?" she asked.

"I don't know," he answered. "I needed quiet, I suppose, and the place has a quiet look. Why did you come?"

"It is not the first time I have been," she said. "I come here often."

"You!" he said. "Why?"

She pointed to the mound at her feet with a singular gesture.

"Because *he* is here," she said, "and I have learned to care for him."

She knelt down and laid her hand upon the grass, and he remembered again her emotion in the strange scene which had occurred before.

"I know him very well," she said. "I *know* him."

"You told me that I would not understand," he said. "It is true that I don't yet——"

Suddenly there were tears in her eyes and in her voice.

"He does not seem a dead man to me," she said. "He never will."

"I do not think," he answered, heavily, "that his life seems at an end to any of us."

"Not to me," she repeated. "I have thought of him until I have seemed to grow near to him, and to know what his

Murdoch was, and how patiently he bore it. I have never been patient. I have rebelled always, and so it has gone to my heart all the more."

Murdoch looked down upon the covering sod with a pang.

"He did bear it patiently," he said, "at the bitterest and worst."

"I know that," she replied. "I have been sure of it."

"I found some papers in my room when I first came," she went on. "Some of them were plans he had drawn thirty years ago. He had been very patient and constant with them. He had drawn the same thing again and again. Often he had written a few words upon them, and they helped me to understand. After I had looked them over I could not forget. They haunted me and came back to me. I began to care for him and put things together until all was real."

Then she added, slowly and in a lowered voice :

"I have even thought that if he had lived he would have been fond of me. I don't know why, but I have thought that perhaps he would."

For the first time in his knowledge of her, Murdoch saw in her the youth he had always missed. Her dark and bitter young face was softened ; for the moment she seemed almost a child,—even though a child whose life had been clouded by the shadow of sin and wrong.

"I think—he would," he said, slowly.

"And I have got into the habit of coming here when I was lonely or—at my worst."

"You are lonely often, I dare say," he returned, wearily.

"I wish it could be helped."

"It is nothing new," she replied, with something of her old manner, "and there is no help for it."

But her touch upon the grass was a caress. She smoothed it softly, and moved with singular gentleness a few dead leaves which had dropped upon it.

"When I come here I am—better," she said, "and—less

hard. Things do not seem to matter so much—or to look so shameful."

A pause followed, which she herself broke in upon.

"I have thought a great deal of—what he left unfinished," she said. "I have wished that I might see it. It would be almost as if I had seen himself."

"I can show it to you," Murdoch answered. "It is a little thing to have caused so great pain."

They said but little else until they rose to go. As he sat watching the long grass wave under the warm wind, Murdoch felt that his excitement had calmed down. He was in a cooler mood when they got up at last. But before they turned away the girl lingered for a moment, as if she wished to speak.

"Sometimes," she faltered,—sometimes I have thought you had half forgotten."

"Nay," he answered, "never that, God knows!"

"I could not bear to believe it," she said, passionately. "It would make me hate you!"

When they reached home he took her up to his room. He had locked the door when he left it in the morning. He unlocked it, and they went in. A cloth covered something standing upon the table. He drew it aside with an unsteady hand.

"Look at it," he said. "It has been there since last night. You see it haunts me too."

"What!" she said, "you brought it out yourself—again!"

"Yes," he answered, "again."

She drew nearer, and sat down in the chair before the table.

"He used to sit here?" she said.

"Yes."

"If it had been finished," she said, almost as if speaking to herself, "Death would have seemed a little thing to him. Even if it should be finished now, I think he would forget the rest."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"TEN SHILLINGS' WORTH."

THE same evening, Mr. Briarley, having partaken of an early tea and some vigorous advice from his wife, had suddenly, during a lull in the storm, vanished from the domestic circle, possibly called therefrom by the recollection of a previous engagement. Mrs. Briarley had gone out to do her "Sunday shoppin'," the younger children had been put to bed, the older ones were disporting themselves in the streets and byways, and consequently Janey was left alone, uncheered save by the presence of Granny Dixon, who had fallen asleep in her chair with her cap unbecomingly disarranged.

Janey sat down upon her stool at a discreet distance from the hearth. She had taken down from its place her last book of "memoirs,"—a volume of more than usually orthodox and peppery flavor. She held it within range of the light of the fire and began to read in a subdued tone with much unction.

But she had only mastered the interesting circumstance that "James Joseph Wilson was born November 8th," when her attention was called to the fact that wheels had stopped before the gate and she paused to listen.

"Bless us!" she said. "Some un's comin' in."

The person in question was Haworth, who so far dispensed with ceremony as to walk up to the firelight without even knocking at the door, which stood open.

"Where's your father?" he demanded.

"He's takken hissen off to th' beer-house," said Janey, "as he allus does on Saturday neet,—an' ivvery other neet too, as he gets th' chance."

A chair stood near and Haworth took it.

"I'll sit down and wait for him," he replied.

"Tha'lt ha' to wait a good bit then," said Miss Briarley. "He'll noan be whoam till midneet."

"She stood in no awe of her visitor. She had heard him discussed too freely and too often. Of late years she had not unfrequently assisted in the discussions herself. She was familiar with his sins and shortcomings and regarded him with due severity.

"He'll noan be whoam till midneet," she repeated as she seated herself on her stool.

But Haworth did not move. He was in a mysterious humor, it was plain. In a minute more his young companion began to stare at him with open eyes. She saw something in his face which bewildered her.

"He's gotten more than's good fur him," she was about to decide shrewdly, when he leaned forward and touched her with the handle of the whip he held."

"You're a sharp little lass, I warrant," he said.

Janey regarded him with some impatience. He was flushed and somewhat disheveled and spoke awkwardly.

"You're a sharp little lass, I'll warrant," he said again.

"I ha' to be," she responded, tartly. "Tha'd be sharp thyself if tha had as mich to look after as I ha'."

"I dare say," he answered. "I dare say." Then added even more awkwardly still, "I've heard Murdoch say you were—Murdoch."

The disfavor with which she had examined him began to be mingled with distrust. She hitched her stool a few inches backward.

"Mester Murdoch!" she echoed. "Aye, I know him well enow."

"He comes here every day or so?"

"Aye, him an' me's good friends."

"He's got a good many friends," he said.

"Aye," she answered. "He's a noice chap. Most o' folk tak' to him. There's Mr. Ffrench now and *her*."

He goes there pretty often?"

"Aye, oftener than he goes any wheer else. They mak' as mich o' him as if he wur a gentleman."

"Did *he* tell you that?"

"Nay," she answered. "He does na talk mich about it. I've fun it out from them as knows."

Then a new idea presented itself to her.

"What does tha want to know fur?" she demanded with unceremonious candor.

He did not tell her why. He gave no notice to her question save by turning away from the fire suddenly and asking her another.

"What does he say about *her*?" he asked.

He spoke in such a manner that she pushed her stool still farther back, and sat staring at him blankly and with some indignation.

"He does na say *nowt* about her," she exclaimed. "What's up wi' thee?"

The next moment she uttered an ejaculation and the book of memoirs fell upon the floor. A flame shot up from the fire and showed her his face. He drew forth his purse and, opening it, took out a coin. The light fell upon that too and showed her what it was.

"Do you see that?" he asked.

"Aye," she answered, "it's a half-sov'rin."

"I'll give it to you," he said, "if you'll tell me what he says and what he does. You're sharp enow to have seen summat, I'll swear, and I'll give it to you if you'll tell me."

He did not care what impression he made on her or how he entangled himself. He only thought of one thing.

"Tell me what he says and what he does," he repeated, "and I'll give it to you."

Janey rose from her stool in such a hurry that it lost its balance and fell over.

"I—I dunnot want it!" she cried. "I dunnot want it. I can na mak' thee out!"

"You're not as sharp as I took you for, if you don't want it," he answered. "You'll not earn another as easy, my lass."

Only stern common sense rescued her from the weakness of backing out of the room into the next apartment.

"I dunnot know what tha'rt drivin' at," she said. "I tell thee—I dunnot know nowt."

"Does he never say," he put it to her, "that he's been there—and that he's seen her—and that she's sat and talked—and that he's looked at her—and listened—and thought over it afterward?"

This was the last straw. Bewilderment turned to contempt.

"*That* would na be worth ten shillin'," she said. "Tha knows he's been theer, an' tha knows he's seen her, an' tha knows he could na see her wi'out lookin' at her. I dunnot see as theer's owt i' lookin' at her, or i' listenin' neyther. Wheer's th' use o' givin' ten shillin' to hear summat yo' know yo'rsen? Theer's nowt i' that!"

"Has he ever said it?" he persisted.

"No," she answered, "He has na. He nivver wur much give to talk, an' he says less than ivver i' these days."

"Has he never said that she treated him well, and—was easier to please than he'd thought; has he never said nowt like that?"

"Nay, that he has na!" with vigor. "Nowt o' t' soart."

He got up as unceremoniously and abruptly as he had sat down.

"I was an accursed fool for coming," she heard him mutter.

He threw the half-sovereign toward her, and it fell on the floor.

"Art tha goin' to gi' it me?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered, and he strode through the door-way into the darkness, leaving her staring at it.

She went to the fire and, bending down, examined it closely

and rubbed it with a corner of her apron. Then she tried its ring upon the flagged floor.

"Aye," she said, "it's a good un, sure enow! It's a good un!"

She had quite lost her breath. She sat down upon her stool again, forgetting the memoirs altogether.

"I nivver heard so mich doment made over nowt i' aw my days," she said. "I conna see now what he wur up to, axin' questions as if he wur i' drink. He mun ha' been i' drink or he'd nivver ha' gi'en it to me."

And on the mother's return she explained the affair to her upon this sound and common-sense basis.

"Mester Haworth's been here," she said, "an' he wur i' drink an' give me ten shillin'. I could na mak' out what he wur drivin' at. He wur askin' questions as put me out o' patience. Eh! what foo's men is when they've gotten too much."

When he left the house, Haworth sprang into his gig with an oath. Since the morning he had had time to think over things slowly. He had worked himself up into a desperate, headlong mood. His blood burned in his veins, his pulses throbbed. He went home to his dinner, but ate nothing. He drank heavily, and sat at the table wearing such a look that his mother was stricken with wonder.

"I'm out o' humor, old lady," he said to her. "Stick to your dinner, and don't mind me. A chap with a place like mine on his mind can't always be up to the mark."

"If you aint ill, Jem," she said, "it don't matter your not talkin'. You mustn't think o' me my dear! I'm used to havin' lived alone so long."

After dinner he went out again, but before he left the room he went to her and kissed her.

"Ther's nowt wrong wi' me," he said. "You've no need to trouble yourself about that. I'm right enow, never fear."

"There's nothin' else could trouble me," she said, "nothin', so long as you're well an' happy."

"There's nowt to go agen me bein' happy," he said, a little grimly. "Not yet, as I know on. I don't let things go agen me easy."

About half an hour later he stood in the road before his partner's house. The night was warm, and the windows of the drawing-room were thrown open. He stood and looked up at them for a minute and then spoke aloud.

"Aye!" he said, "he's there, by George!"

He could see inside plainly; but the thing she saw best were Rachel Ffrench and Murdoch. Ffrench himself sat in a large chair reading. Miss Ffrench stood upon the hearth. She rested an arm upon the low mantel, and talked to Murdoch, who stood opposite to her. The man who watched uttered an oath at the sight of her.

"Him!" he said. "Him—damn him!" and grew hot and cold by turns.

He kept his stand for full ten minutes, and then crossed the road.

The servant who answered his summons at the door regarded him with amazement.

"I know they're in," he said, making his way past him. "I saw 'em through the window."

Those in the drawing-room heard his heavy feet as he mounted the staircase. It is possible that each recognized the sound. Ffrench rose hurriedly, and, it must be owned, with some slight trepidation. Rachel merely turned her face toward the door. She did not change her position otherwise at all. Murdoch did not move.

"My dear fellow," said Ffrench, with misplaced enthusiasm. "I am glad to see you."

But Haworth passed him over with a nod. His eyes were fixed on Murdoch. He gave him a nod also and spoke to him.

"What, you're here, are you?" he said. "That's a good thing."

"We think so," said Mr. Ffrench, with fresh fervor. "My dear fellow, sit down."

He took the chair offered him, but still looked at Murdoch and spoke to him.

"I've been to Briarley's," he said. "I've had a talk with that little lass of his. She gave me the notion you'd be here. She's a sharp little un, by George!"

"They're all sharp," said Mr. Ffrench. "The precocity one finds in these manufacturing towns is something astonishing—astonishing."

He launched at once into a dissertation upon the causes of precocity in a manufacturing town and became so absorbed in his theme that it mattered very little that Haworth paid no attention to him. He was leaning back in his chair with his hands in his pockets, not moving his eyes from Murdoch.

Mr. Ffrench was in the middle of his dissertation when, half an hour afterward, Haworth got up without ceremony. Murdoch was going.

"I'll go with you," he said to him.

They went out of the room and down the staircase together without speaking. They did not even look at each other, in fact.

When they were fairly out of the room Mr. Ffrench glanced somewhat uneasily at his daughter.

"Really," he said, "he is not always a pleasant fellow to deal with. One is never sure of reaching him." And then, as he received no answer, he returned in some embarrassment to his book.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT AN END.

WHEN they stood in the road, Haworth laid his hand upon his companion's shoulder heavily.

"Come up to the Works, lad," he said, "and let's have a bit of a talk."

His voice and his touch had something in common. Murdoch understood them both. There was no need for clearer speech.

"Why there?" he asked.

"It's quiet there. I've a fancy for it."

"I have no fancy against it. As well there as anywhere else."

"Aye," said Haworth. "Not only as well, but better."

He led the way into his own room and struck a light. He flung the keys upon the table; they struck it with a heavy clang. Then he spoke his first words since they had turned from the gate-way.

"Aye," he said, "not only as well but better. I'm at home here, if I'm out everywhere else. The place knows me and I know it. I'm the best man here, by ——! if I'm out everywhere else."

He sat down at the table and rested his chin upon his hand. His hand shook and his forehead was clammy.

Murdoch threw himself into a chair opposite to him.

"Go on," he said. "Say what you have to say."

Haworth bent forward a little.

"You've got on better than I'd have thought, lad," he said, —"better than I'd have thought."

"What!" hoarsely. "Does she treat me as she treats other men?"

"Nay," said Haworth, "not as she treats me—by the Lord Harry!"

The deadly bitterness which possessed him was terrible; he was livid with it.

"I've thought of a good many," he said. "I've looked on at 'em as they stood round her—chaps of her own sort, with money and the rest of it; but I never thought of you—not once."

"No," said Murdoch, "I dare say not."

"No—not once," the man repeated. "Get up and let's take a look at you," he said. "Happen I've not had the right notion on you."

"Don't say anything you'll repent," said Murdoch. "It's bad enough as it is."

But his words were like chaff before the wind.

"You!" cried the man. "You were the chap that knew naught of women's ways. You'd scarce look one on 'em in in the face. *You're* not the build I thought they took to."

"You told me that once before," said Murdoch, with a bitter laugh. "I've not forgotten it."

Haworth's clenched fist fell upon the table with a force which made the keys ring.

"Blast you," he said. "You're nigher to her now than me *now*!"

"Then," Murdoch answered, "you may give up."

"Give up!" was the reply. "Nay, not that, my lad. I've not come to that yet."

Then his rage broke forth again.

"*You* to be going there on the quiet!" he cried. "*You* to be making way with her, and finding her easy to please, and priding yourself on it!"

"*I* please her!" said Murdoch. "*I* pride myself!"

He got up and began to pace the floor.

"You're mad!" he said. "Mad!"

Haworth checked himself to stare at him.

"What did you go for," he asked, "if it wasn't for that?" Murdoch stopped in his walk. He turned himself about.

"I don't know," he said, "I don't know."

"Do you think," he said, in a hushed voice, after the pause which followed,— "do you think I expect anything? Do you think I look forward or backward? Can you understand that it is enough as it stands—enough?"

Haworth still stared at him dully.

"Nay," he returned, "that I cannot."

"I to stand before her as a man with a best side which might win her favor! What is there in *me*, that she should give me a thought when I am not near her? What have I done? What has my life been worth? It may be nothing in the end! Good God! nothing!"

He said it almost as if stunned. For the moment he was overwhelmed, and had forgotten.

"You're nigher to her than I am," said Haworth. "You think because you're one o' the gentleman sort——"

"Gentleman!" said Murdoch, speculative. "I a gentleman?"

"Aye, damn you," said Haworth, bitterly, "and you know it."

The very words seemed to rouse him. He shook his clenched hand.

"That's it!" he cried. "There's where it is. You've got it in you, and you know it—and she knows it too!"

"I have never asked myself whether I was or not," said Murdoch. "I have not cared. What did it matter? What you said just now was true, after all. I know nothing of women. I know little enough of men. I have been a dull fellow, I think, and slow to learn. I can only take what comes."

He came back to the table, and threw himself into his chair.

"Does either of us know what we came here for?" he asked.

"We came to talk it over," was Haworth's answer, "and we've done it."

"Then, if we have done it, let us go our ways."

"Nay, not yet. I've summat more to say."

"Say it," Murdoch replied, "and let us have it over."

"It's this," he returned. "You're a different chap from what I took you for—a different chap. I never thought of you—not once."

"You've said that before."

"Aye," grimly, "I've said it before. Like enough I shall say it again. It sticks to me. We've been good friends, after a manner, and that makes it stick to me. I don't say you're to blame. I haven't quite made the thing out yet. We're of a different build, and—there's been times before when I haven't quite been up to you. But we've been friends, after a manner, and now th' time's come when we're done with that."

"Done with it!" repeated Murdoch, mechanically.

"Aye," meeting his glance fully, "done with it! We'll begin fair and square, lad. It's done with. Do you think," with deadly coolness, "I'd stop at aught if th' time come?"

He rose a little from his seat, bending forward.

"Naught's never come in my way, yet, that's stopped me," he said. "Things has gone agen me and I've got th' best on 'em in one way or another. I've not minded how. I've gone on till I've reached this. Naught's stopped me—naught never shall!"

He fell back in his chair and wiped the cold sweat from his forehead with his handkerchief.

"I wish," he said, "it had been another chap. I never thought of you—not once."

CHAPTER XXV.

"I SHALL NOT TURN BACK."

MURDOCH went out into the night alone. When he found himself outside the iron gate he stood still for a moment.

"I will not go home yet," he said; "not yet."

He knew this time where he was going when he turned his steps upon the road again. He had only left the place a few hours before.

The moonlight gave it almost a desolate look, he thought, as he passed through the entrance. The wind still swayed the grass upon the mounds fitfully, and the headstones cast darker shadows upon them. There was no shadow upon the one under which Stephen Murdoch rested. It lay in the broad moonlight. Murdoch noticed this as he stopped beside it. He sat down upon the grass, just as he had done in the afternoon.

"Better not go home, just yet," he said again. "There is time enough."

Suddenly an almost unnatural calmness had fallen upon him. His passions and uncertainties of the past few months seemed small things. He had reached a climax and for a moment there seemed time enough. He thought of the past almost coldly—going over the ground mentally, step by step. It was as if he thought of the doings of another man—one who was younger and simpler and whose life was now over.

"There are a good many things that are done with," he said mechanically, recalling Haworth's words.

He thought of the model standing in its old place in the empty room. It was a living thing awaiting his coming. The end might be anything—calamity, failure, death!—but to-night he had taken his first step toward that end.

"To-night I shall begin as he began," he thought; "to-night."

He threw himself full length upon the grass, clasping his hands beneath his head, his face turned upward to the vast clearness and depth above him. He had known it would come some day, but he never thought of its coming in this way. The man who slept under the earth at his side had begun with hope ; he began as one who neither hoped nor feared, yielding only to a force stronger than himself.

He lay in this manner looking up for nearly an hour. Then he arose and stood with bared head in the white light and stillness.

"I shall not turn back," he said aloud at last, as if to some presence near him. "I shall not turn back, at least. Do not fear it."

And he turned away.

It was his mother who opened the door for him when he reached home.

"Come in," he said to her, with a gesture toward the inner room. "I have something to say to you."

She followed him in silence. Her expression was cold and fixed. It struck him that she, too, had lived past hope and dread.

She did not sit down when she had closed the door, but stood upright, facing him.

He spoke hoarsely.

"I am going upstairs," he said. "I told you once that some day it would see the light again in spite of us both. You can guess what work I shall do to-night."

"Yes," she answered, "I can guess. I gave up long ago."

She looked at him steadily ; her eyes dilated a little as if with slow-growing fear of him.

"I knew it would end so," she went on, "I fought against my belief that it would, but it grew stronger every day—every hour. There was no other way."

"No," he replied, "there was no other way."

"I have seen it in your face," she said. "I have heard it in your voice. It has never been absent from your thoughts a moment—nor mine."

He did not speak.

"At first, when he died——"

Her voice faltered and broke, and then rose in a cry almost shrill.

"He did not die!" she cried. "He is not dead. He lives now—*here*! There is no death for him—not even death until it is done."

She panted for breath; her thin chest rose and fell—and yet suddenly she had checked herself again and stood before him with her first strained calm.

"Go," she said. "I cannot hold you. If there is an end to be reached, reach it for God's sake and let him rest."

"Wish me God-speed," he said. "I—have more to bear than you think of."

For answer she repeated steadily words which she had uttered before.

"I do not believe in it; I have never believed for one hour."

CHAPTER XXVI.

"A REVOLUTION."

IN a month's time the Broxton Bank was an established fact. It had sprung into existence in a manner which astonished even its originator. Haworth had come to him in cool blood and talked the matter over. He had listened to the expounding of his views, and without being apparently much moved by his eloquence, had still shown a disposition to weigh the plan, and having given a few days to deliberation, he had returned a favorable decision.

"The thing sounds well," he said, "and it may be a sharp

stroke that way. When the rest on 'em hear on it, it'll set 'em thinkin'. Blast 'em ! I like to astonish 'em, an' give 'em summat to chew."

Mr. Ffrench could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses. He had been secretly conscious of playing a minor part in all business transactions. His pet theories had been thrust aside as worthy of small notice. His continental experience had been openly set at naught. When he had gone to the trouble of explaining his ideas to the heads of the various departments, he had been conscious of illuminating smiles on the grimy countenances around him. His rather frail physique, his good breeding, his well-modulated voice, had each been the subject of derisive comment.

"Gi' him a puddlin' rake an' let him puddle a bit," he had heard a brawny fellow say, after one of his most practical dissertations.

After his final interview with Haworth, he went home jubilant. At dinner he could speak of nothing else. Miss Ffrench heard the details from beginning to end, and enjoyed them in a manner peculiarly her own.

At the "Who'd ha Thowt it" no little excitement prevailed when the movement was discussed.

"A bank !" said Foxy Gibbs. "An' wheer did he get th' money to set up a bank wi'? Why, he gotten it out o' th' workin' mon, an' th' sweat o' th' workin' mon's brow. If theer wur na no banks, theer'd be more money to put in 'em. I dunnot believe i' banks mysen. Let th' brass cerkylate—let it cerkylate."

"Aye," said Mr. Briarley, who had reached his second quart, "let it cerkylate, an' he'll ha' more comfort, will the workin' mon. Theer's too many on 'em," with natural emotion. "They're th' ruin o' th' country. Theer's summat wrong wi' 'em. If they'd gi' a chap summat to put i' 'em theer'd be some chance for him ; but that's allus th' way. He

has na no chance, hasn't the workin' mon—he has na no——"

"Shut up!" said Foxy Gibbs.

"Eh?" inquired the orator, weakly and uncertainly.

"Shut up, till tha's gotten less beer i' thee!"

"Shut—" repeated Mr. Briarley, winking his eyes slowly,—
up?"

He seized his beer mug and gazed into its depths in some confusion. A deep sigh escaped him.

"That's allus th' road," he faltered. "It's th' road wi' Sararann, an' it's th' road wi' aw on 'em. He has no chance, has na a mon as is misforchnit." And he happily disposed of the beer before Janey opened the door and appeared to marshal him homeward.

But the Broxton Bank was an established fact, and created no small sensation.

"He is a bold fellow, this Haworth," it was said among his rivals, "but he will overstep himself one of these days."

"He's set up a bank, has he?" shouted Granny Dixon, on Murdoch's first visit after she had heard the story.

"Yes," Murdoch answered.

She sat glowering at the fire a few moments almost bent double, and then, having deluded her audience into believing she had subsided, suddenly started and came to life again with increased vigor.

"I've gotten my brass i' th' Manchester Savin's," she cried, "an' I'll keep it theer."

It med unnecessary to reply, and nobody made any remark upon this statement of facts. But the venerable matron had not concluded.

"I'll keep it theer!" she repeated—"keep it theer! I conna bide him, no more than I can bide her." And then she returned to her fire, fixing her great eyes upon it and mumbling with no small elation.

"Th' thing'll break now, for sure," commented her much-tried hostess, sardonically. "It conna stand up agen that, i

reason. Haworth ud better sell th' Works at th' start afore it's too late."

There had been some vague wonder in Murdoch's mind as to what the result of Haworth's outburst against himself would be.

The first time he found himself confronting him as he went to his work-room he spoke to him :

"You said once," he remarked, "that you had kept this room empty because you did not care to be at close quarters with every man. Now——"

"Get th' in, my lad," he interrupted, dryly. "It suits me well enow to ha' you nigh me. Never fear that."

The only outward change made was in his manner. He went about his labor with a deadly persistence. He came early and went home late. The simplest "hand" saw that some powerful force was at work. He was silent and harder in his rule of those under him. He made closer bargains and more daring plans. Men who had been his rivals began to have a kind of fear of him. All he took in hand throve.

"He is a wonderful fellow," said Ffrench to his friends. "Wonderful—wonderful !"

Even the friends in question who were, some of them, county magnates of great dignity, began to find their opinion of the man shaken. In these days there was actually nothing to complain of. The simple little country woman reigned in his household. She attended the Broxton Chapel and dispensed her innocent charities on all sides. Finally a dowager of high degree (the patroness of a charitable society) made the bold move of calling upon her for a subscription.

"It weren't as hard to talk to her, Jem, as I'd have thought," said Mrs. Haworth afterward. "She began to tell me about the poor women as suffers so, an' somehow I forgot about her bein' so grand. I couldn't think of nothin' but the poor creturs an' their pain, an' when I come to sign my name my

'and trembled so an' my eyes was that full I couldn't hardly tell what I'd put down. To think of them poor things——"

"How much did you give her?" asked Haworth.

"I give her ten pound, my dear, an'——"

He wrote out a check and handed it to her.

"Go to her to-morrow and give her that," he said. "Happen it 'll be summat new fur her to get fifty at a stroke."

So it began to be understood that the master of "Haworth's" was a bugbear with redeeming points after all. The Broxton Bank had its weight too, and the new cottages which it was necessary to build.

"It is to Haworth after all that you owe the fact that the place is growing," said Ffrench.

There came an evening, when on entering the drawing-room of a county potentate with whom she and her father were to dine, Rachel Ffrench found herself looking directly at Haworth, who stood in the center of a group of guests. They were talking to him with an air of great interest and listening to his off-hand replies with actual respect. Suddenly the tide had turned. Before the evening had passed the man was a lion, and all the more a lion because he had been so long tabooed. He went in to dinner with the lady patroness, and she afterward announced her intention of calling upon his mother in state.

"There is a rough candor about the man, my dear," she said, "which one must respect, and it appears that he has really reformed."

There was no difficulty after this. Mrs. Haworth had visitors every day, who came and examined her and wondered, and, somehow, were never displeased by her tender credulity. She admired them all and believed in them, and was always ready with tears and relief for their pensioners and charities.

"Don't thank me ma'am," she would say. "Don't never thank me, for it's not me that deserves it, but him that's so ready and generous to every one that suffers. There never

was such a kind heart before, it seems to me, ma'am, nor such a lovin' one."

Haworth's wealth, his success, his open-handedness, his past sins, were the chief topics of conversation. To speak of Broxton was to speak of the man who had made it what it was by his daring and his power, and who was an absolute ruler over it and its inhabitants.

Ffrench was a triumphant man. He was a potentate also; he could ride his hobby to the sound of applause. When he expatiated upon "processes," he could gain an audience which was attentive and appreciative. He had not failed this time, at least, and was put down as a shrewd fellow after all.

In the festivities which seemed, somehow, the result of this sudden revulsion of feeling, Rachel Ffrench was naturally a marked figure. Among the women, with whom she was not exactly a favorite, it was still conceded that she was not a young woman whom it was easy to ignore. Her beauty—of which it was impossible to say that she was conscious—was of a type not to be rivaled. When she entered a room, glancing neither to right nor left, those who had seen her before unavoidably looked again, and those who had not were silent as she passed.

There was a delicate suggestion of indifference in her manner, which might be real or it might not. Her demeanor toward Haworth never altered, even to the extent of the finest shadow of change.

When they were in a room together his eye followed her with stealthy vigilance, and her knowledge of the fact was not a disturbing one. The intensity of her consciousness was her great strength. She was never unprepared. When he approached her she met him with her little untranslatable smile. He might be bold, or awkward, or desperate, but he never found her outwardly conscious or disturbed, or a shade colder or warmer.

It was only natural that it should not be long before others saw what she, seeing, showed no knowledge of. It was easily

seen that he made no effort at concealment. His passion revealed itself in every look and gesture. He could not have controlled it if he would, and would not if he could.

"Let 'em see," he said to himself. "It's naught to them. It's betwixt her and me." He even bore himself with a sullen air of defiance at times, knowing that he had gained one thing at least. He was nearer to her in one way than any other man; he might come and go as he choose, he saw her day after day, he knew her in-goings and out-comings. The success which had restored her father's fortunes was his success.

"I can make her like a queen among 'em," he said,—“like a queen, by George,—and I'll do it.”

Every triumph which fell to him he regarded only as it would have weight in her eyes. When society opened its doors to him, he said to himself, “Now she'll see that I can stand up with the best of 'em, gentlemen or no gentlemen!”

When he suddenly found himself a prominent figure—a man deferred to and talked of, he waited with secret feverishness to see what the effect upon her would be.

“It's what women like,” he said. “It's what *she* likes more than the most on 'em. It'll be bound to tell in the end.”

He labored as he had never labored before; his ambitions were boundless; he strove and planned and ventured, lying awake through long hours of the night pondering and building, his daring growing with his success.

There occurred one thing, however, which he had not bargained for. In his laudable enthusiasm Mr. French could not resist the temptation to sound the praises of his *protégé*. His belief in him had increased instead of diminished with time, as he had been forced regretfully to acknowledge had been the case during the eras of the young man from Manchester and his fellows. He had reason to suspect that a climax had been reached and that his hopes might be realized. It is not every man who keeps on hand a genius. Naturally his friends heard of Murdoch often. Those who came to the

Works were taken to his work-room as to a point of interest. He became in time a feature, and was spoken of with a mixture of curiosity and bewilderment. To each visitor Ffrench told in strict confidence the story of his father with due effect.

"And it's my impression," he always added, "that we shall hear more of this invention one of these days. He is a singular fellow—reserved and not easy to read—just the man to carry a purpose in his mind and say nothing of it, and in the end startle society by accomplishing what he has held in view."

Finally, upon one occasion, when his daughter was making her list of invitations for a dinner party they were to give, he turned to her suddenly, with some hesitation in his manner.

"Oh—by the way," he said, "there's Murdoch, we've never had Murdoch."

She wrote the name without comment.

"Who next?" she asked after having done it.

"You see," he went on waveringly, "there is really nothing which could be an obstacle in the way of our inviting him—really nothing. He is—he is all that we could wish."

The reply he received staggered him.

"It is nonsense," she said, looking up calmly, "to talk of obstacles. I should have invited him long ago."

"You!" he exclaimed. "Would you—really?"

"Yes," she answered. "Why not?"

"Why—not?" he repeated feebly. "I don't know why not. I thought that perhaps——" and then he broke off. "I wish I had known as much before," he added.

When he received the invitation, Murdoch declined it.

"I should only be out of place," he said candidly to Miss Ffrench. "I should know nobody, and nobody would know me. Why should I come?"

"There is very good reason why you should come," answered the young woman with perfect composure. "*I am the reason.*"

There was no further discussion of the point. He was present and Haworth sat opposite to him at the table.

"It's the first time for *him*!" said Haworth to Miss Ffrench, afterward.

"It is the first time he has dined here with other people," she answered. "Have you a reason for asking?"

He held his coffee-cup in his hand and glanced over it across the room.

"He is not like the rest on 'em," he said, "but he stands it pretty well, by George!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

"THE BEGINNING."

FOR some time there had hung over the conduct of Mr. Briarley, an air of deep mystery. The boon of his society had been granted to his family even less frequently than ever. His habit of sudden and apparently unaccountable disappearance from the home circle after or even in the midst of an argument had become more than usually pronounced. He went out every night and invariably returned under the influence of malt liquor.

"Wheer he gets th' brass bangs me," said Mrs. Briarley. "He does na tak' it out o' his wage, that's certain, fur he has na been a ha'penny short fur three week, an' he does na get it o' tick, *that* I know. Bannett at th' 'Public' is na a foo'. Wheer does he get th' brass fro'?"

But this was not easily explained. On being catechised Mr. Briarley either shed tears of penitence or shook his head with deep solemnity of meaning. At times when he began to shake it—if the hour was late and his condition specially foggy—he was with difficulty induced to stop shaking it, but frequently continued to do so with protracted fervor and significance gradually decreasing until he fell asleep. When he was sober he was timorous and abstracted. He started at the sound of

the opening door, and apparently existed in a state of secret expectation and alarm.

"I conna tell thee, Sararann," he would say. "At least," with some tremor, "I wunnot tell thee just yet. Thou'lt know i' toime."

He did not patronize the "Who'd ha' Thowt it" as much as formerly, in these days, Janey discovered. He evidently got the beer elsewhere and at somebody's expense. His explanation of this was a brilliant and happy one, but it was only offered once, in consequence of the mode of its reception by his hearers. He presented it suddenly one night after some moments of silence and mental research.

"Theer's a gentlemon as is a friend o' moine," he said, "as has had uncommon luck. His hei s has deed an' left him a forchin, an' he's come into it, an' he's very much tuk wi' me, I dannot know as I iver seed ony one as much tuk wi' me, Sararann—an' his heirs deein' an' leavin' him a forchin—that theer's how it is, Sararann,—that theer's how it is."

"Tha brazant leer!" cried Mrs. Briarley, aghast. "Tha brazant leer! Get out wi' thee!" in an outburst of indignation. "Thee an' thy forchins an' heirs deein'—as if it wur na bad enow at th' start. A noice chap tha art to set thysen up to know gentlefolks wi' heirs to dee an' leave 'em brass. Eh! Bless us! what art tha comin' too?"

The result was not satisfactory, as Mr. Briarley felt keenly.

"Tha hast gotten no confydence i' me, Sararann," he said in weak protest. "Tha has na no faith—nor yet," following the train of thought with manifest uncertainty,—“nor yet no works.”

The situation was so painful, however, that he made no further efforts of the imagination to elucidate the matter, and it remained temporarily obscured in mystery.

Only temporarily, however. A few weeks afterward Ffrench came down to the Works in great excitement. He went to

Haworth's room, and finding him there, shut the door and almost dropped into a chair.

"What's up?" demanded Haworth, with some impatience. "What's up, man?"

"You haven't heard the report?" Ffrench answered tremulously. "It hasn't reached you yet?"

"I've heard nowt to upset me. Out with it! What's up?"

He was plainly startled, and lost a shade of color, but he held himself boldly. Ffrench explained himself with trepidation.

"The hands in Marfort and Molton and Howton are on the strike, and those in Dillup and Burton are plainly about to follow suit. I've just got a Manchester paper, which says the lookout is bad all over the country. Meetings have been going on in secret for some time."

He stopped and sat staring at his partner. Haworth was deathly pale. He seemed for a moment to lack breath, and then suddenly the dark color rushed to his face again.

"By ——" he began, and stopped with the oath upon his lips.

"Don't swear for pity's sake," broke forth Ffrench, finding courage for protest in his very desperation. "It's not the time for it. Let's look the thing in the face."

"Look it in the face," Haworth repeated. "Aye, let's."

He said the words with a fierce sneer.

"Aye, look it in the face, man," he said again. "That is th' thing to do."

He bent forward, extending his hand across the table.

"Let's see th' paper," he demanded.

Ffrench gave it to him and he read the paragraphs referred to in silence. When he had finished them he folded the paper again mechanically.

"They might have done it last year and welcome, blast 'em!" he said.

Ffrench began to tremble.

"You've ventured a good deal of late, Haworth," he said, weakly. "You've done some pretty daring things, you know—and ——"

Haworth turned on him.

"If I lose all I've made," he said, hoarsely, "shall I lose aught of yours, lad?"

Ffrench did not reply. He sat playing with his watch-chain nervously. He had cause for anxiousness on his own score, and his soul quaked within him.

"What is to be done?" he ventured at last.

"There's only one thing to be done," Haworth answered, pushing his chair back. "Stop it here—at th' start."

"Stop it?" Ffrench echoed, in amazement.

"Aye, stop it."

He got up and took his hat down and put it on.

"I'm going round th' place and about th' yards and into th' town," he said. "There's naught for you to do but keep quiet. Th' quieter you keep th' better for us. Go on as if you'd heard naught. Stay here a bit, and then walk over to th' bank. Look alive, man!"

He went out and left Ffrench alone. In the passage he came upon a couple of men who were talking together in low voices. They started at sight of him and walked away slowly.

He went first to the engine-room. There he found Floxham and Murdoch talking also. The old engineer wore an irritable air, and was plainly in a testy mood. Murdoch looked fagged and pale. Of late he was often so. As Haworth entered he turned toward him, uttering an exclamation.

"He is here now," he said. "That is well enough."

Floxham gave him a glance from under his bent, bushy brows.

"Aye," he answered. "We may as well out wi' it."

He touched his cap clumsily.

"Tell him," he said to Murdoch, "an' ha' it over."

Murdoch spoke in a cool, low voice.

"I have found out," he said, "that there is trouble on foot. I began to suspect it a week ago. Some rough fellows from Manchester and Molton have been holding secret meetings at a low place here. Some of the hands have been attending them. Last night a worse and larger gang came and remained in the town. They are here now. They mean mischief at least, and there are reports afloat that strikes are breaking out on all sides."

Haworth turned abruptly to Floxham.

"Where do you stand?" he asked roughly.

The old fellow laid his grimy hand upon his engine.

"I stand here, my lad," he answered. "That's wheer—an' I'll stick to it, unions or no unions."

"That's the worst side of the trouble," said Murdoch. "Those who would hold themselves aloof from the rest will be afraid of the trades unions. If worst comes to worst, their very lives will be in danger. They know that, and so do we."

"Aye, lad," said Floxham, "an' tha'rt reet theer."

Haworth ground his teeth and swore under his breath. Then he spoke to Murdoch.

"How is it going on here?" he asked.

"Badly enough, in a quiet way. You had better go and see for yourself."

He went out, walking from room to room, through the yards and wherever men were at work. Here and there a place was vacant. Where the work went on, it went on dully; he saw dogged faces and subdued ones; those who looked up as he passed wore an almost deprecatory air; those who did not look up at all, bent over their tasks with an expression which was at least negatively defiant. His keen eye discovered favorable symptoms, however; those who were in evil mood were his worst workmen—men who had their off days of drunken stupor and idleness, and the heads of departments were plainly making an effort to stir briskly and ignore the presence of any cloud upon their labor.

By the time he had made the rounds he had grasped the situation fully. The strait was desperate, but not as bad as it might have been.

"I *may* hold 'em," he said to himself, between his teeth. "And by the Lord Harry I'll try hard for it."

He went over to the bank and found Ffrench in his private room, pale and out of all courage.

"There will be a run on us by this time to-morrow," he said. "I see signs of it already."

"Will there?" said Haworth. "We'll see about that. Wait a bit, my lads!"

He went into the town and spent an hour or so taking a sharp lookout. Nothing escaped him. There were more idlers than usual about the ale houses, and more than once he passed two or three women talking together with anxious faces and in undertones. As he was passing one such group one of the women saw him and started.

"Theer he is!" she said, and her companion turned with her and they both stopped talking to look after him.

Before returning he went up to his partner's house. He asked for Miss Ffrench and was shown into the room where she sat writing letters. She neither looked pleased nor displeased when she saw him, but rose to greet him at once. She gave him a rather long look.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

Suddenly he felt less bold. The heat of his excitement failed to sustain him. He was all unstrung.

"I've come to tell you not to go out," he said. "There's trouble afoot—in the trade. There's no knowing how it'll turn out. There's a lot of chaps in th' town who are not in th' mood to see aught that'll fret 'em. They're ready for mischief, and have got drink in 'em. Stay you here until we see which way th' thing's going."

"Do you mean," she demanded, "that there are signs of a strike?"

"There's more than signs of it," he answered, sullenly. "Before night the whole place will be astir."

She moved across the room and pulled the bell. A servant answered the summons instantly.

"I want the carriage," she said.

Then she turned to Haworth with a smile of actual triumph.

"*Nothing* would keep me at home," she said. "I shall drive through the town and back again. Do you think I will let them fancy that *I* am afraid of them?"

"You're not afraid?" he said, almost in a whisper.

"I afraid?" she answered, "*I*?"

"Wait here," she added. She left the room, and in less than ten minutes returned. He had never before seen her in the fire he saw her then. There was a spark of light in her eyes, a color on her cheek. She had chosen her dress with distinct care for its luxurious richness. His exclamation, as she entered buttoning her long, delicate glove, was a repressed oath. He exulted in her. His fear for her was gone, and only this exultation remained.

"You've made up your mind to that?" he said. He wanted to make her say more.

"I am going to see your mother," she answered. "That will take me outside of the town, then I shall drive back again—slowly. They shall understand me at least."

She let him lead her out to the carriage, which by this time was waiting. After she was seated in it, she bent forward and spoke to him.

"Tell my father where I am going and why," she said.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SPEECH.

WHEN he returned to the Works the noon-bell was ringing, and the hands were crowding through the gates on their way to their midday meal. Among those going out he met Floxham, who spoke to him as he passed.

"Theer's some o' them chaps," he said, "as wunnot show their faces again."

"Aye," said Haworth, "I see that."

Ffrench had left the bank and was pacing up and down his room panic-stricken.

"What have you heard?" he exclaimed, turning as Haworth entered. "Is it—is it as bad as you expected?"

"Aye," said Haworth, "worse and better too."

"Better?" he faltered.

Haworth flung himself into a chair. He wore a look of dogged triumph.

"Leave 'em to me," he answered. "I'm in th' mood fur 'em *now*."

But it was not until some time afterward that he delivered the message Rachel Ffrench had intrusted to him.

On hearing it her father appeared to rally a little.

"It seems a rather dangerous thing to do," he said, "but—it is like her. And perhaps, after all, there is something in— in showing no fear."

And for a few moments after having thought the incident over he became comparatively sanguine and cheerful.

As Floxham had predicted, when the work-bell called the hands together again there were new places vacant. Mr. Briarley, it may be observed, had been absent all day, and by this time was listening with affectionate interest and spasmodic attacks of inopportune enthusiasm to various inflammatory speeches which were being made at a beer-house.

Toward evening the work lagged so that the over-lookers could no longer keep up the semblance of ignorance. A kind of gloom settled upon them also, and they went about with depressed faces.

"It'll be all up to-morrow," said one, "if there's nothing done."

But something was done.

Suddenly—just before time for the last bell to ring—Haworth appeared at the door of the principal room.

"Lads!" he shouted, "them on you as wants a speech from Jem Haworth gather it th' yard in five minutes from now."

There was no more work done. The bell began to ring; implements were thrown down and a shout went up from the crowd. Then there was a rush into the yard, and in less than five minutes the out-pouring of the place thronged about its chief door-way where Jem Haworth stood on the topmost step, looking down, facing them all, boldly—with the air of a man who felt his victory more than half won.

"Let's here what tha'st gotten to say," cried some one well hidden by the crowd. "Out wi' it."

"It's not much," Haworth shouted back. "It's this to start with. I'm here to find out where you chaps stand."

But there was no answer to this. He had known there would be none and went on.

"I've been through th' place this morning," he said, "and through th' town, and I know how th' wind blows as well as any on you. Th' lads at Marfort and Molton and Dillup are on th' strike. There's a bad lookout in many a place besides them. There's a lot of fools laying in beer and making speeches down in Broxton; there were some here this morning as didn't show this afternoon. How many on you's going to follow them?"

Then there was a murmur, but it was not easy to understand it. It was a mixture of sounds defiant and conciliatory.

Haworth moved forward. He knew them better than they knew him.

"*I'm* not one o' the model soart," he called out. "I've not set up soup kitchens nor given you flannel petticoats. I've looked sharp after you, and I should have been a fool if I hadn't. I've let you alone out of work hours, and I've not grudged you your sprees, when they didn't stand in my way. I've done the square thing by you, and I've done it by myself. Th' places I've built let no water in, and I let 'em to you as easy as I could and make no loss. I didn't build 'em for benevolent purposes, but I've not heard one of you chaps complain of 'em yet. I've given you your dues and stood by you—and I'll do it again, by——"

There was a silence—a significant breathless one.

"Have I done it," he said, "or haven't I?"

Suddenly the silence was broken.

"Aye," there was a shout, "aye, lad, yo' ha'."

"Then," he shouted, "them as Jem Haworth has stood by, let 'em stand by Jem Haworth!"

And he struck his big fist upon his open palm with a fierce blow, and stood there before them breathing hard.

He had the best metal on his side somehow, and the best metal carried the day. The boldness of his move, the fact that he had not waited, but had taken the lead, were things all for him. Even those who wavered toward the enemy were stirred to something like admiration.

"But what about th' Union?" said a timorous voice in the rear. "Theer'll be trouble with th' Unions as sure as we stand out, Mester."

Haworth made a movement none of them understood. He put his hand behind him and drew from his hip-pocket an object which caused every man of them to give a little start and gasp. They were used to simple and always convenient modes of defense. The little object he produced would not have startled an American, but it startled a Lancashire audience.

It was of shining steel and rose-wood, and its bright barrels glittered significantly. He held it out and patted it lightly—with a terrible lightness.

"That's for the Union, lads," he said. "And more like it."

A few of the black sheep moved restlessly and with manifest tremor. This was a new aspect of affairs. One of them suddenly cried out with much feebleness:

"Th—three cheers for Haworth."

"Let the chaps as are on the other side go to their lot now," said Haworth.

But no one moved.

"There's some here that'll go when th' time comes," he announced. "Let 'em tell what they've heard. Now lads, the rest on you up with your hands."

The whole place was in a tumult. They held up their hands and clenched and shook them and shouted, and here and there swore with fluency and enthusiasm. There were not six among them who were not fired with the general friendly excitement.

"To-morrow morning there'll be papers posted up, writ in Jem Haworth's hand and signed with his name," cried Haworth. "Read 'em as you come along, lads, and when you reach here I'll be ready for you."

"Is it about th' pistols?" faltered the timorous voice.

"Aye," Haworth answered, "about th' pistols. Now go home."

He turned to mount the step, flushed and breathing fast and with high-beating pulses, but suddenly he stopped. Before the iron gate a carriage had stopped. A servant in livery got down and opened the door, and Rachel Ffrench stepped out. The hands checked their shouting to look at her. She came up the yard slowly and with the setting sun shining upon her. It was natural that they should gaze at her as she approached, though she did not look at any of them—only at Haworth, who waited. They made a path-way for her and she passed

through it and went up the step. Her rich dress touched more than one man as she swept by.

"I thought," they heard her say, "that I would call for my father."

Then for the first time she looked at the men. She turned at the top of the step and looked down—the sun on her dress and face.

There was not a man among them who did not feel the look. At first a murmur and then an incoherent cry and then a shout, and they threw up their caps and shouted until they were hoarse.

In the midst of it she turned aside and went in with a smile on her lips.

In Haworth's room they found her father standing behind the door with a startled air.

"What are they shouting for?" he asked. "What is the matter now?"

"I think I am the matter," Miss Ffrench answered, "though I scarcely know why. Ah," giving him a quiet glance, "you are afraid!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

"SARARANN."

THE next morning there was an uproar in the town. The strikers from Molton and Marfort no longer remained in the shade. They presented themselves openly to the community in the characters they had assumed. At first they lounged about in groups at the corners and before the ale-houses, smoking, talking, gesticulating, or wearing sullen faces. But this negative state of affairs did not last long. By eight o'clock the discovery was made that something had happened in the night.

In a score of prominent positions,—on walls and posts,—

there appeared papers upon which was written, in a large, bold hand, the following announcement :

"Haworth's lads will stand by him. The chaps that have aught to say against this, let them remember that to every man there's six barrels well loaded, and to Jem Haworth twelve. Those that want their brass out of Broxton Bank, let them come and get it.

Writ and signed by

JEM HAWORTH.

The first man who saw it swore aloud and ran to call others. Soon a select party stood before the place on which the card was posted, confronting it in different moods. Some were scientifically profane, some raged loudly, some were silent, one or two grinned.

"He staid up aw neet to do that theer," remarked one of these. "He's gotten a gizzard o' his own, has Haworth. He's done it wi' his own hands."

One gentleman neither grinned nor swore. His countenance fell with singular rapidity. This was Mr. Briarley, who had come up in the rear. He held in one hand a pewter pot which was half empty. He had caught it up in the heat of the moment, from the table at which he had been sitting when the news came.

"What's in th' barrils?" he inquired.

The man he spoke to turned to him roughly.

"Powder," he answered, "and lead, tha domned foo'!"

Mr Briarley looked at his mug regretfully.

"I thowt," he said, "as happen it mought ha' bin beer."

Having reflected a moment, he was on the point of raising the mug to his lips when a thought struck him. He stopped short.

"What's he goin' to do wi' 'em?" he quavered.

"Ax him," was the grim answer. "Ax him, lad. He dun-not say."

"He is na—" in manifest trepidation, "he is na—goin' to—to fire 'em off!"

"He'll fire 'em off, if he comes across thee," was the reply. "Mak' sure o' that. An' I should na blame him, neyther."

Mr. Briarley reflected again for a few seconds—reflected deeply. Then he moved aside a little.

"I hannot seen Sararann sin' yesterday," he said softly, "nor yet Janey, nor yet—th' owd missus. I—I mun go and see 'em."

Haworth kept his word. The next day there was not a man who went to and from the Works who could not have defended himself if he had been attacked. But no one was attacked. His course was one so unheard of, so unexpected, that it produced a shock. There was a lull in the movement, at least. The number of his enemies increased and were more violent, but they were forced to content themselves with violence of speech. Somehow, it scarcely seemed safe to use ordinary measures against Jem Haworth. He slept in his room at the Works, and shared watches with the force he had on guard. He drove through the town boldly, and carried a grim, alert face. He was here, and there, and everywhere; in the Works, going from room to room; at the bank, ready for emergencies.

"When this here's over," he said, "I'll give you chaps a spree you won't get over in a bit, by George!"

Those who presented themselves at the bank the morning the placards were to be seen got their money. By noon the number arriving diminished perceptibly. In a day or two a few came back, and would have handed over their savings again willingly, but the bank refused to take them.

"Carry it to Manchester," were Haworth's words. "They'll take it there—I won't."

Those of his hands who had deserted him came out of their respective "sprées" in a week's time, with chop-fallen countenances. They had not gained anything, and were somehow not in great favor among the outside strikers. In their most pronounced moods, they had been neither useful nor ornamental to their party. They were not eloquent, nor even

violent; they were simply idle vagabonds, who were no great loss to Haworth and no great gain to his enemies. In their own families they were in deep and dire disgrace, and loud were the ratings they received from their feminine relatives.

The lot of Mr. Briarley was melancholy indeed. Among the malcontents his portion was derision and contumely; at home he was received with bewailings and scathing severity.

"An' that theer was what tha wur up to, was it?" cried Mrs. Briarley, the day he found himself compelled by circumstances to reveal the true state of affairs. "Tha'rt j'ined th' strikers, has tha?"

"Aye, Sararann, I've j'ined 'em—an'—an' we're goin' to set things straight, bless yo'—that's what we're goin' to do. We—we're goin' to bring the mesters down a bit, an'—an' get our dues. That's what we're goin' to do, Sararann."

It was dinner-time, and in the yard, and about the street at the front the young members of the family disported themselves with vigor. Without Janey and the baby, who were in the house, there were ten of them. Mrs. Briarley went to the door and called them. Roused to frantic demonstrations of joy by the immediate prospect of dinner, they appeared in a body, tumbling over one another, shrieking, filling the room to overflowing.

Generally they were disposed of in relays, for convenience sake. It was some time since Mr. Briarley had beheld the whole array. He sat upright and stared at them. Mrs. Briarley sat down confronting him.

"What art tha goin' to do wi' *them* while tha bring th' mesters down?" she inquired.

Mr. Briarley regarded the assembly with *naïve* bewilderment. A natural depression of spirit set in.

"Theer—theer seems a good many on 'em, Sararann," he said, with an air of meek protestation. "They seem to ha'—to ha' cumulated!"

"Theer's twelve on 'em," answered Mrs. Briarley, dryly, "an'

they've all gotten mouths, as tha sees. An' their feyther's goin' to bring th' mesters down a bit!"

Twelve pairs of eyes stolidly regarded their immediate progenitor, as if desirous of discovering his intentions. Mr. Briarley was embarrassed.

"Sararann," he faltered, "send 'em out to play 'em. Send 'em out into th' open air. It's good fur 'em, th' open air is, an' they set a mon back."

Mrs. Briarley burst into lamentations, covering her face with her apron and rocking to and fro.

"Aye," cried she, "send 'em out in th' air—happen they'll fatten on it. It's aw they'll get, poor childer. Let 'em mak' th' most on it."

In these days Haworth was more of a lion than ever. He might have dined in state with a social potentate each day if he had been so minded. The bolder spirits visited him at the Works and would have had him talk the matter over. But he was in the humor for neither festivities nor talk. He knew what foundation his safety rested upon, and spent many a sleepless and feverish night. He was bitter enough at heart against those he had temporarily baffled.

"Wait till tha'rt out o' the woods," he said to Ffrench, when he was betrayed into expressing his sense of relief.

Oddly enough the feeling against Ffrench was disproportionately violent. He was regarded as an alien and a usurper of the rights of others. There existed a large disgust for his gentle birth and breeding, and a sardonic contempt for his incapacity and lack of experience. He had no prestige of success and daring, he had not shown himself in the hour of danger, he took all and gave nothing.

"I should not be surprised," said Miss Ffrench to Murdoch, "if we have trouble yet."

CHAPTER XXX.

MRS. HAWORTH AND GRANNY DIXON.

ABOUT this time a change appeared in little Mrs. Haworth. Sometimes when they sat together, Haworth found himself looking up suddenly and feeling that her eyes were fixed upon him, and at such times she invariably met his glance with a timid, startled expression, and released herself from it as soon as she had the power.

She had never been so tender and lavish with her innocent caresses, but there was continuously a tremulous watchfulness in her manner, which was almost suggestive of fear. It was not fear of him, however. She clung to him with all the strength of her love. At night when he returned home, however late, he was sure of finding her waiting patiently for him, and in the morning when he left the house he was never so early that she was not at his service. The man began to quail before her, and grow restless in secret, and be haunted, when he awakened in the night, by his remembrance of her.

"She is on the lookout for something," he said to himself, fearfully. "What have they been saying to her?"

On her part, when she sat alone, she used to try and think the matter out, and set it straight and account for it.

"It's the strikes," she said, "as has set them agen him and made 'em hard an' forgetful of all he's done. They'd never have spoke so if they'd been themselves."

She could scarcely have told what she had heard, or how the first blow had struck home. She only knew that here and there she had heard at first a rough jeer and then a terrible outspoken story, which, in spite of her disbelief, filled her with dread. The man who first flung the ill-favored story at her stopped half-way through it, the words dying on his lips at the sight of her face.

It happened in one of her pensioners' cottages, and she rose from her chair trembling.

"I didn't think," she said, with unconscious pathos, "as the world could be so ignorant and wicked."

But as the ill-feeling became more violent, she met with the same story again and again, and often with new and worse versions in forms she could not combat. She began to be haunted by vague memories of things she had not comprehended. A sense of pain followed her. She was afraid, at times, to go to the cottages, lest she should be confronted with something which would overwhelm her. Then she began to search her son's face with a sense of finding some strangeness in it. She watched him wistfully when he had so far forgotten her presence as to be almost unaware of it. One night, having thrown himself upon a sofa and fallen into a weary sleep, he suddenly started up from it to find her standing close by him, looking down, her face pale, her locked fingers moving nervously.

"What is it?" he exclaimed. "What ails you?"

He was startled by her falling upon her knees at his side, crying, and laying her haking shand upon his shoulder.

"You was having a bad dream, my dear," she said,— "a bad dream. I—I scarcely knowed your face, Jem—it was so altered."

He sank back upon his cushions and stared at her. He knew he had been having no bad dream. His dreams were not half so evil and bitter when he slept as they were in these days when he wakened.

"You always had such a good face, Jem," she said, "and such a kind one. When you was a boy —"

He stopped her almost sullenly.

"I'm not a boy now," he said. "That's put away and done with."

"No," she answered, "That's true, my dear; but you've lived an innocent life, an'—an' never done no wrong—no more

than you did when you was one. And your face was so altered."

Her voice died away into a silence which, somehow, neither of them could break.

It was Granny Dixon who revealed the truth in its barest form. Perhaps no man nor woman in Broxton knew more of it than this respectable ancient matron. Haworth and his iniquities had been the spice of her later life. The fact that his name was being mentioned in a conversation never escaped her; she discovered it as if by magic and invariably commanded that the incident under discussion be repeated at the top of the reciter's voice for her benefit, occasionally somewhat to the confusion of the honest matron in question.

How it had happened that she had not betrayed all to Mrs. Haworth at once was a mystery to remain unsolved. During the little woman's visits to the cottage, Mrs. Briarley existed in a chronic condition of fear and trembling.

"She'll be out wi' it some o' these days, mark me," she would quaver to Janey. "An th' Lord knows, I would na' be theer fur nowt when she does."

But she did not do it at first. Mrs. Briarley had a secret conviction that the fact that she did not do so was due entirely to iniquity. She had seen her sit peering from under her brows at their guest as the simple creature poured forth her loving praise of her son, and at such times it was always Mrs. Briarley's province to repeat the conversation for her benefit.

"Aye," Mrs. Dixon would comment with an evil smile, "that's him! That's Haworth! He's a noice chap—is Haworth. I know him."

Mrs. Haworth learned in time to fear her and to speak timidly in her presence, rarely referring to the subject of her boy's benefactions.

"Only as it wouldn't be nat'ral," she said once to Mrs. Briarley, "I should think she was set agen him."

"Eh! bless us," was Mrs. Briarley's answer. "Yo' need na

moind *her*. She's set agen ivverybody. She's th' nowtest owd piece i' Christendom."

A few days after Haworth had awakened to find his mother standing near him, Mrs. Haworth paid a visit to the Briarleys. She took with her a basket, which the poor of Broxton had long since learned to know. In this case it contained stockings for the little Briarleys and a dress or so for the baby.

When she had bestowed her gifts and seated herself, she turned to Granny Dixon with some tremor of manner.

"I hope you're well, ma'am," she said.

Granny Dixon made no reply. She sat bent over in her chair, regarding her for a few seconds with unblinking gaze. Then she slowly pointed with her thin, crooked finger to the little presents.

"He sent 'em, did he?" she trumpeted forth. "Haworth?"

Mrs. Haworth quailed before her.

"Yes, ma'am," she answered, "leastways ——"

Granny Dixon stopped her.

"He did nowt o' th' soart," she cried. "Tha'rt leein'!"

The little woman made an effort to rise, turned pale, and sat down again.

"Ma'am ——" she began.

Granny Dixon's eyes sparkled.

"Tha'rt leein'," she repeated. "He's th' worst chap i' England, an' aw Broxton knows it."

Her victim uttered a low cry of pain. Mrs. Briarley had left the room, and there was no one to help her. All the hints and jeers she had heard rushed back to her, but she struggled to stand up against them.

"It ain't true," she said. "It ain't—true."

Granny Dixon was just beginning to enjoy herself. A difference of opinion with Mrs. Briarley, which had occurred a short time before, had prepared her for the occasion. She knew that nothing would so much demoralize her relative and hostess as this iniquitous outbreak.

"They've been warnin' me to keep quiet an' not tell thee," she answered, "but I tow'd 'em I'd tell thee when I wur i' th' humor, an' I'm i' th' humor now. Will Ffrench wur a devil, but *he's* a bigger one yet. He kep' thee away because he did na want thee to know. He set aw th' place by th' ears. A decent woman would na cross his door-step, nor a decent mon, fur aw his brass—afore tha coom. Th' lot as he used to ha' down fro' Lunnen an' Manchester wur a shame to th' town. *I've* seed 'em—women in paint an' feathers, an' men as decent lasses hide fro'. A good un, wur he? Aye, he wur a good un, for sure."

She sat and chuckled a moment, thinking of Sararann's coming terror and confusion. She had no objection to Haworth's moral lapses, herself, but she meant to make the most of them while she was at it. She saw nothing of the anguish in the face from which all the fresh, almost girlish color had faded.

"An' yo' did na know as they wur na gentlefolk," she proclaimed again. "Tha thowt they wur ladies' an' gentlemen when tha coom in on 'em th' fust neet tha set foot i' th' house. A noice batch o' ladies they wur! An' he passed 'em off on thee! He wur sharp enow fur that, trust him. Ladies, bless us! *I* heard tell on it—an' so did aw Broxton."

The wounded creature gathered all her strength to rise from her chair. She stood pressing her hands against her heart, swaying and deadly pale.

"He has been a good son to me," she said. "A good son—an' I can't believe it. You wouldn't yourself if—you was his mother, an' knew him as—as I do."

She made her way to the door just as Mrs. Briarley came in. One glance told that excellent matron that the long-dreaded calamity had arrived.

"What's she been up to?" she demanded. "Lord ha' mercy! what's she been up to now?"

"She's been tellin' me," faltered the departing guest, "that

my son's a bad man an' a shame to me. Let me go, ma'am—for I've never heard talk like this before—an' it's made me a bit weak an' queer."

And she slipped past and was gone.

Mrs. Briarley's patience deserted her. A full sense of what Granny Dixon's worst might be burst in upon her; a remembrance of her own manifold wrongs and humiliations added itself to this sense; for the moment, discretion ceased to appear the better part of valor.

"What has tha been sayin?" she cried. "What has tha been sayin'? Out wi' it."

"I've been telling her what tha wur afeared to tell her," chuckled Mrs. Dixon with exultation. "I tow'd thee I would, an' I've done it."

Mrs. Briarley made no more ado. She set the baby down upon an adjacent chair with a resonant sound, and then fell upon the miserable old woman and seizing her by the shoulders shook her until her cap flew off and danced upon her back and her mouth opened and shut as if worked by a spring.

"Tha brazent, hard-hearted besom, tha!" she cried as she shook. "Tha ill-farrant nowt, tha! as nivver did no good i' thy days an canna bear as no one else should. I dunnot care if I nivver see thy brass as long as I live. If tha wur noine i'stead o' ninety-five I'd give thee a hidin', tha brazent, hard-hearted owd piece!"

Her strength failed her and she loosened her hold and sat down and wept aloud behind the baby, and Mrs. Dixon fell back in her chair, an unpleasant heap, without breath to speak a word or strength to do anything but clutch wildly at her cap, and so remained shrunken and staring.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HAWORTH'S DEFENDER.

MRS. HAWORTH made her way along the streets with weak and lagging steps. She had been a brisk walker in the days of her country life, and even now was fonder of going here and there on foot than of riding in state, as her son would have preferred. But now the way before her seemed long. She knew where she was going.

"There's one of 'em as knows an' will tell me," she said to herself. "She can't have no cruel feeling against him, bein' a lady, an' knowin' him so well. An' if it's true—not as I believe it, Jem, my dear, for I don't—she'll break it to me gentle."

"Not as I believe, Jem, my dear, for I don't," she said to herself again and again.

Her mind went back to the first hour of his life, when he had lain, a strong-limbed child, on her weak arm, the one comfort given to her out of her wretched marriage. She thought of him again as he had been a lad, growing and thriving in spite of hunger and cold, growing and thriving in spite of cruelty and wrong which broke her health and threw her helpless upon charity. He had been sharper and bolder than other boys, and always steadfast to his determination.

"He was always good to me," she said. "Child an' man he's never forgot me, or been unmindful. If there'd have been wrong in his life, who'd have been liker to see it than me?"

It was to Rachel Ffrench she was going, and when at last she reached the end of her journey, and was walking up the path-way to the house, Rachel Ffrench, who stood at the window, saw her, and was moved to wonder by her pallor and feebleness.

The spring sunshine was so bright outside that the room

seemed quite dark when she came into it, and even after she had seated herself the only light in it seemed to emanate from the figure of Miss Ffrench herself, who stood opposite her in a dress of some thin white stuff and with strongly fragrant yellow hyacinths at her neck and in her hand.

"You are tired," she said. "You should not have walked."

The woman looked up at her timidly.

"It isn't that," she answered. "It's somethin' else."

She suddenly stretched forth her hands into the light.

"I've came here to hear about my boy," she said. "I want to hear from one as knows the truth, an'—will tell me."

Miss Ffrench was not of a sympathetic nature. There existed few young women with more nerve and self-poise at trying times, and she had not at any previous period been specially touched by Mrs. Haworth; but just now she was distressed singularly.

"What do you want to know," she asked, "that I can tell you?"

She was not prepared for what happened next, and she lost a little placidity through it. The simple, loving creature fell at her feet and caught hold of her dress, sobbing.

"He's thirty-three years old," she cried, "an' I've never seen the day when he's give me a hurt. He's been the pride of my life an' the hope of it. I've looked up to him and prayed for him an' believed in him—an' they say he's black with shameful sin—an' I don't know him, nor never did, for he's deceived me from first to last."

The yellow hyacinths fell from Miss Ffrench's hand on the carpet, and she looked down at them instead of at the upturned face.

"Who said it?" she asked.

But she was not answered.

"If it's true—not that I believe it, for I don't—if it's true, what is there left for me, as loved and honored him—where's my son I thanked God for day an' night? Where's my boy as

paid me for all I bore? He's never been—he's never been at all. I've never been his mother nor he's never been my son. If it's true—not as I believe it, for I don't—where is he?"

Miss Ffrench bent down and picked up her hyacinths. She wondered as she bent down, what her reply would be.

"Will you believe *me*?" she asked, as she rose up again.

"Yes, ma'am," she was answered, "I know I may do it—thank God!"

"Yes, you may," said Miss Ffrench, without flinching in the least. "I can have no feeling for or against him. I can have no end to serve, one way or the other. It is not true. It is a lie. He is all you have believed."

She helped her to rise, and made her sit down again in an easy chair, and then herself withdrew a little, and stood leaning against the window, looking at her.

"He has done more good in Broxton than any other man who lives," she said. "He has made it what it is. The people who hate him and speak ill of him are those he has benefitted most. It is the way of their class, I have heard before, and now I believe it to be true. They have said worse things of men who deserve them as little as he does. He has enemies whom he has conquered, and they will never forgive him."

She discovered a good many things to say, having once begun, and she actually found a kind of epicurian enjoyment in saying them in a manner the most telling. She always liked to do a thing very well.

But, notwithstanding this, the time seemed rather long before she was left alone to think the matter over.

Before she had said many words her visitor was another woman. Life's color came back to her, and she sat crying softly, tears of sheer joy and relief.

"I knowed it couldn't be true," she said. "I knowed it, an' oh! thank you ma'am, with all a mother's heart!"

"To think," she said, smiling and sobbing, "as I should

have been so wicked as to let it weigh on me, when I knewed so well as it couldn't never be. I should be almost 'shamed to look him in the face if I didn't know how good he was, an' how ready he'd be to forgive me."

When at last she was gone, Miss Ffrench threw herself into the chair she had left, rather languidly. She was positively tired.

As she did so she heard a sound. She rose hastily and turned toward the folding-doors leading into the adjoining room. They had been partially closed and as she turned they were pushed aside and some one came through them.

It was Jem Haworth.

He was haggard and disheveled, and as he approached her he walked unsteadily.

"I was in there through it all," he said, and I heard every word."

She was herself again, at once. She knew she had not been herself ten minutes before.

"Well," she said.

He came up and stood near her—an almost abject tremor upon him.

"Will you listen to what I have got to say?" he said.

She made a cold gesture of assent.

"If she'd gone to some and heard what they had to tell," he said, "it would have killed her. It's well she came here."

She saw the dark color rush to his face and knew what was coming.

"It's all true, by ——" he burst out, "every word of it!"

"When I was in there," he went on, with a gesture toward the other room, "I swore I'd tell you. Make the best and the worst of it. It's all true—that and more."

He sat down in a chair and rested his forehead on his hands.

"Things has begun to go agen me," he said. "They never did before. I've been used to tell myself there was a kind of

luck in keeping it hid from her. Th' day it comes on her full force, I'm done for. I said in there you should know, at least. It's all true."

"I knew it was true," remarked Miss Ffrench, "all the time."

"*You* knew!" he cried out. "*You*!"

"I have known it from the first," she answered. "Did you think it was a secret?"

He turned hot and cold as he looked at her.

"Then, by George, you'd a reason for saying what you did. What was it?"

She remained silent, looking out of the open window across the flower-bright garden. She watched a couple of yellow butterflies eddying above a purple hyacinth for several seconds before she spoke, and then did so slowly and absently.

"I don't know the reason," she said. "It was a strange thing for *me* to do."

"It wasn't to save *me* aught," he returned. "That's plain enough."

"No," she answered, "it was not to save you. I am not given to pitying people, but I think that for the time I wanted to save *her*. It was a strange thing," she said, softly, "for *me* to do."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CHRISTIAN MURDOCH.

CHRISTIAN had never spoken to Murdoch openly of his secret labor. He was always aware that she knew and understood; he had seen her knowledge in her face almost from the first, but they had exchanged no words on the subject. He had never wavered from his resolve since he had made it. Whatever his tasks had been in the day, or however late his return was at night, he did not rest until he had given a cer-

tain number of hours to this work. Often Christian and his mother, waking long after midnight, heard him moving about in his closed room. He grew gaunt and hollow-eyed, but he did not speak of what he was doing, and they never knew whether he was hopeful or despairing.

Without seeing much of the two women, he still found himself led to think of them constantly. He was vaguely conscious that since their interview in the grave-yard, he had never felt free from Christian Murdoch. More than once her mother's words came back to him with startling force. "She sits and looks on and says nothing. She asks nothing, but her eyes force me to speak."

He always knew that she was watching him. Often he looked up and met her glance, and somehow it was always a kind of shock to him. He knew that she was wondering and asking herself questions she could not ask him.

"If I gave it up or flagged," he told himself, "she would know without my saying a word."

There had grown in her a beauty of a dark, foreign type. The delicate olive of her skin and the dense blackness of her eyes and hair caused her to be considered a novelty worth commenting upon by the men of Broxton society, which was of a highly critical nature. She went out a great deal as the spring advanced and began to know the place and people better. She developed a pathetic eagerness to make friends and understand those around her. One day, she went alone to Broxton Chapel and after sitting through one of Mr. Hixon's most sulphurous sermons, came home in a brooding mood.

"Why did you go?" Murdoch was roused to ask.

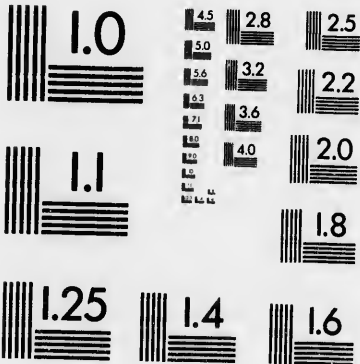
"I thought," she answered, "it might make me better. I thought I would try."

Not long afterward, when he had gone out of the house and she was left sitting with Mrs. Murdoch, she suddenly looked up from the carpet on which her eyes had been fixed and asked her a question.



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"Is it true that I am beginning to be very handsome?" she demanded.

"Yes," Mrs. Murdoch answered, "it is true."

A dark cloud settled upon her face and her eyes fell again.

"I heard some men in the street speak aloud to each other about it," she said. "Do they speak so of *all* women who are handsome?"

"I don't know," her companion replied, surveying her critically and with some anxiety.

"They used to speak so of—*her*," she said, slowly. "*She* was a beautiful woman. They were always telling her of it again and again, and I used to go and look at myself in the glass and be glad that I was thin and dark and ugly and that they laughed at me. I wanted to be hideous. Once, when I was a child, a man said: 'Never mind, she will be a beauty some day—like her mother!' and I flew at him and struck him, and then I ran away to my room and fell down upon my knees and said the first prayer I ever said in my life. I said, 'O God!—if there is a God—strike me dead! O God!—if there is a God—strike me dead!'"

The woman who listened shuddered.

"Am I like—anybody?" she said next.

"I do not know," was the answer.

"I could not tell myself, if I were," she said. "I have watched for it so long that I should not see it if it had come. I look every day. Perhaps I am and do not know. Perhaps that is why they look at me in the street, and speak of me aloud as I go by."

Her voice fell into a whisper. She threw herself upon her knees and laid her head upon the woman's lap.

"Cover me with your arms," she said. "Cover me so that you may not see my face."

She was constantly moved to these strange outbursts of feeling in these days. A few nights later, as he sat at work after midnight, Murdoch fancied that he heard a sound outside his

door. He went to it and opened it and found himself confronting the girl as she sat crouched upon the lowest step of the stair-way.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I could not go to sleep," she answered. "I could not stop thinking of what you were doing. It seemed as if I should have a little share in it if I were here. Are you,"—almost timidly,—“are you tired?”

"Yes," he answered, "I am tired."

"Are you—any nearer?"

"Sometimes I think so,—but so did he."

She rose slowly.

"I will go away," she said. "It would only disturb you to know I was here."

She moved a step upward and then paused uncertainly.

"You told me once," she said, "that there was no reason why I should not be as good and happy as any other woman. Are you sure of what you said?"

"For God's sake, do not doubt in that way," he said.

She stood looking down at him, one hand resting upon the balustrade, her dark eyes wild with some strange emotion.

"I lie awake at night a great deal," she said, "and I am always thinking of what has gone by. Sometimes—lately—I have wished that—I had forgiven her."

"I have wished so too," he answered.

"I know that," she returned. "But I did not and it is too late. Everything is over for her and it is too late. For a long time I was glad, but now—I suppose I am repenting. She did not repent. She suffered, but she did not repent. I think I am repenting."

When he returned to his room he found he could not settle down to work again. He walked up and down restlessly for some time, and at last threw himself upon the bed and lay wide awake thinking in the darkness.

It always cost him a struggle to shut out the world and life

and concentrate himself upon his labor in those days. A year before it would have been different, now there was always a battle to be fought. There were dreams to be held at bay and memories which his youth and passion made over-whelming forces.

But to-night, somehow, it was Christian Murdoch who disturbed him. There had been a terrible wistfulness in her voice—a wistfulness mingled with long-repressed fear, which had touched him more than all. And so, when sleep came to him, it happened that her figure stood out alone from all others before him, and was his last thought.

Among those whom Christian Murdoch learned to know was Janey Briarley. She saw her first in the streets, and again in Mrs. Murdoch's kitchen, where she occasionally presented herself, attired in the huge apron, to assist in a professional capacity upon "cleanin' days." The baby having learned to walk, and Mr. Briarley being still an inactive member of the household, it fell upon Janey and her mother to endeavor to add, by such efforts as lay in their power, to their means of providing for the eleven. With the assistance of the apron, Janey was enabled to make herself generally useful upon all active occasions.

"Hoo's a little thing, but hoo's a sharp un," Mrs. Briarley was wont to say. "Hoo con work like a woman. I dunnot know what I'd ha' done wi'out her. Yo' try her, Missus, an' see."

She spent each Saturday afternoon in Mrs. Murdoch's kitchen, and it was not long before Christian drifted into an acquaintance with her. The first time he saw her on her knees before the fire-place, surrounded by black-lead brushes, bath-brick, and "pipe-clay," and vigorously polishing the fender, she stopped short to look at her.

"How old are you?" she asked, after a little while.

"I'm twelve, goin' on thirteen," was the reply, without any cessation of the rubbing.

The girl leaned against the side of the mantel and surveyed her critically.

"You don't look that old," she said.

"Aye, but I do," returned the child, "i' tha looks at my face. I'm stunted wi' nussin', that's what mak's me so little."

She gave her face a sharp turn upward, that it might be seen.

"I've had enow to mak' me look owd, I con tell thee," she remarked.

The interest she saw in her countenance inspired her. She became comparatively garrulous upon the subject of the family anxieties. "Feyther" figured in his usual unenviable rôle, and Granny Dixon was presented in strong colors, but finally she pulled herself up and changed the subject with startling suddenness.

"I've seed thee mony a toime afore," she said, "an' I've heerd folk talk about thee. I nivver heerd *him* say owt about thee, though."

"Whom do you mean?" asked Christian, with a little frown.

"Mester Murdoch. We used to see a good deal on him at th' start, but we dunnot see him so often i' these days. He's gotten other places to go to. Th' quality mak' a good deal on him."

She paused and sat up, polishing brush in hand.

"I dunnot wonder as they say yo're han'some," she volunteered.

"Who says so?" coldly.

"Th' men in th' Works an' th' foak as sees yo' i' th' street. Some on 'em says you're han'somer than her—an' that's sayin' a good bit, yo' know."

"Her' is Miss French?"

"Aye. Yo' dunnot dress as foine, an' yo're dark-skinned, but theer's summat noice about yo'. I dunnot wonder as they say yo're han'some."

"Never mind talking about that. Tell me about something else."

The termination of the interview left them on sufficiently good terms.

Janey went home with a story to tell.

"She's crossed th' seas," she said, "an' liv'd i' furrin parts. She's gotten queer ways an' she stares at a body—but I loike her fur aw that."

"Been i' furrin parts!" exclaimed Mrs. Briarley. "Bless us! No wonder th' poor thing's a bit heathenish. Hast tha ivver seed her at chapel, Jane Ann?"

The fact that she had not been seen at chapel awakened grave misgivings as to the possible presence of popery and the "scarlet woman," which objectionable female figured largely and in most unpleasant guise in the discourses of Brother Hixon.

"Theer's no knowin' what th' poor lass has been browt up to," said the good matron, "livin' reet under th' Pope's nose an' nivver darin' to say her soul's her own. I nivver had no notion o' them furrin parts mysen. Gie me Lancashire."

But the next week the girl made her visit to the chapel and sat throughout the sermon with her steadfast black eyes fixed upon the Reverend Mr. Hixon. Once, during a moment of inflammatory eloquence, that gentleman, suddenly becoming conscious of her gaze, stopped with a start and with difficulty regained his equilibrium, though Christian did not flinch at all, or seem to observe his alarm and confusion.

She cultivated Janey with an odd persistence after this. She asked her questions concerning her life and experiences, and always seemed to find her interesting. Often Janey was conscious of the fact that she stood and looked at her for some time with an air of curiosity.

"Do you," she asked her suddenly one day, "do you believe all that man says to you?"

Janey started into a sitting posture, as was her custom when roused in the midst of her labors.

"Eh! bless us! Yes," she exclaimed. "Dunnot yo?"
"No."

Recollections of the "scarlet woman" flashed across her young hearer's mind.

"Art tha a Papist?" she gasped.

"No—not yet."

"Art tha," Janey asked, breathlessly,—“art tha goin’ to be?”

"I don't know."

"An' tha—tha does na beneve what Mester Hixon says?"

"No—not yet."

"What does tha believe?"

She stared up at the dark young face aghast. It was quite unmoved. The girl's eyes were fixed on space.

"Nothing."

"Wheer—wheer does tha expect to go when tha dees?"

"I don't know," she said, coldly; "very often I don't care."

Janey dropped her brush and forgot to pick it up.

"Why, bless thee!" she exclaimed with some sharpness and also with the manner of one presenting the only practical solution of a difficulty, "tha'lt go to hell, i' tha does na repent!"

The girl turned her eyes upon her.

"Does it all depend on that?" she demanded.

"Aye, to be sure," she replied, testily. "Does na tha know that?"

"Then," said Christian, slowly, "I shall not go to hell—for I am repenting."

And she turned about and walked away.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SEED SOWN.

THERE had been, as it seemed, a lull in the storm. The idlers did not come over from Molton and Dillup as often as they had done at first. The strikes had extended until they were in full blast throughout the country, but "Haworth's," so far, had held its own. Haworth himself was regarded as a kind of demi-god. He might have done almost anything he pleased. It was a source of some surprise to his admirers that he chose to do so little and showed no elation. One or two observing outsiders saw that his struggle had left its mark upon him. There were deep lines in his face; he had lost flesh and something of his air of bravado; at times he was almost haggard. As things became quieter he began to take sudden mysterious journeys to London and Manchester and various other towns. Ffrench did not know why he went; in fact Ffrench knew very little of him but that his humors were frequently trying and always more morose after such absences. He himself had alternately blown hot and cold. Of late the fruit of his efforts had rather the flavor of ashes. He was of even less importance than before, in the Works, and he continually heard unpleasant comments and reports outside. As surely as his spirits rose to a jubilant height some untoward circumstance occurred to dash them.

"I should have thought," he said fretfully to his daughter, "that as a Broxton man and—and a gentleman, the people would have been with me, but they are not."

"No," said Miss Ffrench, "they are not."

She knew far more than he did himself. She was not in the habit of allowing any sign to escape her. When she took her frequent drives she kept her eyes open to all that happened.

"If they dared, there are a good many of them who would be insolent to me."

"Why should they not dare?" asked her father with increased irritation.

"Because they know I am not afraid of them—because I set them at defiance; and for another reason."

The other reason which she did not state had nothing to do with their daring. It was the strong one that in the splendor of her beauty she had her greatest power. Ordinary womanhood would scarcely in itself have appealed to the chivalric sentiment of Broxton, Molton and Dillup, but Rachel French driving slowly through the streets and past the "beer-house" doors, and turning her perfect, unmoved face for criticism to the crowd collected thereat, created a natural diversion. Those who had previously been in a sarcastic mood, lapsed into silence, the most inveterate 'bacco consumers took their pipes out of their mouths, feeling it necessary to suspend all action that they might look after her with a clearer appreciation. They were neither touched nor softened, but they were certainly roused to an active admiration which, after a manner, held them in check.

"Theer is na another loike her i' England," was once remarked rather sullenly by one. "Not i' England, let aloan Lancashire—an' be dom'd to her,"—this last added with a shade of delicate significance.

But there was one man who saw her with eyes different from the rest. If he had not so seen her, existence would have been another matter. He seemed to live a simple, monotonous life. He held his place in the Works, and did well what he had to do. He was not very thoroughly understood by his fellows, but there existed a vague feeling of respect for him among them. They had become used to his silence and absent-mindedness and the tasks which seemed to them eccentricities. His responsibilities had increased, but he shouldered them without making any fuss, and worked among the rest just as he had been wont to do when he had been Floxham's right hand in the engine-room. In more select circles he was re-

garded, somewhat to his distaste, with no inconsiderable interest. He was talked of privately as a young man with a future before him, though the idea of what that future was to be, being gathered from Ffrench, was somewhat indefinite. His own reserve upon the subject was rather resented, but still was forgiven on the score of eccentricity. For the rest, he lived, as it were, in a dream. The days came and went, but at the close of each there were at least a few hours of happiness.

And yet it was not happiness of a very tangible form. Sometimes, when he left the house and stepped into the cool darkness of the night outside, he found himself stopped for a moment with a sense of bewilderment. Haworth, who had sat talking to his partner and following Rachel Ffrench's figure with devouring eyes, had gained as much as he himself. She had not spoken often, perhaps, and had turned from one to the other with the same glance and tone, but one man left her with anger and misery in his breast, and the other wondered at his own rapture.

"I have done nothing and gained nothing," the young fellow would often say to himself as he sat at the work-table afterward, "but—I am madly happy."

And then he would lie forward with his head upon his folded arms, going over the incidents of the night again and again—living the seconds over, one by one.

Haworth watched him closely in these days. As he passed him on his way to his work-room, he would look up and follow him with a glance until he turned in at its door. He found ways of hearing of his life outside and of his doings in the Works.

One morning, as he was driving down the road toward the town, he saw in the distance the graceful figure of Mr. Briarley, who was slouching along in the somewhat muddled condition consequent upon the excitement of an agreeably convivial evening at the "Who'd ha' Thowt it."

He gave him a critical glance and the next moment whipped up his horse, uttering an exclamation.

"There's th' chap," he said, "by th' Lord Harry!"

In a few seconds more he pulled up alongside of him.

"Stop a bit, lad," he said.

Mr. Briarley hesitated and then obeyed with some suddenness. A delicately suggestive recollection of "th' barrels" induced him to do so. He ducked his head with a feeble smile, whose effect was somewhat obscured by a temporary cloud of natural embarrassment. He had not been brought into immediate contact with Haworth since the strikes began.

"Th' same," he faltered, with illusive cheerfulness,— "th' same to yo' an'—an' mony on 'em."

Then he paused and stood holding his hat in his hand, endeavoring painfully to preserve the smile in all its pristine beauty of expression.

Haworth leaned forward in his gig.

"You're a nice chap," he said. "You're a nice chap."

A general vague condition of mind betrayed Mr. Briarley into the momentary weakness of receiving this compliment literally. He brightened perceptibly, and his countenance became suffused with the roseate blush of manly modesty.

"My best days is ower," he replied. "I've been misforchnit, Mester—but theer wur a toime as th' opposite sect ha' said th' same—though that theer's a thing," reflecting deeply and shaking his head, "as I nivver remoind Sararann on."

The next moment he fell back in some trepidation. Haworth looked down at him coolly.

"You're a pretty chap," he said, "goin' on th' strike an' leaving your wife and children to starve at home while you lay in your beer and make an ass of yourself."

"Eh!" exclaimed Mr. Briarley.

"And make an ass of yourself," repeated Haworth, unmovedly. "You'd better be drawin' your wages, my lad."

Mr. Briarley's expression changed. From bewilderment he passed into comparative gloom.

"It is na drawin' 'em I've gotten owt agen," he remarked. "It is na drawin' 'em. It's earnin' 'em,—an' ha'in' 'em took away an'—an' spent i' luxuries—berryin'—clubs an' th' loike. Brass as ud buy th' nessycerries."

"If we'd left you alone," said Haworth, "where would your wife and children be now, you scoundrel? Who's fed 'em and clothed 'em while you've been on th' spree? Jem Haworth, blast you!—Jem Haworth."

He put his hand in his pocket, and, drawing forth a few jingling silver coins, tossed them to him.

"Take these," he said, "an' go an' spend 'em on th' nessycerries, as you call 'em. You'll do it, I know well enow. You'll be in a worse box than you are now, before long. We'll have done with you chaps when Murdoch's finished the job he's got on hand."

"What's that?" faltered Briarley. "I ha' na heerd on it?"

Haworth laughed and picked up his whip and reins.

"Ask him," he answered. "He can tell you better than I can. He's at work on a thing that'll set the masters a good bit freer than they are now. That's all I know. There wont be any need o' so many o' you lads. You'll have to make your brass out of a new trade."

He bent a little to settle a strap.

"Go and tell the rest on 'em," he said. "You'll do it when you're drunk enow, I dare say."

Briarley fumbled with his coins. His air became speculative.

"What are you thinkin' on?" demanded Haworth. "It's a bad lookout, isn't it?"

Mr. Briarley drew a step nearer the gig's side. He appeared somewhat pale, and spoke in a whisper. Muddled as he was, he had an idea or so left.

"It'll be a bad lookout for him," he said. "Bless yo'!"

They'd tear him to pieces. They're in th' humor for it. They've been carryin' a grudge so long they're ready fur owt. They've nivver thowt mich o' him, though, but start 'em on that an' they wouldn't leave a shred o' it together—nor a shred o' him, eyther, if they got the chance."

Haworth laughed again.

"Wouldn't they?" he said. "Let 'em try. He'd have plenty to stand by him. Th' masters are on his side, my lad."

He touched his horse, and it began to move. Suddenly he checked it and looked back, speaking again.

"Keep it to yourself, then," he said, "if there's danger, and keep my name out of it, by George, if you want to be safe!"

Just as he drove up to the gates of the yard Murdoch passed him and entered them. Until then—since he had left Briarley—he had not spoken. He had driven rapidly on his way with a grim, steady face. As Murdoch went by he got down from his gig, and went to the horse's head. He stood close to it, knotting the reins.

"Nor of him either," he said. "Nor of him either, by——"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A CLIMAX.

THE same night Mr. Briarley came home in a condition more muddled and disheveled than usual. He looked as if he had been hustled about and somewhat unceremoniously treated. He had lost his hat, and was tremulous and excited. He came in without the trifling ceremony of opening the door. In fact, he fell up against it and ran in, and making an erratic dive at a chair, sat down. Granny Dixon, who had been dozing in her usual seat, was roused by the concussion and wakened and sat up, glaring excitedly.

"He's been at it again!" she shouted. "At it again! He'll nivver ha' none o' my brass to mak' way wi'. H's been at ——"

Mrs. Briarley turned upon her.

"Keep thy mouth shut!" she said.

The command was effective in one sense, though not in another. Mrs. Dixon stopped in the midst of the word "at" with her mouth wide open, and so sat for some seconds, with the aspect of an ancient beldame ordinarily going by machinery and suddenly having had her works stopped.

She would probably have presented this appearance for the remainder of the evening if Mrs. Briarley had not addressed her again.

"Shut thy mouth!" she said.

The works were set temporarily in motion, and her countenance slowly resumed its natural lines. She appeared to settle down all over and sink and become smaller, though as she crouched nearer the fire, she had rather an evil look, which seemed to take its red glow into her confidence and secretly rage at it.

"What's tha been doin'?" Mrs. Briarley demanded of her better half. "Out wi' it!"

Mr. Briarley had already fallen into his favorite position. He had already placed an elbow upon each knee and carefully supported his disheveled head upon his hands. He had also already begun to shed tears, which dropped and made disproportionately large circles upon the pipe-clayed floor.

"I'm a misforchnit chap," he said. "I'm a misforchnit chap, Sararann, as nivver had no luck."

"What's tha been doin'?" repeated Mrs. Briarley, with even greater sharpness than before; "out wi' it!"

"Nay," said Mr. Briarley, "that theer's what I've gotten mysen i' trouble wi'. I wunnot do it again."

"Theer's summat i' beer," he proceeded mournfully, "as goes agen a man. He towed me not to say nowt an' I did na

mean to, but," with fresh pathos, "theer's summat i' beer as winds—as winds a chap up. I'm not mich o' th' speakin' line Sararann, but afore I knowed it, I wur a-makin' a speech—an' when I bethowt me an' wanted to set down—they wur bound to mak' me—go on to th' eend—an' when I would na—theer wur a good bit—o' public opinion igspressed—an' I did na stop—to bid 'em good-neet. Theer wur too much agoin' on."

"What wur it aw about?" asked Mrs. Briarley.

But Mr. Briarley's voice had been gradually becoming lower and lower, and his words more incoherent. He was sinking into slumber. When she repeated her question, he awakened with a violent start.

"I'm a misforchnit chap," he murmured, "an' I dunnot know. 'Scaped me, Sararann—owin' to misforchins."

"Eh!" remarked Mrs. Briarley, regarding him with connu-bial irony, "but tha art a graidely foo'! I'd gie summat to see a gradelier un!"

But he was so far gone by this time that there was no prospect of a clear solution of the cause of his excitement. And so she turned to Granny Dixon.

"It's toime for thee to be i' bed," she shouted.

Granny Dixon gave a sharp, stealthy move round, and a sharp, stealthy glance up at her.

"I—dunnot want to go," she quavered shrilly.

"Aye, but tha does," was the answer. "An' tha'rt goin' too. Get up, Missus."

And singularly enough, Mrs. Dixon fumbled until she found her stick, and gathering herself up and leaning upon it, made her rambling way out of the room carrying her evil look with her.

"Bless us!" Mrs. Briarley had said in confidence to a neighbor a few days before. "I wur nivver more feart i' my life than when I'd done it, an' th' owd besom set theer wi' her cap o' one side an' her breath gone. I did na know but I'd

put an eend to her. I nivver should ha' touched her i' th' world if I had na been that theer upset as I did na know what I wur doin'. I thowt she'd been up an' out i' th' street as soon as she'd gotten her breath an', happen, ca' on th' porlice. An' to think it's been th' settlin' on her! It feart me to see it at the first, but I wur na goin' to lose th' chance an' th' next day I give it to her up an' down--tremblin' i' my shoes aw th' toime. I says, 'Tha may leave thy brass to who tha loikes, but tha'lt behave thysen while tha stays here or Sararann Briarley 'll see about it. So mak' up thy moind.' An' I've nivver had a bit o' trouble wi' her fro' then till now." She conna bide th' soight o' me, but she dare na go agen me fur her life."

The next day Haworth went away upon one of his mysterious journeys.

"To Leeds or Manchester, or perhaps London," said Ffrench. "I don't know where."

The day after was Saturday, and in the afternoon Janey Briarley presented herself to Mrs. Murdoch at an early hour, and evidently with something on her mind.

"I mun get through wi' th' cleanin' an' go whoam soon," she said. "Th' stroikers is over fro' Molton and Dellup again. Theer's summat up among 'em."

"We dunnot know nowt about it," she answered, when further questioned. "We on'y know they're here and i' a ill way about summat they've fun out. Feyther, he's aw upset, but he dare na say nowt fur fear o' th' Union. Mother thinks they've gotten summat agen Ffrench."

"Does Mr. Ffrench know that?" Mrs. Murdoch asked.

"He'll know it soon enow, if he does na," dryly. "They'll noan stand back at tellin' him if they're i' th' humor—but he's loiker to know than not. He's too feart on 'em not to be on the watch."

It was plain enough before many hours had passed that

some disturbance was on foot. The strikers gathered about the streets in groups, or lounged here and there sullenly. They were a worse-looking lot than they had been at the outset. Idleness and ill-feeling and dissipation had left their marks. Clothes were shabbier, faces more brutal, and habits plainly more vicious.

At one o'clock Mr. Ffrench disappeared from his room at the bank, no one knew exactly how or when. All the morning he had spent in vacillating between his desk and a window looking into the street. There was a rumor among the clerks that he had been seen vanishing through a side door leading into a deserted little back street.

An hour later he appeared in the parlor in which his daughter sat. He was hot and flurried and out of breath.

"Those scoundrels are in the town again," he said. "And there is no knowing what they are up to. It was an insane thing for Haworth to go away at such a time. By night there will be an uproar."

"If there is an uproar," said Miss Ffrench, "they will come here. They know that they can do nothing at the Works. He is always ready for them there—and they are angrier with you than they are with him."

"There is no reason why they should be," Ffrench protested. "I took no measures against them, heaven knows."

"I think," returned Rachel "that is the reason. You have been afraid of them."

He colored to the roots of his hair.

"You are saying a deuced unpleasant thing, my dear," he broke forth.

"It is true," she answered. "What would be the use in *not* saying it?"

He had no reply to make. The trouble was that he never had a reply to make to these deadly simple statements of hers.

He began to walk up and down the room.

"The people we invited to dine with us," she said, "will not come. They will hear what is going on and will be afraid. It is very stupid."

"I wonder," he faltered, "if Murdock will fail us. He never did before."

"No," she answered. "*He* will not stay away."

The afternoon dragged away its unpleasant length. As it passed Ffrench found in every hour fresh cause for nervousness and excitement. The servant who had been out brought disagreeable enough tidings. The small police force of the town had its hands full in attending to its business of keeping order.

"If we had had time to send to Manchester for some assistance," said Mr. Ffrench.

"That would have been reason enough for being attacked," said Rachel. "It would have shown them that we felt we needed protection."

"We *may* need it, before all is quiet again," retorted her father.

"We may," she answered, "or we may not."

By night several arrests had been made, and there was a good deal of disorder in the town. A goodly quantity of beer had been drunk and there had been a friendly fight or so among the strikers themselves.

Rachel left her father in the drawing-room and went up stairs to prepare for dinner. When she returned an hour afterward he turned to her with an impatient start.

"Why did you dress yourself in that manner?" he exclaimed. "You said yourself our guests would not come."

"It occurred to me," she answered, "that we might have visitors after all."

But it was as she had prophesied,—the guests they had expected did not come. They were discreet and well-regulated elderly people who had lived long in the manufacturing districts, and had passed through little unpleasantnesses before. They knew that under existing circumstances it would be

wiser to remain at home than to run the risk of exposing themselves to spasmodic criticism and its results.

But they had visitors.

The dinner hour passed and they were still alone. Even Murdoch had not come. A dead silence reigned in the room. Ffrench was trying to read and not succeeding very well. Miss Ffrench stood by the window looking out. It was a clear night and the moon was at full; it was easy to see far up the road upon whose whiteness the trees cast black shadows. She was looking up this road toward the town. She had been watching it steadily for some time. Once her father had turned to her restlessly, saying:

"Why do you stand there? You—you might be expecting something to happen"

She did not make any reply and still retained her position. But about half an hour afterward, she turned suddenly and spoke in a low, clear tone.

"If you are afraid, you had better go away," she said. "They are coming."

It was evident that at least she felt no alarm, though there was a thrill of excitement in her voice. Mr. Ffrench sprang up from his seat.

"They are coming!" he echoed. "Good God! What do you mean?"

It was not necessary that she should enter into an explanation. A clamor of voices in the road told its own story. There were shouts and riotous cries which, in a moment more, were no longer outside the gates but within them. An uproarious crowd of men and boys poured into the garden, trampling the lawn and flower-beds beneath their feet as they rushed and stumbled over them.

"Where is he?" they shouted. "Bring the chap out' an' let's tak' a look at him. Bring him out!"

Ffrench moved towards the door of the room, and then, checked by some recollection, turned back again.

"Good Heavens!" he said "they are at their worst, and here we are utterly alone. Why did Haworth go away? Why——"

His daughter interrupted him.

"There is no use in your staying," she said. "It will do no good. You may go if you like. There is a back way. None of them are near it."

"I—I can't leave you here," he stammered. "Haworth was mad! Why, in Heaven's name——"

"There no use asking why again," she replied. "I cannot tell you. I think you had better go."

Her icy coldness would have been a pretty hard thing to bear if he had been less terror stricken; but he saw that the hand with which she held the window-curtain was shaking.

He did not know, however, that it was not shaking with fear, but with the power of the excitement which stirred her.

It is scarcely possible that he would have left her, notwithstanding his panic, though, for a second, it nearly seemed that he had so far lost self-control as to be wavering; but as he stood, pale and breathless, there arose a fresh yell.

"Wheer is he? Bring him out! Murdoch, th' 'Merican chap! We're come to see him!"

"What's that?" he asked. "Who is it they want?"

"Murdoch! Murdoch!" was shouted again. "Let's ha' a word wi' Murdoch! We lads ha' summat to say to him!"

"It is not I they want," he said. "It is Murdoch. It is not I at all!"

She dashed the window-curtain aside and turned on him. He was stunned by the mere sight of her face. Every drop of blood seemed driven from it.

"You are a coward!" she cried, panting. "A coward! It is a relief to you!"

He stood staring at her.

"A—a relief!" he stammered. "I—don't understand you. What is the matter."

She had recovered herself almost before he had begun to speak. It was over in a second. He had not had time to realize the situation before she was moving toward the window.

"They shall see *me*," she said. "Let us see what they will have to say to *me*."

He would have stopped her, but she did not pay the slightest attention to his exclamation. The window was a French one, opening upon a terrace. She flung it backward, and stepped out and stood before the rioters.

For a second there was not a sound.

They had expected to see a man,—perhaps French, perhaps Murdoch, perhaps even a representative of the small police force, looking as if he felt himself one too many in the gathering, or not quite enough,—and here was simply a tall young woman in a dazzling dress of some rich white stuff, and with something sparkling upon her hands and arms and in her high-dressed blonde hair.

The moonlight struck full upon her, and she stood in it serene and bore unmoved the stupid stare of all their eyes. It was she who spoke first, and then they knew her, and the spell which held them dumb was broken.

"What do you want?" she demanded. "I should like to hear."

Then they began to shout again.

"We want Murdoch!" they said. "We ha' summat to say to him."

"He is not here," she said. "He has not been here."

"That's a lee," remarked a gentleman on the outskirts of the crowd. "A dom'd un."

She made no answer, and, singularly enough, nobody laughed.

"Why do you want him?" she said next.

"We want to hear about that contrapshun o' his as is goin' to mak' th' mesters independent. He knows what we want him fur. We've just been to his house and brokken th' winders. He's gettin' wind on us cummin', an' he made off wi' the

machine. He'll be here afore long if he is na here now, an' we're bound to see him."

"He'll be up to see thee," put in the gentleman on the outskirts, "an' I dunnot blame him. I'm glad I coud mysen. Tha's worth th' trip—an' I'm a Dillup chap, moind yo'."

She stood quite still as before and let them look at her, to see what effect the words had produced. It seemed as if they had produced none.

"If you have come to see him," she said after a few seconds, "you may go away again. He is not here. I know where he is, and you cannot reach him. If there has not been some blunder, he is far enough away."

She told the lie without flinching in the least, and with a clever coldness which led her to think in a flash beforehand even of the clause which would save her dignity if he should chance to come in the midst of her words.

"If you want to break windows," she went on, "break them here. They can be replaced afterwards, and there is no one here to interfere with you. If you would like to vent your anger upon a woman, vent it upon *me*. I am not afraid of you. Look at me!"

She took half a step forward and presented herself to them motionless. Not a fellow among them but felt that she would not have stirred if they had rushed upon her bodily. The effect of her supreme beauty and the cold defiance which had in it a touch of delicate insolence, was indescribable. This was not in accordance with their ideas of women of her class; they were used to seeing them discreetly keeping themselves in the shade in the time of disorder. Here was one—"one o' the nobs," as they said—who flung their threats to the wind and scorned them.

What they would have done when they recovered themselves is uncertain. The scale might have turned either way; but, just in the intervening moment which would have decided it, there arose a tumult in their midst. A man pushed his way

with mad haste through the crowd and sprang upon the terrace at her side, amid yells and hoots from those who had guessed who he was.

An instant later they all knew him, though his dress was disordered, his head was bare, and his whole face and figure seemed altered by his excitement.

"Dom him!" they yelled. "Theer he is by——!"

"I towd thee he'd coom," shouted the cynic. "He did na get th' tellygraph, tha sees."

He turned on them, panting and white with rage.

"You devils!" he cried. "You are here too! Haven't you done enough? Isn't bullying and frightening two women enough for you, that you must come here?"

"That's reet," commended the cynic. "Stond up fur th' young woman, Murdoch. I'd do it mysen i' I wur o' that soide. Allus stond up fur th' sect!"

Murdoch spoke to Rachel Ffrench.

"You must go in," he said. "There is no knowing what they will do."

"I shall stay here," she answered.

She made an impatient gesture. She was shuddering from head to foot.

"Don't look at or speak to me," she said. "You—you make me a coward."

"They will stand at nothing," he protested.

"I will not turn my back upon them," she said. "Let them do their worst."

He turned to the crowd again. Her life itself was in danger, and he knew he could not move her. He was shuddering himself.

"Who is your leader?" he said to the men. "I suppose you have one."

The man known as Foxy Gibbs responded to their cries of his name by pushing his way to the front. He was a big, resolute, hulking scamp who had never been known to do an

honest day's work, and who was yet always in funds and at liberty to make incendiary speeches where beer and tobacco were plentiful.

"What do you want of me?" demanded Murdoch. "Speak out."

The fellow was ready enough with his words, and forcible too.

"We've heard tell o' summat goin' on we're not goin' to stond," he said. "We've heerd tell o' a chap 'at's contrivin' summat to do away wi' them as does th' work now an' mak's theer bread by it. We've heerd as th' mesters is proidin' theersens on it an' laughin' in their sleeves. We've heerd tell as theer's a chap makkin' what'll eend i' mischief—an' yo're th' chap."

"Who told you?"

"Nivver moind who. A foo' let it out, an' we wur na in th' humor to let it pass. We're goin' to sift th' thing to th' bottom. Yo're th' chap as was nam't. What ha' yo' gotten to say?"

"Just one thing," he answered. "It's a lie from first to last—an accursed lie!"

"Lee or not, we're goin' to smash th' thing whatever it is. We're noan particular about th' lee. We'll mak' th' thing safe first, an' then settle about th' lee!"

Murdoch thrust his hands into his pocket and eyed them with his first approach to his usual *sang-froid*.

"It's where you wont find it," he said. "I've made sure of that."

It was a mad speech to have made, but he had lost self-control and balance. He was too terribly conscious of Rachel Ffrench's perilous nearness to be in the mood to weigh his words. He saw his mistake in a second. There was a shout and a surging movement of the mob toward him, and Rachel Ffrench, with an indescribable swiftness, had thrown herself before him and was struck by a stone which came whizzing through the air.

She staggered under the stroke but stood upright in a breath's time.

"My God!" Murdoch cried out. "They have struck you! They have struck you!"

He was half mad with his anguish and horror. The sight of the little stream of blood which trickled from her temples made him sick with rage.

"You devils!" he raved, "do you see what you have done?"

But the play was over. Before he had finished his outcry there was a shout of "th' coppers! th' coppers!" and a rush and skurry and tumble of undignified retreat. The police force with a band of anti-strikers behind them had appeared upon the scene in the full glory of the uniform of the corporation, and such was the result of habit and the majesty of the law that those who were not taken into custody incontinently took to their heels and scattered in every direction, uttering curses loud and deep, since they were not yet prepared to resist an attack more formally.

In half an hour the trampled grass and flower-beds and broken shrubs were the only signs of the tumult. Mr. Ffrench was walking up and down the dreary room in as nervous a condition as ever.

"Good heavens, Rachel!" he said. "You must have been mad—mad."

She had persistently refused to lie down and sat in an easy-chair, looking rather colorless and languid. When they were left alone, Murdoch came and stood near her. He was paler than she, and haggard and worn. Before she knew what he was about to do he fell upon his knees, and covered her hands with kisses.

"If any harm had come to you," he cried—"if any harm had come to you——"

She tried to drag her hands away with an angry face, but he

clung to them. And then quite suddenly all her resistance ceased and her eyes fixed themselves upon him as if with a kind of dread.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"I AM NOT READY FOR IT YET."

IN expectation of something very serious happening, the constabulary re-inforced itself the day following and assumed a more imposing aspect and was prepared to be very severe indeed upon all short-comings or symptoms of approaching disorder. But somewhat to its private disappointment, an unlooked for quiet prevailed—an almost suspicious quiet, indeed. There were rumors that a secret meeting had been held by the strikers the night before, and the result of it was that in the morning there appeared to have been a sudden dispersing, and only those remained behind who were unavoidably detained by the rather unfortunate circumstance of their having before them the prospect of spending a few weeks in the comparative retirement of the county jail. These gentlemen peremptorily refused to give any definite explanation of their eccentricities of conduct of the night before and were altogether very unsatisfactory indeed, one of them even going so far, under the influence of temporary excitement, as to be guilty of the indiscretion of announcing his intention of "doin' fur" one or two enemies of his cause when his term expired, on account of which amiable statement three months were added to said term upon the spot.

It was Janey Briarley who had given Murdoch his warning upon the night of the riot. Just before he had left the Works she had come into the yard, saying she had a message for Haworth, and on being told that he was away, had asked for Murdoch.

"He'll do if I canna see th' mester," she remarked.

But when she reached Murdoch's room she stepped across the threshold and shut the door cautiously.

"Con anybody hear?" she demanded, with an uneasy glance round.

"No," he answered.

"Then cut thy stick as fast as tha can an' get thee whoam an' hoid away that thing tha'rt makkin. Th' stroikers is after it. Nivver moind how I fun' out. Cut an' run. I axt fur Haworth to throw 'em off th' scent. I knowed he wur na here. Haste thee!"

Her manifest alarm convinced him that there was foundation enough for her errand, and that she had run some risk in venturing it.

"Thank you," he said. "You may have saved me a great deal. Let us go out quietly as if nothing was in hand. Come along."

And so they went, he talking aloud as they passed through the gates, and as it was already dusk he was out on the Brompton road in less than half an hour, and when he returned the mob had been to his mother's house and broken a few windows in their rage at his having escaped them, and had gone off shouting that they would go to Ffrench's.

"He'll be fun theer," some one said—possibly the cynic. "Th' young woman is a sweetheart o' his an' yo'll be like to hear o' th' cat wheer th' cream stonds."

His mother met him on the threshold with the news of the outbreak and the direction it had taken. A few brief sentences told him all, and at the end of them he left the house at once.

"I am going there to show myself to them," he said. "They will not return here. You are safe enough now. The worst is over here, but there is no knowing what they may do there when they find themselves baffled."

It was after midnight when he came back, and then it was Christian who opened the door for him.

He came into the little dark passage with a slow, unsteady step. For a second he did not seem to see her at all. His face was white, his eyes were shining and his brow was slightly knit in lines which might have meant intense pain.

"Are you hurt?" she asked.

It was as if her voice wakened him from a trance. He looked at her for the first time.

"Hurt!" he echoed. "No—not hurt."

He went into the sitting-room and she followed him. The narrow horse-hair sofa upon which his father had lain so often stood in its old place. He threw himself full length upon it and lay looking straight before him.

"Are you—are you sure you are not hurt?" she faltered.

He echoed her words again.

"Am I sure I am not hurt?" he repeated dreamily. "Yes, I am sure of it."

And then he turned slightly toward her and she saw that the look his face wore was not one of pain, but of strange rapture.

"I am not hurt," he said quite slowly. "I am madly happy."

Then she understood. She was as ignorant of many things as she was bitterly wise in others, but she had not been blind and she understood quite clearly. She sat down upon a low seat, from which she could see him, her hands clasped on her knee.

"I knew," she said at last, "that it would come some day—I *knew* that it would."

"Did you?" he answered in the same dreamy way. "I did not. I did not even hope for it. I do not comprehend it even now."

"I do," she returned, "quite well."

He scarcely seemed to hear her.

"I hoped for nothing," he said. "And now—I am madly happy."

There was nothing more for her to say. She had a fancy that perhaps in the morning he would have forgotten that he had spoken. It seemed as if even yet he was hardly conscious of her presence. But before she went away she asked him a question.

"Where did you put the model?"

He gave a feverish start.

"Where?" And then falling back into his previous manner—"I took it to the chapel yard. I knew they would not go there. There was space enough behind the—the headstone and the old wall for it to stand, and the grass grew long and thick. I left it there."

"It was a safe place," she answered. "When shall you bring it back?"

He sighed impatiently.

"Not yet," he said. "Not just yet. Let it stay there a while. I am not—ready for it. Let it stay."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SETTLING AN ACCOUNT.

IT was not until the week following that Haworth returned, and then he came without having given any previous warning of his intention. French, sitting in his office in a rather dejected mood one morning, was startled by his entering with even less than his usual small ceremony.

"My dear Haworth," he exclaimed. "Is it possible!"

His first intention had been to hold out his hand, but he did not do so. In fact he sat down again a little suddenly and uneasily. Haworth sat down too, confronting him squarely.

"What have you been up to?" he demanded. "What is this row about?"

"About!" echoed Ffrench. "It's the most extraordinary combination of nonsense and misunderstanding I ever heard of in my life. How it arose there is no knowing. The fellows are mad!"

"Aye," angrily, "mad enow, but you can't stop 'em now they've got agate. It's a devilish lookout for us. I've heard it all over the country and the more you say agen it the worse it is. They're set on it all through Lancashire that there's a plot agen 'em and they're fur fettlin' it their own fashion."

"You—you don't think it will be worse for us?" his partner suggested weakly. "It struck me that—in the end—it mightn't be a bad thing—that it would change the direction of their mood."

"Wait until the end comes. It's not here yet. Tell me how it happened."

Upon the whole, Mr. Ffrench made a good story of it. He depicted the anxieties and dangers of the occasion very graphically. He had lost a good deal of his enthusiasm on the subject of the uncultivated virtues and sturdy determination of the manufacturing laboring classes, and he was always fluent as has been before mentioned. He was very fluent now, and equally so in describing the incident of his daughter's presenting herself to the mob and the result of her daring.

"She might have lost her life," he said at one point. "It was an insane thing to have done—an insane thing. She surprised them at first, but she could not hold them in check after Murdoch came. She will bear the mark of the stone for many a day."

"They threw a stone, blast 'em, did they?" said Haworth, setting his teeth.

"Yes—but not at her. Perhaps they would hardly have dared that after all. It was thrown at Murdoch."

"And he stepped out of the way?"

"Oh, no. He did not see the man raise his arm, but she did,

and was too much alarmed to reflect, I suppose—and—in fact threw herself before him."

He moved back disturbedly the next instant. Haworth burst forth with a string of oaths. The veins stood out like cords on his forehead; he ground his teeth. When the outbreak was over he asked an embarrassing question.

"Where were you?"

"I?"—with some uncertainty of tone. "I—had not gone out. I—I did not wish to infuriate them. It seemed to me that—that—that a great deal depended upon their not being infuriated.

"Aye," said Haworth, "a good deal."

He asked a good many questions Ffrench did not quite understand. He seemed in a questioning humor and went over the ground step by step. He asked what the mob had said and done and even how they had looked.

"It's a bad lookout for Murdoch," he said. "They'll have a spite again' him. They're lyin' quiet a bit now, because it's safest, but they'll carry their spite."

At Ffrench's invitation he went up to the house with him to dinner. As they passed into the grounds, Murdoch passed out. He was walking quickly and scarcely seemed to see them until Ffrench spoke.

"It's a queer time of day for him to be here," said Haworth, when he was gone.

Ffrench's reply held a touch of embarrassment.

"He is not usually here so early," he said. "He has probably been doing some little errand for Rachel."

The truth was that he had been with her for an hour, and that, on seeing Haworth coming down the road with her father, she had sent him away.

"I want to be alone when he comes," she had said.

And when Murdoch had said "Why?" she had answered, "Because it will be easier."

When they came in she was sitting with the right side of her

face toward them. They could see nothing of the mark upon her left temple. It was not a large mark and not a disfiguring one, but there were traces of its presence in her pallor. She did not rise, and would have kept this side of her face out of view, but Haworth came and took his seat before her. It would not have been easy for her to move or change her position—and he looked directly at the significant little bruise. His glance turned upon it again and again as he talked to her or her father; if it wandered off it came back and rested there. During dinner she felt that, place herself as she would, in a few seconds she would be conscious again that he had baffled her. For the first time in his experience, it was he who had the advantage.

But when they returned to the parlor she held herself in check. She placed herself opposite to him and turned her face toward him, and let him look without flinching. It was as if suddenly she wished that he should see, and had a secret defiant reason for the wish. It seemed a long evening, but she did not lose an inch of ground after this. When he was going away she rose and stood before him. Her father had gone to the other end of the room, and was fussing unnecessarily over some memoranda. As they waited together, Haworth took his last look at the mark upon her temple.

"If it had been *me* you wore it for," he said, "I'd have had my hands on the throat of the chap that did it before now. It *wasn't* me, but I'll find him and pay him for it yet, by George!"

She had no time to answer him. Her father came toward them with the papers in his hands. Haworth listened to his wordy explanation without moving a line of his face. He did not hear it, and Ffrench was dimly aware of the fact.

About half an hour after, the door of the bar-parlor of the "Who'd ha' Thowt it" was flung open.

"Where's Briarley?" a voice demanded. "Send him out here. I want him—Haworth."

Mr. Briarley arose in even more than his usual trepidation. He looked from side to side, quaking.

"Wheer is he?" he asked.

Haworth stood on the threshold.

"Here," he answered. "Come out!"

Mr. Briarley obeyed. At the door Haworth collared him and led him down the sanded passage and into the road outside.

A few yards from the house there was a pump. He piloted him to it and set him against it, and began to swear at him fluently.

"You blasted scoundrel!" he said. "You let it out, did you?"

Mr. Briarley was covered with confusion as with a garment.

"I'm a misforchnit chap as is allus i' trouble," he said.

"Theer's summat i' ivvery thin' I lay hond on as seems to go agen me. I dunnot see how it is. Happen theer's summat i' me a-bein' a dom'd foo', or happen it's nowt but misforchin. Sararann——"

Haworth stopped him by swearing again, something more sulphuriously than before,—so sulphuriously, indeed, that Mr. Briarley listened with eyes distended and mouth agape.

"Let's hear what you know about th' thing," Haworth ended.

Mr. Briarley shut his mouth. He would have kept it shut if he had dared.

"I dunnot know nowt," he answered, with patient mendacity.

"I wur na wi' 'em."

"You know plenty," said Haworth. "Out with it, if you don't want to get yourself into trouble. Who was the chap that threw the stone?"

"I—I dunnot know."

"If you don't tell me," said Haworth, through his clenched teeth, "it'll be worse for you. It was you I let the truth slip

to ; you were the first chap that heard it, and you were the first chap that started the row and egged it on."

"I did na egg it on," protested Mr. Briarley. "It did na need no eggin' on. They pounced on it loike cats on a bird. I did na mean to tell 'em owt about it. I'm a dom'd foo'. I'm th' dom'dest foo' fro here to Dillup."

"Aye," said Haworth, sardonically, "that's like enow. Who was the chap that threw the stone?"

He returned to the charge so swiftly and with such fell determination that Mr. Briarley began fairly to whimper.

"I dare na tell," he said. "They'd mak' quick work o' me if they fun me out."

"Who was it?" persisted Haworth. "They'll make quicker work of you at the 'Old Bailey,' if you don't."

Mr. Briarley turned his disreputable, battered cap round and round in his nervous hands. He was mortally afraid of Haworth.

"A man's gotten to think o' his family," he argued. "If he dunnot think o' hissen, he mun think o' his family. I've gotten a mortal big un—twelve on 'em an' Sararann, as ud be left on th' world if owt wur to happen—twelve on 'em as ud be left wi'out no one to stand by 'em an' pervide fur 'em. Theer's nowt a fam'ly misses so mich as th' head. The head should na run no risks. It's th' head's duty to tak care o' hissen an' keep o' th' safe soide."

"Who threw the stone?" said Haworth.

Mr. Briarley gave him one cowed glance and broke down.

"It wur Tummas Reddy," he burst forth helplessly. "Lord ha' mercy on me!"

"Where is he?"

"He's i' theer," jerking his cap toward the bar-room, "an' I'm i' th' worst mess I ivver wur i' i' my loife. I'm fettlit now, by th' Lord Harry!"

"Which way does he go home?"

"Straight along the road here, if I *mun* get up to my neck—an'—an be dom'd to him!—if I may tak' th' liberty."

"Settle yourself to stand here till he comes out, and then tell me which is him."

"Eh!"

"When he comes out say the word, and stay here till he does. I've got a bit o' summat to settle with him."

"Will ta—will ta promise tha will na let out who did it? If tha does, th' buryin' club'll ha' brass to pay out afore a week's over."

"You're safe enow," Haworth answered, "if you'll keep your mouth shut. They'll hear nowt from me."

A gleam of hope—a faint one—illuminated Mr. Briarley's countenance.

"I would na ha' no objections to tha settlin' wi' him," he said. "I ha' not nowt agen that. He's a chap as I am na fond on, an' he's gotten more cheek than belongs to him. I'd ha' settled wi' him mysen if I had na been a fam'l'y man. Ha'in' a fam'l'y to think on howds a man back. Theer—I hear 'em comin' now. Would yo'," in some hurry, "ha' owt agen me gettin' behind th' pump?"

"Get behind it," answered Haworth, "and be damned to you!"

He got behind it with alacrity, and, as it was not a large pump, was driven by necessity to narrowing himself to its compass, as it were, and taking up very little room. Haworth himself drew back somewhat, and yet kept within hearing.

Four or five men came out and went their different ways, and Mr. Briarley made no sign; but as the sixth, a powerful, clumsy fellow, passed, he uttered a cautious "Theer he is!"

Haworth did not stir. It was a dark, cloudy night, and he was far enough from the road to be safe from discovery. The man went on at a leisurely pace.

Mr. Briarley re-appeared, breathing shortly.

"I mun go whoam," he said. "Sara-rann ——" and scarcely

waiting for Haworth's signal of dismissal, he departed as if he had been shot from a string-bow, and fled forth into the shadows.

Mr. Reddy went at a leisurely pace, as has been before observed. He usually went at a leisurely pace when he was on his way home. He was "a bad lot" altogether, and his home was a squalid place, and his wife more frequently than not had a black eye or a bruised face, and was haggard with hunger and full of miserable complaints and reproaches. Consequently he did not approach the scenes of his domestic joys with any haste.

He was in a worse humor than usual to-night from various causes, the chief one, perhaps, being that he had only had enough spirituous liquor to make him savage and to cause him to enliven his way with blasphemy.

Suddenly, however, at the corner of a lane which crossed the road he paused. He heard behind him the sound of heavy feet nearing him with a quick tramp which somehow presented to his mind the idea of a purpose, and for some reason, not exactly clear to himself, he turned about and waited.

"Who's that theer?" he asked.

"It's me," he was answered. "Stand up and take thy thrashin', my lad."

The next instant he was struggling in the darkness with an assailant, and the air was hot with oaths, and they were writhing together and panting, and striking blinding blows. Sometimes it was one man and then the other who was uppermost, but at last it was Haworth, and he had his man in his grasp.

"This is because you hit the wrong mark, my lad," he said. "Because luck went agen you, and because it's gone agen me."

When he had done Mr. Reddy lay beaten into seeming insensibility. He had sworn and gnashed his teeth and beaten back in vain.

"Who is it, by ——?" he panted. "Who is it?"

"It's Haworth," he was answered. "Jem Haworth, my lad."

And he was left there lying in the dark while Haworth walked away, his heavy breathing a living presence in the air until he was gone.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A SUMMER AFTERNOON.

"LET it stay there a while," Murdoch had said. "I am not ready for it yet." And it staid there between the head-stone and the old stone wall covered with the long grass and closed in by it. He was not ready for it—yet. The days were not long enough for him as it was. His mother and Christian rarely saw him, but at such times as they did each recognized in him a new look and understood it. He began to live a strange, excitable life. Rachel French did nothing by halves. He was seen with her constantly. It continually happened that where she was invited he was invited also. He forgot that he dreaded to meet strangers and had always held aloof from crowds. There were no strangers now and no crowds; in any gathering there was only one presence and this was enough for him. When people would have cultivated him and drawn him out, he did not see their efforts; when men and women spoke to him they found out that he scarcely heard them and that even as they talked he had unconsciously veered toward another point. He did things sometimes which made them stare at him.

"The fellow is like a ghost," a man said of him once.

The simile was not a bad one. He did not think of what he might be winning or losing—for the time being mere existence was all-sufficient. At night he scarcely slept at all. Often he got up and rambled over the country in the darkness, not knowing where he was going or why he walked. He went

through the routine of the day in haste and impatience, doing more work than was necessary and frequently amazing those around him by losing his temper and missing his mark. Ffrench began to regard him with wonder. Divers things were a source of wonder to Ffrench, in these days. He understood Rachel less than ever and found her less satisfactory. He could not comprehend her motives. He had become accustomed to feeling that she always had a motive in the background and he made the natural mistake of supposing that she had one now. But she had none. She had suddenly given way to a mysterious impulse which overmastered her and she let herself go, as it were. It did not matter to her that the time came when her course was discussed and marveled at; upon the whole, she felt a secret pleasure in defying public comment as usual, and going steadily in her own path.

She did strange things too. She began to go among the people who knew Murdoch best,—visiting the families of the men who worked under him, and leading them on to speaking of him and his way of life. It cannot be said that the honest matrons she honored by her visits were very fond of her or exactly rejoiced when she appeared. They felt terribly out of place and awe-stricken when she sat down on their wooden chairs with her rich dress lying upon the pipe-claved floors. Her beauty and her grandeur stunned them however much they admired both.

"I tell yo' she's a lady," they said. "She knows nowt about poor folk, bless yo', but she's gotten brass to gie away—an' she gies it wi'out makin' a doment. I mun say it puts me out a bit to see her coom in, but she does na go out wi'out leavin' summat."

She made no pretense of bringing sympathy and consolation; she merely gave money, and money was an equivalent, and after all it was something of an event to have her carriage stop before the gate and to see her descend and enter in all her splendor. The general vague idea which prevailed was that

she meant to be charitable after the manner of her order,—but that was a mistake too.

It happened at last that one day her carriage drew up before the house at whose window Murdoch's mother and Christian sat at work.

It was Saturday, and Janey Briarley, in her "cleanin' up" apparel opened the door for her.

"They're in th' parlor," she answered in reply to her question. "Art tha coom to see 'em?"

When she was ushered into the parlor in question, Mrs. Murdoch rose with her work in her hand; Christian rose also and stood in the shadow. They had never had a visitor before, and had not expected such a one as this.

They thought at first that she had come upon some errand, but she had not. She gave no reason for her presence other than she would have given in making any call of ceremony.

As she sat on the narrow sofa, she saw all the room and its meagerness,—its smallness, its scant, plain furnishing; its ugly carpet and walls; the straight, black dress of the older woman, the dark beauty of the girl who did not sit down but stood behind her chair, watching. This beauty was the only thing which relieved the monotony of the place, but it was the most grating thing she saw, to Rachel Ffrench. It roused within her a slow anger. She resented it and felt that she would like to revenge herself upon it quietly. She had merely meant to try the effect of these people and their surroundings upon herself as a fine experiment, but the effect was a stronger one than she had anticipated. When she went away Christian accompanied her to the door.

In the narrow passage Rachel Ffrench turned and looked at her—giving her a glance from head to foot.

"I think I have see you before," she said.

"You *know* you have seen me," the girl answered.

"I have seen you on the Continent. Your apartment was opposite to ours in Paris—when you were with your mother. I

used to watch the people go in and out. You are very like your mother."

And she left her, not looking back once,—as if there was no living creature behind, or as if she had forgotten that there was one.

Christian went back to the room within. She sat down but did not take up her work again.

"Do you know why she came?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"She came to look at us—to see what manner of people we were—to see how we lived—to measure the distance between our life and hers. As she went away," she went on, "she remembered that she had seen me before. She told me that I was very like my mother."

She leaned forward, her hands clasped palm to palm between her knees.

"There was a man who did my mother a great wrong once," she said. "They had loved each other in a mad sort of way for a long time, but in the end, I suppose, he got tired, for suddenly he went away. When he was gone, my mother did not speak of him and it was as if he had never lived, but she grew haggard and dreadful and lost her beauty. I was a little child and she took me with her and began to travel from one place to another. I did not know why at first, but I found out afterward. She was following him. She found him in Paris, at last, after two years. One foggy night she took me to a narrow street near one of the theaters, and after we got there I knew she was waiting for some one, because she walked to and fro between two of the street lamps dragging me by the hand. She walked so for half an hour, and then the man came, not knowing we were there. She went to him, dragging me with her, and when she stood in front of him, threw back her veil and let the light shine upon her. She lifted her hand and struck him—struck him full upon the face, panting for

breath. 'I am a woman,' she said. 'I am a woman and I have *struck* you! Remember it to your last hour as I shall!' I thought that he would strike her back, but he did not. His hands fell at his sides, and he stood before her pale and helpless. I think it was even more terrible than she had meant it to be ——"

Mrs. Murdoch stopped her, almost angrily.

"Why do you go back to it?" she demanded. "Why should you think of such a story now?"

"It came to me," she answered. "I was thinking that it is true that I am like her,—I bear a grudge such a long time, and it will not die out. It is her blood which is strong in me. She spoke the truth."

Early in the afternoon Rachael Ffrench, sauntering about the garden in the sun, saw Murdoch coming down the road toward the house,—not until he had first seen her, however. His eyes were fixed upon her when she turned, and it seemed as if he found it impossible to remove them, even for a breath's time. Since his glance had first caught the pale blue of her dress he had not once looked away from it. All the morning, in the midst of the smoke and din of the workrooms, he had been thinking of the hours to come. The rest of the day lay before him. The weather was dazzling; the heat of summer was in the air; the garden was ablaze with flowers whose brightness seemed never to have been there before; there was here and there the drone of a bee, and now and again a stir of leaves. The day before had been of another color and so might the morrow be, but to-day left nothing to be believed in except its own sun and beauty.

When at last he was quite near her, he seemed for a little while to see nothing but the faint pale blue of her dress. He never forgot it afterward, and never remembered it without a sense of summer heat and languor. He could not have told what he said to her, or if he at first spoke at all. Soon she began to move down the path and he followed her,—simply

followed her,—stopping when she stopped to break a flower from its stem.

It was as she bent forward once that she told him of what she had done.

"This morning," she said, "I went to see your mother."

"She told me so," he answered.

She broke the stem of the flower and stood upright, holding it in her hand.

"You do not ask me why I went."

"Why?" he asked.

Their eyes met, and she was silent for a little. Then she said, with perfect deliberateness:

"I have known nothing of the life you live. I wanted to see it for myself. I wanted—to bring it near."

He drew quite close to her, his face pale, his eyes burning.

"Near!" he repeated. "To bring it near! Do you—do you know what you have said?"

"To bring it near," she said again, with no less deliberateness than before, but with a strange softness.

Just for to-day, she had told herself, she would try the sensation of being swept onward by the stream. But she weighed herself as she spoke, and weighed him and his passion, and her power against its force.

But he came no closer to her. He did not attempt to touch even her hand or her dress. His own hands fell helplessly at his sides, and he stood still before her.

"Oh God!" he said in a hushed voice, "How happy I am."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"GOD BLESS YOU!"

LATE the same night, Mrs. Haworth, who had been watching for her son alone in the grand, desolate room in which it was

her lot to sit, rose to her feet on hearing him enter the house.

The first object which met his eye when he came in was her little figure and her patient face turned toward the door. As he crossed the threshold, she took a few steps as if to meet him, and then stopped.

"Jem!" she exclaimed. "Jem!"

Her voice was tremulous and her eyes bright with the indefinable feeling which seized upon her the moment she saw his face. Her utterance of his name was a cry of anxiousness and fear.

"What!" he said. "Are you here yet?"

He came to her and laid a hand upon her shoulder in a rough caress.

"You'd better go to bed," he said to her. "It's late and I've got work to do."

"I felt," she answered, "as if I'd like to wait an' see you. I knowed I should sleep better for it—I always do."

There was a moment's pause in which she stroked his sleeve with her withered hand. Then he spoke.

"Sleep better," he said. "That's a queer notion. You've got queer fancies, you women—some on you."

Then he stooped and kissed her awkwardly. He always did it with more or less awkwardness and lack of ease, but it never failed to make her happy.

"Now you've done it," he said. "You'd better go, old lady, and leave me to finish what I've got to do."

"It's late for work, Jem," she answered. "You oughtn't to try yourself so much."

"It ain't work so much," he said, "as thinking. There's summat I've got to think out."

For the moment he seemed quite to forget her. He stood with his hands thrust into his pockets and his feet apart, staring at the carpet. He did not stir when she moved away, and was still standing so when she turned at the door to look at him.

What she saw brought her back, hurried and tearful.

"Let me stay!" she cried. "Let me stay. There's trouble in your face, Jem, for I see it. Don't keep it from me—for the sake of what we've been through together in times that's past."

He bestirred himself and looked up at her.

"Trouble!" he repeated. "That's not the word. It's not trouble, old lady, and it's naught that can be helped. There's me and it to fight it out. Go and get your sleep and leave us to it."

She went slowly and sadly. She always obeyed him, whatever his wish might be.

When the last sound of her faltering feet had died away upon the stairs, he went to the side-board and poured out a glass of raw brandy and drank it.

"I want summat to steady me," he said—"and to warm me."

But it did not steady him, at least. When he sat down at the table, the hand he laid upon it shook.

He looked at it curiously, clinching and unclenching it.

"I'm pretty well done for when it goes like that," he said.

"I'm further gone than I thought. It's all over me—over and through me. I'm shaking like a fool."

He broke out with a torrent of curses.

"Is it me that's sitting here," he cried, "or some other chap? Is it me that luck's gone agen on every side or a chap that's useder to it?"

Among all his pangs of humiliation and baffled passion there was not one so subtle and terrible in its influence upon him as his momentary sense of physical weakness. He understood it less than all the rest, and raged against it more. His body had never failed him once, and now for the first time he felt that its power faltered. He was faint and cold and trembled not merely from excitement but from loss of strength.

Opposite to him, at the other side of the room, was a full-

length mirror. Accidentally raising his eyes toward it he caught sight of his own face. He started back and unconsciously glanced behind him.

"Who ——!" he began.

And then he stopped, knowing the face for his own—white-lipped, damp with cold sweat, lined with harsh furrows—evil to see. He got up, shaking his fist at it, crying out through his shut teeth.

"Blast her!" he said. "Who's to blame but her?"

He had given up all for her, his ambition, which had swept all before it, his greatest strength, his very sins and coarseness, and half an hour ago he had passed the open door of a room and had seen Murdoch standing motionless, not uttering a word, but with his face fairly transfigured by his ecstasy, and with her hand crushed against his breast.

He had gone in to see Ffrench, and had remained with him for an hour in one of the parlors, knowing that the two were alone in the other. He had heard their voices now and then, and had known that once they went out upon the terrace and talked there. He had grown burning hot and deadly cold, and had strained his ears for every sound and never caught more than a word or low laugh coming from Rachel Ffrench. At last he had left his partner, and on his way out had passed the open door. They had come back to the room, and Murdoch was saying his good-night. He held Rachel Ffrench's hand, and she made no effort to withdraw it, but gave it to his caress. She did not move nor speak, but her eyes rested upon his rapt face with an expression not easy to understand. Haworth did not understand it, but the rage which seized and shook him was the most brutal emotion he had ever felt in his life. It was a madness which left him weak. He staggered down the stairs and out into the night blindly, blaspheming as he went. He did not know how he reached home. The sight his mother had seen, and which had drawn a cry from her and checked her midway in the room had been cause

enough for tremor in her. Nothing but the most violent effort had saved him from an outbreak in her presence. He was weaker for the struggle when she was gone.

He could think of nothing but of Rachel Ffrench's untranslatable face and of Murdoch's close clasp of her surrendered hand.

"What has she ever given me?" he cried. "*Me*, that's played the fool for her! What's he done that he should stand there and fondle her as if he'd bought and paid for her? I'm the chap that paid for her! She's mine, body and soul, by George, if every man had his rights!"

And then, remembering all that had gone by, he turned from hot to cold again.

"I've stood up agen her a long time," he said, "and what have I got? I swore I'd make my way with her, and how far have I gone? She's never give me a word, by George, or a look that'd be what another woman would have give. She's not even played with me—most on 'em would have done that—but she's not. She's gone on her way and let me go on mine. She's turned neither right nor left for me—I wasn't man enough."

He wore himself out in the end and went to the brandy again, and drank of it deeply. It sent him up-stairs with heated blood and feverish brain. It was after midnight, and he went to his room, but not to sleep. He lay upon his pillow in the darkness thinking of the things he had done in the past few months, and of the fruit the first seed he had sown might bring forth.

"There's things that may happen to any on us, my lad," he said, "and some on 'em might happen to you. If it's Jem Haworth that's to lose, the other sha'n't gain, by George!"

He had put the light out and lay in the darkness, and was so lying with this mood at work upon him when there came a timid summons on the door, and it opened and some one came in softly.

He knew who it was, even before she spoke.

"Jem," she said, "Jem, you're not asleep, my dear."

"No," he answered.

She came to the bed-side and stood there.

"I—I couldn't sleep," she said. "Something's a little wrong with me. I'm gettin' foolish, an'—an' fearful. I felt as if you wasn't quite safe. I thought I'd come and speak to you."

"You're out o' sorts," he answered "You'll have to be looked after."

"It's nothing but my foolish way," she replied. "You're very good to me—an' me so full of fancies. Would you—would you mind me a-kneelin' down an' sayin' a prayer here to myself as I used to when you was a boy, Jem? I think it 'd do me good. Would you mind it?"

"No," he answered hoarsely. "Kneel down."

And she knelt and grasped for his hand and held it, and he heard her whispering in the dark as he had been wont to hear her nearly thirty years before.

And when it was over, she got up and kissed him on the forehead.

"God bless you, my dear!" she said. "God bless you!" and went away.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"IT IS DONE WITH."

AFTER the departure of Haworth and Murdoch, Mr. Ffrench waited for some time for his daughter's appearance. He picked up a pamphlet and turned over its leaves uneasily, trying to read here and there, and making no great success of the effort. He was in a disturbed and nervous mood, the evening had been a trial to him, more especially the latter

part of it during which Haworth had sat on the other side of the table in his usual awkwardly free and easy posture, his hands in his pockets, his feet thrust out before him. His silence and the expression he had worn had not been of a kind to relieve his companion of any tithe of the burden which had gradually accumulated upon his not too muscular shoulders. At the outset Ffrench had been simply bewildered, then somewhat anxious and annoyed, but to-day he had been stunned. Haworth's departure was an immense relief to him, in fact, it was often a relief to him in these days. Then he had heard Murdoch descend the stairs and leave the house and he waited with mingled dread and anxiousness for Rachel's coming. But she did not make her appearance. He heard her walk across the room after Murdoch left her, and then she did not seem to move again.

After the lapse of half an hour he laid his pamphlet aside and rose himself. He coughed two or three times and paced the floor a little—gradually he edged toward the folding doors leading into the front room and passed through them.

Rachel stood at one of the windows, which was thrown open. She was leaning against its side and looking out into the night. When she turned toward him something in her manner caused Ffrench an increase of nervousness amounting to irritation.

"You wish to say something to me," she remarked. "What is it?"

"Yes," he answered. "I wish to say something to you."

He could not make up his mind to say it for a moment or so. He found himself returning her undisturbed glance with an excited and bewildered one.

"I—the fact is"—he broke forth desperately, "I—I do not understand you."

"That is not at all singular," she replied. "You have often said so before."

He began to lose his temper and to walk about the room.

"You have often chosen to seem incomprehensible," he said, "but *this* is the most extraordinary thing you have done yet. You—you must know that it looks very bad—that people are discussing you openly—you of all women!"

Suddenly he wheeled about and stopped, staring at her with more uncertainty and bewilderment than ever.

"I ought to know you better," he said. "I do know you better than to think you capable of any weakness of—of that kind. You are *not* capable of it. You are too proud and too fond of yourself, and yet——"

"And yet what?" she demanded, in a peculiar, low voice.

He faltered visibly.

"And yet you are permitting yourself to—to be talked over and—misunderstood."

"Do you think," she asked in the same voice, "that I care for being 'talked over?'"

"You would care if you knew what is said," he responded.

"You do not know."

"I can guess," she replied, "easily."

But she was deadly pale and he saw it. And her humiliation was that she *knew* he saw it.

"What you do," he continued, "is of more consequence than what most women do. You are not popular. You have held yourself very high and have set people at defiance. If you should be guilty of a romantic folly, it would go harder with you than with others."

"I know that," she answered him, "far better than you do."

She held herself quite erect and kept her eyes steadily upon him.

"What is the romantic folly?" she put it to him.

He could not have put it into words just then if his life had depended upon his power to do it.

"You will not commit it," he said. "It is not in you to do

it, but you have put yourself in a false position, and it is very unpleasant for both of us."

She stopped him.

"You are very much afraid of speaking plainly," she said. "Be more definite."

He actually flushed to the roots of his hair in his confusion and uneasiness. There was no way out of the difficulty.

"You have adopted such a manner with the world generally," he floundered, "that a concession from you means a great deal. You—you have been making extraordinary concessions. It is easy to see that this young fellow is madly enamored of you. He does not know how to conceal it, and he does not try. You have not seemed to demand that he should. You have let him follow you, and come and go as his passion and simplicity prompted him. One might say you had encouraged him—though encouraged seems hardly the word to use."

"No," she interrupted, "it is not the word to use."

"He has made himself conspicuous and you, too, and you have never protested by word or deed. When he was in danger you actually risked your life for him."

"Great heaven!" she ejaculated.

The memory of the truth of what he had said came upon her like a flash. Until this moment she had only seen the night from one stand-point, and to see it from this one was a deadly blow to her. She lost her balance.

"How dare you?" she cried breathlessly. "I was mad with excitement. If I had stopped to think——"

"You usually do stop to think," he put in. "That was why I was amazed. You did a thing without calculating its significance. You never did so before in your life. You know that it is true. You pride yourself upon it."

He could have said nothing so bitter and terrible. For the moment they had changed places. It was he who had presented

a weakness to her. She did pride herself upon her cool power of calculation.

"Go on!" she exclaimed.

"He has been here half the day," he proceeded, growing bolder. "You were out in the garden together all the afternoon—he has only just left you. When you contrast his position with yours is not *that* an extraordinary thing? What should you say if another woman had gone so far? Two years ago he was Haworth's engineer. He is a wonderful fellow and a genius, and the world will hear of him yet. I should never think of anything but that if I were the only individual concerned, but you—you treated him badly enough at first."

She turned paler and paler.

"You think that I—that I——"

She had meant to daunt him with the most daring speech she could make, but it would not complete itself. She faltered and broke down.

"I don't know what to think," he answered desperately. "It seems impossible. Good heavens! it *is* impossible!—you—it is not in your nature."

"No," she said, "it is not."

Even in that brief space she had recovered herself wholly. She met his glance just as she had met it before, even with more perfect *sang froid*.

"I will tell you what to think," she went on. "I have been very dull here. I wished from the first that I had never come. I hate the people, and I despise them more than hate them. I must be amused and interested, and they are less than nothing. The person you speak of was different. I suppose what you say of him is true and he is a genius. I care nothing for that in itself, but he has managed to interest me. At first I thought him only absurd; he was of a low class and a common workman, and he was so simple and ignorant of the world that he did not feel his position or did not care. That amused me and I led him on to revealing himself. Then I found out that

there was a difference between him and the rest of his class and I began to study him. I have no sentimental notions about his honor and good qualities. Those things do not affect me, but I have been interested and the time has passed more easily. Now the matter will end just as it began,—not because I am tired of him or because I care for what people say, but because I think it is time,—and I choose that it should. It is done with from to-night."

"Good heaven!" he cried. "You are not going to drop the poor fellow like that?"

"You may call it what you please," she returned. "I have gone as far as I choose to go, and it is done with from to-night."

Mr. Ffrench's excitement became somewhat painful to see. Between his embarrassment as a weak nature before a strong one,—an embarrassment which was founded upon secret fear of unpleasant results,—between this and the natural compunctions arising from tendencies toward a certain refined and amiable sense of fairness, he well-nigh lost all control over himself and became courageous. He grew heated and flushed and burst forth into protest.

"My dear," he said, "I must say it's a—*a deuced* ungentlemanly business!"

Her lack of response absolutely inspired him.

"It's a *deuced* ill-bred business," he added, "from 'first to last."

She did not reply even to that, so he went on, growing warmer and warmer.

"You have taunted me with being afraid of you," he said, "though you have never put it into so many words. Perhaps I have been afraid of you. You can make yourself confoundedly unpleasant at times,—and I may have shrunk from saying what would rouse you,—but I must speak my mind about this, and say it is a *deucedly* cruel and unfair thing, and is

unworthy of you. A less well-bred woman might have done it."

A little color rose to her cheek and remained there, but she did not answer still.

"He is an innocent fellow," he proceeded, "an unworldly fellow; he has lived in his books and his work, and he knows nothing of women. His passion for you is a pure, romantic one; he would lay his world at your feet. Call it folly, if you will,—it *is* folly,—but allow me to tell you it is worthy of a better object."

He was so astonished at his own daring that he stopped to see what effect it had produced.

She replied by asking a simple but utterly confounding question.

"What," she said, "would you wish me to do?"

"What would I wish you to do?" he stammered. "What? I—I hardly know," he replied weakly.

And after regarding her helplessly a little longer, he turned about and left the room.

CHAPTER XL.

"LOOK OUT!"

THE next morning French rather surprised Murdoch by walking into his cell with the evident intention of paying him a somewhat prolonged visit. It was not, however, the fact of his appearing there which was unusual enough to excite wonder, but the fact of a certain degree of mingled constraint and effusiveness in his manner. It was as if he was troubled with some mental compunctions which he was desirous of setting at rest. At times he talked very fast and in a comparatively light and jocular vein, and again he was silent for some minutes, invariably rousing himself from his abstraction with a sudden effort.

Several times Murdoch found that he was regarding him with a disturbed air of anxiety.

Before going away he made an erratic and indecisive tour of the little room, glancing at drawings and picking up first one thing and then another.

"You have a good many things here," he said, "of one kind and another."

"Yes," Murdoch answered, absently.

Ffrench glanced around at the jumble of mechanical odds and ends, the plans and models in various stages of neglect or completion.

"It's a queer place," he commented, "and it has an air of significance. It's crammed with ideas—of one kind and another."

"Yes," Murdoch answered, as before.

Ffrench approached him and laid his hand weakly on his shoulder.

"You are a fellow of ideas," he said, "and you have a good deal before you. Whatever disappointments you might meet with, you would always have a great deal before you. You have ideas. I," with apparent inconsequence, "I haven't, you know."

Murdoch looked somewhat puzzled, but he did not contradict him, so he repeated his statement.

"I haven't, you know. I wish I had."

Then he dropped his hand and looked indefinite again.

"I should always like you to remember that I am your friend," he said. "I wish I could have been of more service to you. You are a fine fellow, Murdoch. I have admired you—I have liked you. Don't forget it."

And he went away carrying the burden of his indecision and embarrassment and good intention with much amiable awkwardness.

That day Murdoch did not see Rachel Ffrench. Circumstances occurred which kept him at work until a late hour.

The next day it was the same story, and the next also. A series of incidents seemed to combine against him, and the end of each day found him worn out and fretted. But on the fourth he was free again, and early in the evening found himself within sight of the iron gates. Every pulse in his body throbbed as he passed through them. He was full of intense expectation. He could scarcely bear to think of what was before him. His desperate happiness was a kind of pain. One of his chief longings was that he might find her wearing the pale blue dress again and that when he entered she might be standing in the center of the room as he had left her. Then it would seem as if there had been no nights and days between the last terribly happy moment and this. The thought which flashed across his mind that there might possibly be some one else in the room was a shock to him.

"If she is not alone," he said to himself, "it will be unbearable."

As he passed up the walk, he came upon a tall white lily blooming on one of the border beds. He was in a sufficiently mystical and emotional mood to be stopped by it.

"It is like her," he said. And he gathered it and took it with him to the house.

The first thing upon which his eye rested when he stood upon the threshold of the room was the pale blue color, and she was standing just as he had left her, it seemed to him upon the very same spot upon which they had parted. His wish had been realized so far at least.

He was obliged to pause a moment to regain his self-control. It was an actual truth that he could not have trusted himself so far as to go in at once.

It was best that he did not. The next instant she turned and spoke to a third person at the other side of the room, and even as she did so caught sight of him and stopped.

"Here is Mr. Murdoch," she said, and paused, waiting for

him to come forward. She did not advance to meet him, did not stir until he was scarcely more than a pace from her. She simply waited, watching him as he moved toward her, as if she were a little curious to see what he would do. Then she gave him her hand, and he took it with a feeling that something unnatural had happened, or that he was suddenly awakening from a delusion.

He did not even speak. It was she who spoke, turning toward the person whom she had addressed before he entered.

"You have heard us speak of Mr. Murdoch," she said ; and then to himself, "This is M. Saint Méran."

M. Saint Méran rose and bowed profoundly. He presented, as his best points, long, graceful limbs and a pair of clear gray eyes, which seemed to hold their opinions in check. He regarded Murdoch with an expression of suave interest and made a well-bred speech of greeting.

Murdoch said nothing. He could think of nothing to say. He was never very ready of speech. He bowed with an uncertain air, and almost immediately wandered off to the other end of the room, holding his lily in his hand. He began to turn over the pages of a book of engravings, seeing none of them. After a little while a peculiar perfume close to him attracted his attention, and he looked downward vacantly and saw the lily. Then he laid it down and moved farther away.

Afterward—he did not know how long afterward—Ffrench came in. He seemed in a very feverish state of mind, talking a great deal and rather inanely, and forcing Murdoch to reply and join in the conversation.

M. Saint Méran held himself with a graceful air of security and self-poise, and made gentle efforts at scientific remark which should also have an interest for genius of a mechanical and inventive turn. But Murdoch's replies were vague. His glance followed Rachel Ffrench. He devoured her with his eyes—a violence which she bore very well. At last—he had

not been in the house an hour—he left his chair and went to her.

"I am going away," he said in an undertone. "Good-night!"

She did not seem to hear him. She was speaking to Saint Méran.

"Good-night!" he repeated, in the same tone, not raising it at all, only giving it an intense, concentrated sound.

She turned her face toward him.

"Good-night!" she answered.

And he went away, Ffrench following him to the door with erratic and profuse regrets, which he did not hear at all.

When he got outside, he struck out across the country. The strength with which he held himself in check was a wonder to him. It seemed as if he was not thinking at all—that he did not allow himself to think. He walked fast, it might even be said, violently; the exertion made his head throb and his blood rush through his veins. He walked until at last his heart beat so suffocatingly that he was forced to stop. He threw himself down—almost fell down upon the grass at the wayside and lay with shut eyes. He was giddy and exhausted, and panted for breath. He could not have thought then, if he would; he had gained so much at least. He did not leave the place for an hour. When he did so, it was to walk home by another route, slowly, almost weakly. This route led him by the Briarley cottage, and, as he neared it, he was seized with a fancy for going in. The door was ajar and a light burned in the living-room, and this drew him toward it.

Upon the table stood a basket filled with purchases and near the basket lay a shawl which Janey wore upon all occasions requiring a toilet. She had just come in from her shopping, and sat on a stool in her usual posture, not having yet removed the large bonnet which spread its brim around her small face, a respectable and steady-going aureole enlivened

with bunches of flowers which in their better days had rejoiced Mrs. Briarley's heart with exceeding great joy.

She looked up as he came in but she did not rise.

"Eh! it's thee, is it?" she remarked. "I thowt it wur toime tha wur comin'. Tha'st not been here fur nigh a month."

"I have been—doing a great deal."

"Aye," she answered. "I suppose so."

She jerked her thumb toward Granny Dixon's basket chair, which stood empty.

"She's takken down," she said. "She wur takken down a week sin', an' a noice toime we're ha'in' nursin' her. None on us can do anything wi' her but mother—*she* can settle her, thank th' Almoighty."

She rested her sharp little elbows upon her knees and her chin upon both palms and surveyed him with interest.

"Has tha seed him?" she demanded suddenly.

"Who?" he asked.

"Him," with a nod of her head. "Th' furriner as is stayin' at Mester Ffrench's. Yo' mun ha' seen him. He's been theer three days."

"I saw him this evening."

"I thowt tha mun ha' seed him. He coom o' Monday. He coom fro' France. I should na," with a tone of serious speculation,—*"I should na ha' thowt she'd ha' had a Frenchman."*

She moved her feet and settled herself more conveniently without moving her eyes from his face.

"I dunnot think much o' Frenchmen mysen," she proceeded. "An' neyther does mother, but they say as this is a rich un an' a grand un. She's lived i' France a good bit, an' happen she does na' moind their ways. She's knowed him afore."

"When?" he asked.

"When she wur theer. She lived theer, yo' know."

Yes, he remembered, she had lived there. He said nothing more, only sat watching the little stunted figure and sharp small face with a sense of mild fascination, wondering dully

how much she knew and where she had learned it all, and what she would say next. But she gave him no further information—chiefly because she had no more on hand, there being a limit even to her sagacity. She became suddenly interested in himself.

"Yo're as pale as if yo'd had th' whoopin'-cough," she remarked. "What's wrong wi' yo'?"

"I am tired," he answered. "Worn out."

It was true enough, but did not satisfy her. Her matter of fact and matronly mind arrived at a direct solution of the question.

"Did yo' ivver think," she put it to him, "as she'd ha yo'?"

He had no answer to give her. He began to turn deathly white about the lips. She surveyed him with increased interest, and proceeded:

"Mother an' me's talked it over," she said. "We tak' th' 'Ha'penny Reader,' an' theer wur a tale in it as tow'd o' one o' th' nobility as wed a workin' chap—an' mother she said as happen she wur loike her an' ud do it, but I said she would na. Th' chap i' th' tale turnt out to be a earl, as ud been kidnapped by th' gypsies, but yo' nivver wur kidnapt, an' she's noan o' th' soft koind. Th' Lady *Geraldine* wur a difrient mak'. Theer wur na mich i' her to my moind. She wur allus makkin' out as brass wur nowt, an' talkin' about 'humble virchew' as if theer wur nowt loike it. Yo' would na ketch *her* talkin' that road. Mother she'd sit an' cry until th' babby's bishop wur wet through, but I nivver seed nowt to cry about mysen. She getten th' chap i' th' eend, an' he turnt out to be a earl after aw. But I tow'd mother as marryin' a workin' man wur na i' *her* loine."

Murdoch burst into a harsh laugh and got up.

"I've been pretty well talked over, it seems," he said. "I didn't know that before."

"Aye," replied Janey, coolly. "We've talked yo' ower a good bit. Are yo' goin'?"

"Yes," he answered, "I am going."

He went out with an uncertain movement, leaving the door open behind him. As he descended the steps, the light from the room, slanting out into the darkness, struck athwart a face, the body pertaining to which seemed to be leaning against the pailings, grasping them with both hands. It was the face of Mr. Briarley, who regarded him with a mingled expression of anxiety and desire to propitiate.

"Is it yo'?" he whispered as Murdoch neared him.

"Yes," he was answered, somewhat shortly.

Mr. Briarley put out a hand and plucked him by the sleeve.

"I've been watin' fur yo'," he said in a sonorous whisper which only failed to penetrate the innermost recesses of the dwelling through some miracle.

Murdoch turned out of the gate.

"Why?" he asked.

Mr. Briarley glanced toward the house uneasily, and also up and down the road.

"Le's get out o' the way a bit," he remarked.

Murdoch walked on, and he shuffled a few paces behind him. When they got well into the shadow of the hedge, he stopped. Suddenly he dropped upon his knees and crawling through a very small gap into the field behind, remained there for a few seconds; then he re-appeared panting.

"Theer's no one theer," he said. "I would na ha' risked theer bein' one on 'em lyin' under th' hedge."

"One of whom?" Murdoch inquired.

"I did na say who," he answered.

When he stood on his feet again, he took his companion by the button.

"Theer's a friend o' moine," he said, "as 'as sent a messidge to yo'. This here's it—'Look out!'"

"What does it mean?" Murdoch asked. "Speak more plainly."

Mr. Briarley became evidently disturbed.

"Nay," he said, "that theer's plain enow fur me. It ud do my business i' quick toime if I ——"

He stopped and glanced about him again and then without warning threw himself, so to speak, on Murdoch's shoulder and began to pour a flood of whispers into his ear.

"Theer wur a chap as were a foo'," he said, "an' he was drawed into bein' a bigger foo' than common. It wur him as gotten yo' i' trouble wi' th' stroikers. He did na mean no ill, an'—an' he ses, 'I'll tell him to look out. I'll run th' risk.' He knowed what wur goin' on, an' he ses, 'I'll tell him to look out.'"

"Who was he?" Murdoch interposed.

Mr. Briarley fell back a pace, perspiring profusely and dabbing at his forehead with his cap.

"He—he wur a friend o' moine," he stammered,—“a friend o' moine as has gotten a way o' gettin' hissen i' trouble, an' he ses, 'I'll tell him to look out.'"

"Tell him from me," said Murdoch, "that I am not afraid of anything that may happen."

It was a rash speech, but was not so defiant as it sounded. His only feeling was one of cold carelessness. He wanted to get free and go away and end his night in his silent room at home. But Mr. Briarley kept up with him, edging toward him apologetically as he walked.

"Yo're set agen th' chap fur bein' a foo'," he persisted, breathlessly, "an' I dunnot blame yo'. He's set agen hissen. He's a misforchnit chap as is allus i' trouble. It's set heavy on him, an' ses he, 'I'll tell him to look out.'"

At a turn into a by-lane he stopped.

"I'll go this road," he said, "an' I'll tell him as I've done it."

CHAPTER XLI.

"IT HAS ALL BEEN A LIE."

IN a week's time Saint Méran had become a distinct element in the social atmosphere of Broxton and vicinity. He fell into his place at Rachel Ffrench's side with the naturalness of a man who felt he had some claim upon his position. He was her father's guest; they had seen a great deal of each other abroad. Any woman might have felt his well-bred homage a delicate compliment. He was received as an agreeable addition to society; he attended her upon all occasions. From the window of his work-room Murdoch saw him drive by with her in her carriage, saw him drop into the bank for a friendly chat with Ffrench, who regarded him with a mixture of nervousness and admiration.

Haworth, having gone away again, had not heard of him. Of late the Works had seen little of its master. He made journeys hither and thither, and on his return from such journeys invariably kept the place in hot water. He drove the work on and tyrannized over the hands from foremen to puddlers. At such times there was mysterious and covert rebellion and some sharp guessing as to what was going on, but it generally ended in this. Upon the whole the men were used to being bullied, and some of them worked the better for it.

Murdoch went about his work as usual, though there was not a decent man on the place who did not gradually awaken to the fact that some singular change was at work upon him. He concentrated all his mental powers upon what he had to do during work hours, and so held himself in check, but he spent all his leisure in a kind of apathy, sitting in his cell at his work-table in his old posture, his forehead supported by his hands, his fingers locked in his tumbled hair. Sometimes he was seized with fits of nervous trembling which left him weak.

When he left home in the morning he did not return until night and he ate no midday meal.

As yet he was only drifting here and there ; he had arrived at no conclusions ; he did not believe in his own reasoning ; the first blow had simply stunned him. A man who had been less reserved and who had begun upon a fair foundation of common knowledge would have understood ; he understood nothing but his passion, his past rapture, and that a mysterious shock had fallen upon him.

He lived in this way for more than a week, and then he roused himself to make a struggle. One bright, sunny day, after sitting dumbly for half an hour or so, he staggered to his feet and took up his hat.

"I'll—try—again," he said, mechanically. "I'll try again. I don't know what it means. It may have been my fault. I don't think it was—but it may have been. Perhaps I expected too much." And he went out.

After he had been absent some minutes, Ffrench came in from the bank. He had been having a hard morning of it. The few apparently unimportant indiscretions in the way of private speculation of which he had been guilty were beginning to present themselves in divers unpleasant forms, and to assume an air of importance he had not believed possible. His best ventures had failed him, and things which he was extremely anxious to keep from Haworth's ears were assuming a shape which would render it difficult to manage them privately. He was badgered and baited on all sides, and naturally began to see his own folly. His greatest fear was not so much that he should lose the money he had risked as that Haworth should discover his luckless weakness and confront and crush him with it. As he stood in fear of his daughter, so he stood in fear of Haworth ; but his dread of Haworth was, perhaps, the stronger feeling of the two. His very refinement added to it. Having gained the object of his ambition, he had found it not exactly what he had pictured it. Haworth had not spared him ; the

very hands had derided his enthusiastic and strenuous efforts; he had secretly felt that his position was ridiculous, and provocative of satire among the unscientific herd. When he had done anything which should have brought him success and helped him to assert himself, it had somehow always failed, and now —.

He sat down in the managerial chair before Haworth's great table, strewn with papers and bills. He had shut the door behind him and was glad to be alone.

"I am extremely unfortunate," he faltered aloud. "I don't know how to account for it." And he glanced about him helplessly. Before the words had fairly left his lips his privacy was broken in upon. The door was flung open and Murdoch came in. He had evidently walked fast, for he was breathing heavily, and he had plainly expected to find the room empty. He looked at Ffrench, sat down and wiped his lips.

"I want you," he began, with labored articulation, "I want you—to tell me—what—I have done."

Ffrench could only stare at him.

"I went to the house," he said, "and asked for her." (He did not say for whom, nor was it necessary that he should. Ffrench understood him perfectly.) "I swear I saw her standing at the window as I went up the path. She had a purple dress on—and a white flower in her hair—and Saint Méran was at her side. Before, the man at the door never waited for me to speak; this time he stood and looked at me. I said, 'I want to see Miss Ffrench;' he answered, 'She is not at home.' 'Not at home,'—breaking into a rough laugh,—"'not at home' to me!"

He clenched his fist and dashed it against the chair.

"What does it mean?" he cried out. "What does it mean!"

Ffrench quaked.

"I—I don't know," he answered, and his own face gave him the lie.

Murdoch caught his words up and flung them back at him. "You don't know!" he cried. "Then I will tell you. It means that she has been playing me false from first to last."

Ffrench felt his position becoming weaker and weaker. Here was a state of affairs he had never seen before; here was a madness which concealed nothing, which defied all, which flung all social presuppositions to the winds. He ought to have been able to palter and equivocate, to profess a well-bred surprise and some delicate indignation, to be dignified and subtle; but he was not. He could only sit and wonder what would come next, and feel uncomfortable and alarmed. The thing which came next he had not expected any more than he had expected the rest of the outbreak.

Suddenly a sullen calmness settled upon the young fellow—a calm which spoke of some fierce determination.

"I don't know why I should have broken out like this before you," he said. "Seeing you here when I expected to fight it out alone, surprised me into it. But there is one thing I am going to do. I'll hear the truth from her own lips. When you go home I will go with you. They won't turn me back then, and I'll see her face to face."

"I——" began Ffrench, and then added, completely overwhelmed, "Very—perhaps it would be—be best."

"Best!" echoed Murdoch, with another laugh. "No, it won't be best; it will be worst; but I'll do it for all that."

And he dropped his head upon the arms he had folded on the chair's back, and so sat in a forlorn, comfortless posture, not speaking, not stirring, as if he did not know that there was any presence in the room but his own.

And he kept his word. As Ffrench was going out into the street at dusk he felt a touch on his shoulder, and turning, found Murdoch close behind him.

"I'm ready," he said, "if you are."

When they reached the house, the man who opened the door stared at them blankly, which so irritated Ffrench that he found

an excuse for administering a sharp rebuke to him about some trifle.

"They are always making some stupid blunder," he said to Murdoch as they passed upstairs to the drawing-room.

But Murdoch did not hear.

It was one of the occasions on which Rachel French reached her highest point of beauty. Her black velvet dress was almost severe in its simplicity, and her one ornament was the jewelled star in her high *coiffure*. M. St. Méran held his place at her side. He received Murdoch with *empressement* and exhibited much tact and good feeling. But Murdoch would have none of him. He had neither tact nor experience.

His time did not come until the evening was nearly over, and it would never have come if he had not at last forced her to confront him by making his way to her side with a daring which was so novel in him that it would have mastered another woman.

Near her he trembled a little, but he said what he had come to say.

"To-day," he said, "when I called—your servant told me you were not at home."

She paused a moment before answering, but when she did answer he trembled no more.

"That was unfortunate," she said.

"It was not true—I saw you at the window."

She looked him quietly in the face, answering him in two words.

"Did you?"

He turned on his heel and walked away. His brain whirled; he did not know how he got out of the room. He was scarcely conscious of existence until he found himself out-o'-doors. He got beyond the gate and into the road, and to the end of the road, but there he stopped and turned back. He went back until he found he was opposite the house again, looking up at the lighted window, he did not know why. A sharp rain was

falling, but he did not feel it. He stood staring at the window, mechanically plucking at the leaves on the hedge near him. He scarcely knew whether it was a curse or a sob which fell from his lips and awakened him at last.

"Am I going mad?" he said. "Do men go mad through such things? God forbid! It has all been a lie—a lie—a lie!!"

CHAPTER XLII.

"ANOTHER MAN!"

IN two days Haworth returned. He came from the station one morning, not having been home. He did not go to the Works, but to the bank and straight into Ffrench's private room.

The look this unhappy gentleman gave him when he saw him was a queer mixture of anxiety, furtive query, and amiably frank welcome,—the frank welcome a very faint element indeed, though it was brought to light by a violent effort. Haworth shut the door and locked it, and then turned upon him, his face black with rage.

"Say summat!" he ground out through his teeth. "Say summat as'll keep me from smashing every bone in your body!"

Ffrench gave him one hopeless glance and wilted into a drooping, weekly protesting, humiliated figure.

"Don't—don't be so severe, Haworth," he said. "I—I——"

"Blast you!" burst in Haworth, pitilessly. "You've ruined me!"

He spoke under his breath. No one in the room beyond could hear a word, but it was a thousand times more terrible than if he had roared at the top of his voice, as was his custom when things went amiss.

"You've ruined me!" he repeated. "You! A chap that's

played gentleman manufacturer; a chap I've laughed at; a chap I took in to serve my own ends—ruined me, by——"

"Oh, no, no!" the culprit cried out. "My dear fellow, no! No, no!"

Haworth strode up to him and struck his fist against the table.

"Have I ever told you a word of what was going on?" he demanded.

"No! No!"

"Have I ever let you be aught but what I swore you should be at th' first—a fellow to play second fiddle and do what he was told?"

Ffrench turned pale. A less hard nature would have felt more symyathy for him.

"No," he answered, "you have not," and his chin dropped on his breast.

Haworth shook his fist in his face. He was in a frenzy of rage and despair.

"It's been going from bad to worse for six months," he said; "but you were not up to seeing it stare you in the face. Strikes are the things for trade to thrive on! One place after another gone down and Jem Haworth's stood up. Jem Haworth's outdone 'em all. I've not slept for three month, my lad. I've fought it like a tiger! I've not left a stone unturned. I've held my mouth shut and my eyes open,—aye, and held my breath, too. I've sworn every time I saw daylight that I'd hold it out to the end and show 'em all what Haworth was made off, and how he stood when th' nobbs went down at the first drive. I'd sooner have hell than what's bound to come now! And it's you that's done it. You've lost me twenty thousand pound—twenty thousand, when ten's worth more to me than a hundred was a twelvemonth since!"

Ffrench quailed like a woman.

"Are—are you going to murder me?" he said. "You look as if you were."

Haworth turned on his heel.

"You're not worth it," he answered, "or I'd do it, by the Lord Harry."

Then he came back to him.

"I've paid enow for what I've never had, by George," he said, with bitter grimness.

"For what you have——" Ffrench began.

Haworth stopped him by flinging himself down in a chair near him—so near that their faces were brought within uncomfortable close range of each other. There was no avoiding his eye.

"You know what," he sneered. "None better."

"I——" Ffrench faltered.

"Blast you!" said Haworth. "You played her like bait to a fish—in your gentleman's fashion."

Ffrench felt a little sick. It was not unnatural that he should. A man of refined instincts likes less than any other man to be confronted brutally with the fact that he has, however delicately, tampered with a coarseness.

Haworth went on.

"You knew how to do it, and you did it—gentleman way. You knew me and you knew I was hard hit and you knew I'd make a big throw. That was between us two, though we never said a word. I'd never give up a thing in my life before and I was mad for her. She knew how to hold me off and gave me plenty to think of. What else had you, my lad? 'Haworth's' didn't want a gentleman; 'Haworth's' didn't want brass, and you had none to give him if it did. It wasn't *you* who was took into partner; it was what Jem Haworth was aiming at—and has missed, by——"

He got up, and, pushing his chair back, made a stride toward the door. Ffrench was sure he was going away without another word, but he suddenly stopped and turned back.

"I'd sooner take hell than what's comin'," he repeated in a

hoarse whisper. "And it's you that brought it on me; but if I'd got what I aimed at, it might have come and welcome."

Then he went out.

He went across to the Works, and, going into his room, he found Murdoch standing at one of the windows gazing out at something in the street. He was haggard and gaunt and had a vacant look. It occurred to Haworth that some sudden physical ailment had attacked him. He went up to his side.

"What have you found, lad?" he demanded.

The next instant his own eyes discovered what it was. An open carriage was just drawing up before the bank. Rachel Ffrench sat in it, and Saint Méran was with her.

He looked at them a second or so and then looked at Murdoch—at his wretched face and hollow eyes. An unsavory exclamation burst from him.

"What!" he cried out after it. "There's another man, is there? Is it *that*?"

"Yes," was Murdoch's monotonous reply. "There's another man."

CHAPTER XLIII.

"EVEN."

THE same evening M. Saint Méran had the pleasure of meeting a person of whom he had heard much, and in whom he was greatly interested. This person was the master of "Haworth's," who came in after dinner.

If he had found Murdoch a little trying and wearisome, M. Saint Méran found Haworth astounding. He was not at all prepared for him. When he walked into the room as if it were his own, gave a bare half nod to Ffrench, and carried himself aggressively to Miss Ffrench's side, Saint Méran was transfixed with astonishment. He had heard faint rumors of something like this before, but he never dreamed of seeing it

He retreated within himself and proceeded to study minutely the manners and characteristics of the successful manufacturers of Great Britain.

"He is very large," he said, with soft sarcasm, to Miss Ffrench. "Very large indeed."

"That," replied Miss Ffrench, "is probably the result of the iron trade."

The truth was that he seemed to fill the room. The time had passed when he was ill at ease in the house. Now he was cool to defiance. Ffrench had never found him so embarrassing as he was upon this particular evening. He spoke very little, sitting in his chair silent, with a gloomy and brooding look. When he directed his attention upon any one, it was upon Rachel. The prolonged gaze which he occasionally fixed upon her was one of evil scrutiny, which stirred her usually cool blood not a little. She never failed, however, to meet it with composure. At last she did a daring thing. Under cover of a conversation between her father and Saint Méran, she went to the table at his side and began to turn over the books upon it.

"I think," she said, in an undertone, "that you have something to say to me."

"Aye," he answered, "I have that, and the time 'll come when I shall say it, too."

"You think I'm afraid to hear it," she continued. "Follow me into the next room and see."

Then she addressed her father, speaking aloud.

"Your plans for the new bank are in the next room, I believe," she said. "I wish to show them to Mr. Haworth."

Y—yes," he admitted, somewhat reluctantly. "They are on my table."

She passed through the folding doors and Haworth followed her. She stopped at one of the windows and waited for him to speak, and it was during this moment in which she waited that he saw in her face what he had not seen before—a

faint pallor and a change which was not so much a real change as the foreshadowing of one to come. He saw it now because it chanced that the light struck full upon her.

"Now," she said, "say your say. But let me tell you that I shall listen, not because I feel a shadow of interest in it, but because I *know* you thought I shrank from hearing it."

He pushed open the French window and strode on to the terrace.

"Step out here," he said.

She went out.

"This," he said, glancing about him, "this is th' place you stood on th' night you showed yourself to the strikers."

She made no answer.

"It's as good a place as any," he went on. "I'm going to have it out with you," he said, with bitter significance.

Then, for the first time, it struck her that she had overstepped the mark and done a dangerous thing, but she would have borne a great deal sooner than turn back, and so she remained.

"I've stood it a long time," he said, "and now I'm going to reckon up. There's a good bit of reckoning to be done betwixt you and me, for all you've held me at arm's length."

"I am glad," she put in, "that you acknowledge that I did hold you at arm's length, and that you were not blind to it."

"Oh," he answered, "I wasn't blind to it, no more than you were blind to the other; and from first to last it's been my comfort to remember that you weren't blind to the other—that you knew it as well as I did. I've held to that."

He came close to her.

"When I give up what I'd worked twenty year to get, what did I give up for? For *you*. When I took French in partner, what did I run the risk for? For *you*. What was to pay me? *You*."

His close presence in the shadow was so intolerable to her that she could have cried out, but she did not.

"You made a poor bargain," she remarked.

"Aye, a poor bargain; but you were one in it. You bore it in your mind, and you've bore it there from then till now, and I've got a hold on you through it that's worth summat to me, if I never came nigh nor touched you. You knew it, and you let it be. No other chap can pay more for you than Jem Haworth's paid. I've got that to think of."

She made a gesture with her hand.

"I—I—hush!" she cried. "I will not hear it."

"Stop it, if you call. Call 'em if you want, and let 'em hear—th' new chap and all. You shall hear, if all Broxton comes. I've paid twenty-five year of work and sweat and grime; I've paid 'Haworth's'—for I'm a ruined chap as I stand here; and but for *you* I'd have got through."

There was a shock in these last words; if they were true the blow would fall on her too.

"What," she faltered—"what do you mean?"

"Th' strikes begun it," he answered, laconically, "and," with a jerk of his thumb toward the room in which her father sat, "he finished it. He tried some of his gentleman pranks in a quiet way, and he lost money on 'em. He's lost it again and again, and tried to cover it with fresh shifts, and its 'Haworth's' that must pay for 'em. It'll come sooner or later, and you may make up your mind to it."

"What were you doing?" she demanded, sharply. "You might have known——"

"Aye," he returned, "what was I doing? I used to be a sharp chap enow. I've not been as sharp i' th' last twelve-month, and he was up to it. He thought it was his own brass, likely—he'd give summat for it as belonged to him."

He came nearer to the light and eyed her over.

"You've had your day," he said. "You've made a worse chap of me than I need have been. You—you lost me a

friend ; I hadn't counted that in. You've done worse by him than you've done by me. He was th' finer mak' of th' two, and it'll go harder with him. When I came in, he was hanging about the roadside, looking up at the house. He didn't see me, but I saw him. He'll be there many a night, I dare say. I'd be ready to swear he's there now."

"Whom do you mean?"

"I mean—Murdoch!"

The very sound of his own voice seemed to fire him with rage. She saw a look in his eye which caused her to shrink back. But she was too late. He caught her by the arm and dragged her toward him.

A second later when he released her, she staggered to one of the rustic seats and sank crouching into it, hiding her face in the folds of her dress. She had not cried out, however, nor uttered a sound, and he had known she would not.

He stood looking down at her.

"A gentleman wouldn't have done it," he said, hoarsely. "I'm not a gentleman. You've held me off and trampled me under foot. That'll leave us a bit even."

And he turned on his heel and walked away into the darkness.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"WHY DO YOU CRY FOR ME?"

WHEN he said that he had seen Murdoch standing in the road before the house, he had spoken the truth. It was also true that even as they stood upon the terrace he was there still.

He was there every night. Where he slept or when, or if at all, his mother and Christian did not know ; they only knew that he never spent a night at home. They barely saw him from day to day. When he came home in the morning and

evening, it was to sit at the table, rarely speaking, scarcely tasting food, only drinking greedily the cup of strong coffee Christian always had in readiness for him. The girl was very good to him in these days. She watched him in terror of his unnatural mood. He hardly seemed to see them when they were in the room with him; his eyes were hollow and burning bright; he grew thin and narrow-chested and stooped; his hands were unsteady when he lifted anything.

When she was alone, Christian said to herself again and again:

"He will die. There is no help for it. He will die—or worse."

One morning she came down to find him lying on the sofa with closed eyes and such a deathly face that she almost cried out aloud. But she restrained herself and went into the kitchen as if to perform her usual tasks. Not long afterward she returned carrying a little tray with a cup of hot coffee upon it.

"Will you drink this for me?" she said to him.

He opened his eyes a little impatiently, but he sat up and drank it.

"It's very good," he said, as he fell back again into his old position, "but you mustn't put yourself to trouble for me."

Afterward the coffee was always ready for him when he came in, and he got into the habit of drinking it mechanically.

The books he had been accustomed to pore over at every leisure moment lay unclosed. He neither touched nor looked at them.

The two women tried to live their lives as if nothing were happening. They studiously avoided questioning or appearing to observe him.

"We must not let him think that we talk of him," Christian said.

She showed a wonderful gentleness and tact. Until long

afterward, Mrs. Murdoch scarcely knew what support and comfort she had in her. Her past life had planted in her a readiness to despair.

"He is like his father," she said once. "He was like him as a child. He is very trusting and faithful, but when his belief is gone it is all over. He has given up as his father did before he died. He will not try to live."

He did not try to live, but he did not think of death. He was too full of other morbid thoughts. He could not follow any idea far. A thousand of them came and went, and in the end were as nothing.

"Why," he kept saying to himself weakly and wearily,—"why was it? What had I done? It was a strange thing to choose me out of so many. I was hardly worth it. To have chosen another man would have served her better."

He did not know how the days passed at the Works. The men began to gaze at him askance and mutter when he went by.

"Th' feyther went daft," they said. "Is this chap goin' th' same way?"

It was only the look of his face which made them say so. He got through his work one way or another. But the days were his dread. The nights, strange and dreadful enough, were better than the broad daylight, with the scores of hands about him and the clangor of hammers and the whirl of machinery. He fell into the habit of going to the engine-room and standing staring at the engine, fascinated by it. Once he drew nearer and nearer with such a look in his eye that Floxham began to regard him stealthily. He went closer, pace by pace, and at last made a step which brought a shout from Floxham, who sprang upon him and tore him away.

"What art at, tha foo'?" he yelled. "Does tha want to go whoam on a shutter?"

Wakening, with a long breath, he said:

"I forgot, that was it. I was thinking of another thing."

The time came at length when he had altered so that when he went out his mother and Christian often sat up together half the night trembling with a fear neither of them would have put into words. As they sat trying to talk, each would glance at the other stealthily, and when their eyes met, each would start as if with some guilty thought.

On one of the worst and most dreadful of nights, Christian suddenly rose from her seat, crossed the hearth and threw herself upon her knees before her companion.

"I am going out," she said. "Don't—don't try to keep me."

"It is midnight," said Mrs. Murdoch, "and—you don't know where to go."

"Yes," the girl returned, "I do. For God's sake, let me go! I cannot bear it."

The woman gave her a long look, and then said a strange and cruel thing.

"You had better stay where you are. It is not *you* he wants."

"No," she said bitterly, "it is not I he wants; but I can find him and make sure—that—he will come back. And then you will go to sleep." She left her in spite of her efforts to detain her. She was utterly fearless, and went into the night as if there was no such thing as peril on earth.

She did know where to go and went there. Murdoch was standing opposite the house in which Rachel Ffrench slept. She went to him and put her hand on his arm.

"What are you doing here?" she said, in a low voice. He turned and gave her a cold, vacant look. He did not seem at all surprised at finding her dark, beautiful young face at his very shoulder.

"I don't know. Can you tell me?"

"We have been waiting for you," she said. "We cannot rest when you are away."

"Do you want me to go home and go to bed decently and

sleep?" he said. "Do you suppose I would not, if I could? I always start from here and come back here. I say to myself, 'It will take me an hour to reach the place where I can see her window.' It is something to hold one's mind in check with. This rambling—and—and forgetting what one has meant to think about is a terrible thing."

"Come home with me," she said. "We will not talk. You can lie on the sofa and we will go away. I want your mother to sleep."

Something in her presence began to influence him to a saner mood.

"What are you doing here?" he asked. "It is midnight."

"I am not afraid. I could not bear to stay in the house. We sit there——"

An idea seemed to strike him suddenly. He stopped her and asked deliberately:

"Did you come because you thought I might do myself harm?"

She would not answer, and after waiting a second or so he went on slowly:

"I have thought I might myself—sometimes—but never for long. You have no need to fear. I am always stopped by the thought that—perhaps—it is not worth it after all. When things look clearer, I shall get over it. Yes—I think I shall get over it—though now there seems to be no end. But—some day—it will come—and I shall get over it. Don't be afraid that I shall do myself harm. If I am not killed—before the end comes—I shall not kill myself. I shall know it was not worth it after all."

The tears had been running down her cheeks as she stood, but she bit her lip and forced herself to breathe evenly, so that he might not find her out. But just then, as he moved, a great drop fell upon the back of his hand. He stopped and began to tremble.

"Good heavens!" he cried. "You are crying. Why do you cry for me?"

"Because I cannot help it," she said in a half-whisper. "I do not cry often. I never cried for any one before."

"I'll take you home," he said, moving slowly along at her side. "Don't cry."

CHAPTER XLV.

"IT IS WORSE THAN I THOUGHT."

A WEEK or so later Saint Méran went away. Ffrench informed his partner of this fact with a secret hope of its producing upon him a somewhat softening effect. But Haworth received the statement with coldness.

"He'll come back again," he said. "Let him alone for that."

The general impression was that he would return. The opinion most popular in the more humble walks of Broxton society was that he had gone "to gotten hissen ready an' ha' th' papers drawn up," and that he would appear some fine day with an imposing retinue, settle an enormous fortune upon Miss Ffrench, and having been united to her with due grandeur and solemnity, would disappear with her to indefinitely "furrin" parts.

There seemed to be little change in Rachel Ffrench's life and manner, however. She began to rather pay more strict attention to her social duties, and consequently went out oftener. This might possibly be attributed to the fact that remaining in-doors was somewhat dull. Haworth and Murdoch came no more, and after Saint Méran's departure a sort of silence seemed to fall upon the house. Ffrench himself felt it when he came in at night, and was naturally restless under it. Perhaps Miss Ffrench felt it, too, though she did not say so.

One morning, Janey Briarley, sitting nursing the baby in the

door-way of the cottage, glanced upward from her somewhat arduous task to find a tall graceful figure standing before her in the sun. She had been too busily engaged to hear footsteps, and there had been no sound of carriage-wheels, so the visitor had come upon her entirely unawares.

It cannot be said she received her graciously. Her whilom admiration had been much tempted by sharp distrust very early in her acquaintance with its object.

"Art tha coomin' in?" she asked unceremoniously.

"Yes," said Miss Ffrench, "I am coming in."

Janey got up and made room for her to pass, and when she had passed gave her a chair, very much overweighted by the baby as she did so.

"Does tha want to see mother?"

"If your mother is busy, you will serve every purpose. The housekeeper told me that Mrs. Dixon was ill, and as I was passing I thought I would come in."

Janey's utter disbelief in this explanation was a sentiment not easily concealed, even by an adept at controlling facial expression, and she was not an adept. But Miss Ffrench was not at all embarrassed by any demonstration of a lack of faith which she might have perceived. When Janey resumed her seat, she broke the silence by an entirely unexpected observation. She touched the baby delicately with the point of her parasol—very delicately indeed.

"I suppose," she remarked, "that this is an extremely handsome child."

This with the air of one inquiring for information.

"Nay, he is na," retorted Janey unrelentingly. "He's good enow, but he nivver wur hurt wi' good looks. None on 'em wur, an' he's fou'est o' th' lot. I should think tha could see that fur thyself."

"Oh," replied Miss Ffrench, "then I suppose I am wrong. My idea was that at that age children all looked alike."

"Loike him?" said Janey dryly. "Did tha think as tha did?"

As the young Briarley in question was of a stolid and unornamental type, uncertain of feature and noticeable chiefly for a large and unusually bald head of phrenological development, this gave the matter an entirely novel aspect.

"Perhaps," said Miss Ffrench, "I scarcely regarded it from that point of view."

Then she changed the subject.

"How is Mrs. Dixon?" she enquired.

"She's neyther better nor worse," was the answer, "an' a mort o' trouble."

"That is unfortunate. Who cares for her?"

"Mother. She's th' on'y one as can do owt wi' her."

"Is there no one else she has a fancy for—your father, for instance?" inquired Miss Ffrench.

"She conna bide th' soight o' him, an' he's feart to go nigh her. Th' on'y man as she ivver looked at wur Murdoch," answered Janey.

"I think I remember his saying she had made friends with him. Is she as fond of him now?"

"I dunnot know as I could ca' it bein' fond on him. She is na fond o' nobody. But she says he's gotten a bit more sense than th' common run."

"It is rather good-natured on his part to come to see her—"

"He does na coom to see her. He has na been nigh th' house fur a month. He's been ill hissen or summat. He's up an' about, but he'd gotten a face loike Death th' last toime I seed him. Happen he's goin off loike his feyther."

"How is that?"

"Did na tha k...," with some impatience, "as he went crazy over summat he wur makkin', an' deed 'cause he could na mak' out to finish it? It's th' very thing Murdoch took up hissen an' th' stroikers wur so set ag'in."

"I think I remember. There was a story about the father. Do you—think he is really ill?"

"Murdoch? Aye, I do.—Mak' less noise, Tummos Henry!" (This to the child.)

"That is a great pity. Ah, there is the carriage."

One of her gloves had been lying upon her lap. When she stood up it dropped. She bent to pick it up, and as she did so something fell tinkling upon the flag floor and rolled under a table. It was one of her rings. Janey brought it back to her.

"It mun ha' been too large fur thee," she said, or tha'rt gettin' thin. Seems loike tha'rt a bit different to what tha wur," with a glance at her.

"Never mind that," she answered sharply, as she handed her some money. "Give this to your mother."

And she dropped the ring into her purse instead of putting it on again and went out to her carriage.

Janey stood and watched her.

"She is a bit thinner, or summat," she remarked, "but she need na moind that. It's genteel enow to be thin, an' I dunnot know as it ud hurt her."

Rachel Ffrench went home, and the same afternoon Murdoch came to her for the last time.

He had not intended to come. In his wildest moments he had never thought of going to her again, but as he passed along the road, intending to spend the afternoon in wandering across the country, he looked up at the windows of the house, and a strange fancy seized upon him. He would go in and ask her the question he had asked himself again and again. It did not seem to him at the time a strange thing to do. It looked wonderfully simple and natural in his strained and unnatural mood. He turned in at the gate with only one feeling—that perhaps she would tell him, and then it would be over. She saw him come up the path, and wondered if the man at the door would remember the charge she had given him. It

chanced that he did not remember, or that he was thrown off his guard. She heard feet on the stairs in a few seconds, and almost immediately Murdoch was in the room. What she thought when, being brought thus near to him, she saw and recognized the dreadful change in him, God knows. She supported herself with her hand upon the back of her chair as she rose. There was a look in his face almost wolfish. He would not sit down, and in three minutes broke through the barrier of her effort at controlling him. It was impossible for her to control him as she might have controlled another man.

"I have only a few words to say," he said. "I have come to ask you a question. I think that is all—only to ask you a question."

"Will you tell me," he said, "what wrong I have done you?"

She put her other hand on the chair and held it firmly.

"Will you tell me," she said, almost in a whisper, "what wrong I have done *you*?"

She remained so, looking at him and he at her with a terrible helplessness through a moment of dead silence.

She dropped her face upon her hands as she held the chair, and so stood.

He fell back a pace, gazing at her still.

"I have heard of women who fancied themselves injured," he said, "planning to revenge themselves upon the men who had intentionally or unintentionally wounded their pride. I remember such things in books I have read, not in real life, and once or twice the thought has crossed my mind that at some time in the past I might, in my poor ignorance have presumed—or—or blundered in some way to—anger you—and that this has been my punishment. It is only a wild thought, but it was a straw to cling to, and I would rather believe it, wild as it is, than believe that what you have done has been done wantonly. Can it be—is it true?"

"No."

But she did not lift her face.

"It is not?"

"No."

"Then it is worse than I thought."

He said the words slowly and clearly, and they were his last. Having said them, he went away without a backward glance.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ONCE AGAIN.

IN half an hour's time Murdoch had left Broxton far behind him. He had left the open road and rambled across fields and through lanes. The people in the farm-houses who knew him, saw him pass looking straight before him and walking steadily like a man with an end in view.

His mind was full of one purpose—the determination to control himself and keep his brain clear.

"*Now*," he said, "let me think it over—now let me look at it in cold blood."

The effort he made was something gigantic; it was a matter of physical as well as mental force. He had wavered and been vague long enough. Now the time had come to rouse himself through sheer power of will, or give up the reins and drift with the current, a lost man.

At dusk he reached Dillup, and roamed about the streets, half conscious of his surroundings. The Saturday night shopping was going on, and squalid women hurrying past him with their baskets on their arms glanced up, wondering at his dark face and preoccupied air.

"He's noan Dillup," they said; one good woman going so far as to add that "she did na loike th' looks on him neyther," with various observations upon the moral character of foreigners in general. He saw nothing of the sensation he created, however. He rambled about erratically until he felt the need

of rest and then went into a clean little shop and bought some simple food and ate it, sitting upon the tall stool before the counter, watched by the stout, white-aproned matron in charge.

"Tha looks poorly, mester," she said, as she handed him his change.

He started a little on hearing her voice, but recovered himself readily.

"On no," he said. "I'm right enough, I think. I'm an American, and I suppose we are rather a gaunt-looking lot as a rule."

"'Merikin, art tha?" she replied. "Well to be sure! Happen that's it" (good-naturedly). "I've 'allus heerd they wur a poor color. 'Merikin! Well—sure-ly!"

The fact of his being an American seemed to impress her deeply. She received his thanks (she was not often thanked by her customers) as a mysterious though not disagreeable result of his nationality, and as he closed the door after him he heard, as an accompaniment to the tinkling of the shop-bell, her amiably surprised ejaculation, "A 'Merikin! Well—sure-ly!"

A few miles from Broxton there was a substantial little stone bridge upon which he had often sat. In passing it again and again it had gradually become a sort of resting-place for him. It was at a quiet point of the road, and sitting upon it he had thought out many a problem. When he reached it on his way back he stopped and took his usual seat, looking down into the slow little stream beneath, and resting against the low buttress. He had not come to work out a problem now; he felt that he had worked his problem out in the past six hours.

"It was not worth it," he said. "No—it was not worth it after all."

When he went on his way again he was very tired, and he wondered drearily whether, if when he came near the old miserable stopping-place, he should not falter and feel the fascination strong upon him again. He had an annoying fear of the

mere possibility of such a thing. When he saw the light striking slantwise upon the trees it might draw him toward it as it had done so often before—even in spite of his determination and struggles.

Half a mile above the house a great heat ran over him and then a deadly chill, but he went on steadily. There was this for him, that for the first time he could think clearly and not lose himself.

He came nearer to it and nearer, and it grew in brightness. He fancied he had never seen it so bright before. He looked up at it and then away. He was glad that having once looked he could turn away; there had been many a night when he could not. Then he was under the shadow of the trees and knew that his dread had been only a fancy and that he was a saner man than he had thought. And the light was left behind him and he did not look back, but went on.

When he reached home the house was utterly silent. He entered with his latch-key and finding all dark went up stairs noiselessly.

The door of his own room was closed, and when he opened it he found darkness there also. He struck a match and turned on the light. For a moment its sudden glare blinded him, and then he turned involuntarily toward the farther corner of the room. Why he did so, he did not know at the time,—the movement was the result of an uncontrollable impulse,—but after he had looked he knew.

The light shone upon the empty chair in its old place—and upon the table and upon the model standing on it!

He did not utter any exclamation; strangely enough, he did not at first feel any shock or surprise. He advanced toward it slowly. But when at last he stood near it, the shock came. His heart beat as if it would burst.

"What falseness is there in me," he cried, "that I should have *forgotten* it?"

He was stricken with burning shame. He did not ask him-

self how it was that it stood there in its place. He thought of nothing but the lack in himself which was so deep a humiliation. Everything else was swept away. He sank into the chair and sat staring at it.

"I had forgotten it," he said,—*forgotten* it."

And then he put out his hand and touched and moved it—and drew it toward him.

About an hour afterward he was obliged to go down-stairs for something he needed. It was to the sitting-room he went, and when he pushed the door open he found a dim light burning and saw that some one was lying upon the sofa. His first thought was that it was his mother who had waited for him, but it was not she—it was Christian Murdoch, fast asleep with her face upon her arm.

Her hat and gloves were thrown upon the table and she still wore a long gray cloak which was stained and damp about the hem. He saw this as soon as he saw her face and no sooner saw than he understood.

He went to the sofa and stood a moment looking down at her, and, though he did not speak or stir, she awakened.

She sat up and pushed her cloak aside, and he spoke to her.

"It was you who brought it back," he said.

"Yes," she answered quietly. "I thought that if you saw it in the old place again, you would remember."

"You did not forget it."

"I had nothing else to think of," was her simple reply.

"I must seem a poor sort of fellow to you," he said wearily.

"I *am* a poor sort of fellow."

"No," she said, "or I should not have thought it worth while to bring it back."

He glanced down at her dress and then up at her face.

"You had better go upstairs to bed," he said. "The dew has made your dress and cloak damp. Thank you for what you have done."

She got up and turned away.

"Good-night," she said.

"Good-night," he answered, and watched her out of the room.

Then he found what he required and went back to his work; only, more than once as he bent over it, he thought again of the innocent look of her face as it had rested upon her arm while she slept.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A FOOTSTEP.

HE went out no more at night. From the moment he laid his hand upon the model again he was safer than he knew. Gradually the old fascination re-asserted itself. There were hours of lassitude and weariness to be borne, and moments of unutterable bitterness and disgust for life, in which he had to fight sharp battles against the poorer side of his nature; but always at the worst there was something which made itself a point to fix thought upon. He could force himself to think of this when, if he had had no purpose in view, he would have been a lost man. The keen sense of treachery to his own resolve stung him, but it was a spur after all. The strength of the reaction had its physical effect upon him, and sometimes he suddenly found himself weak to exhaustion,—so weak that any exertion was impossible, and he was obliged to leave his post at the Works and return home for rest. At such times he lay for hours upon the narrow sofa in the dull little room, as his father had done long before, and wore a look so like him that, one day, his mother coming into the room not knowing he was there, cried out aloud and staggered backward, clutching at her breast.

Her manner toward him softened greatly in these days. It was more what it had been in his boyhood, when she had

watched over him with patient and unfailing fondness. Once he awakened to see her standing a few paces from his side, seeming to have been there some moments.

"If—I have seemed hard to you in your trouble," she said, "forgive me."

She spoke without any prelude, and did not seem to expect any answer, turning away and going about her work at once, but he felt that he need feel restless and chilled in her presence no longer.

He did not pursue his task at home, but took the model down to the Works and found a place for it in his little work-cell.

The day he did so he was favored with a visit from Haworth. It was the first since the rupture between them. Since then they had worked day after day with only the door separating, they had known each other's incomings and outgoings, but had been so far apart as if a world had separated them. Haworth had known more of Murdoch than Murdoch had known of him. No change in him had escaped his eye. He had seen him struggle and reach his climax at last. He had jeered at him as a poor enough fellow with fine, white-livered fancies, and a woman's way of bearing himself. He had raged at and cursed him, and now and then had been lost in wonder at him, but he had never fathomed him from first to last.

But within the last few weeks his mood had changed,—slowly, it is true, but it had changed. His bearing had changed, too. Murdoch himself gradually awakened to a recognition of this fact, in no small wonder. He was less dogged and aggressive, and showed less ill-will.

That he should appear suddenly, almost in his old way, was a somewhat startling state of affairs, but he crossed the threshold coolly.

He sat down and folded his arms on the table.

"You brought summat down with you this morning," he said. "What was it?"

Murdoch pointed to the wooden case, which stood on a shelf a few feet from him.

"It was that," he answered.

"That!" he repeated. "What! You're at work at it again, are you?"

"Yes."

"Well, look sharp after it, that's all. There's a grudge bore again it."

"I know that," Murdoch answered, "to my cost. I brought it here because I thought it would be safer."

"Aye, it'll be safer. Take my advice and keep it close, and work at it at nights, when th' place is quiet. There's a key as'll let you in." And he flung a key down upon the table.

Murdoch picked it up mechanically. He felt as if he could scarcely be awake. It seemed as if the man must have brought his purpose into the room with him, having thought it over beforehand. His manner by no means disarmed the suspicion.

"It is the favor I should have asked, if I had thought ——"

Haworth left his chair.

"There's th' key," he said, abruptly. "Use it. No other chap would get it."

He went back to his own room again, and Murdoch was left to his surprise, which was a strong emotion.

He finished his work for the day and went home, remaining there until night came on. Then he went back to the Works, having first told Christian of his purpose.

"I am going to the Works," he said. "I may be there all night. Don't wait for me, or feel anxious."

When the great building loomed up before him in the dark, his mind recalled instantly the night he had entered it before, attracted by the light in the window. There was no light about it now but that shut in the lantern he carried. The immensity and dead stillness would have been a trying thing for many a man to encounter, but as he relocked the door

and made his way to his den, he thought of them only from one point of view.

"It is the silence of the grave," he said. "A man can concentrate himself upon his work as if there was not a human breath stirring within a mile of him."

Somehow, even his room wore a look which seemed to belong to the silence of night—a look he felt he had not seen before. He marked it with a vague sense of mystery when he set his lantern down upon the table, turning the light only upon the spot on which his work would stand.

"Then he took down the case and opened it and removed the model.

"It will not be forgotten again," he thought aloud. "If it is to be finished, it will be finished here."

Half the night passed before he returned home. When he did so he went to his room and slept heavily until daylight. He had never slept as he slept in these nights,—heavy dreamless sleep, from which, at first, he used to awaken with a start and a perfectly blank sense of loss and dread, but which became, at last, unbroken.

Night after night found him at his labor. It grew upon him; he longed for it through the day; he could not have broken from it if he would.

Once, as he sat at his table, he fancied that he heard a lock click and afterward a stealthy footstep. It was a sound so faint and indistinct that his disbelief in its reality was immediate; but he got up taking his lantern with him, and went out to look at the entrance passage. It was empty and dark, and the door was shut and locked as he had left it. He went back to his work little disturbed. He had not really expected to find the traces of any presence in the place, but he had felt it best to make the matter safe.

Perhaps the fact that once or twice on other nights the same light, indefinite sound fell upon his ear again, made him feel

rather more secure than otherwise. Having examined the place before and with the same result, it troubled him no more. He set it down to some ordinary material cause.

After his first visit Haworth came into his room often. Why he came Murdoch did not understand very clearly. He did not come to talk; sometimes he scarcely spoke at all. He was moody and abstracted. He went about the place wearing a hard and reckless look, utterly unlike any roughness and hardness he had shown before. The hands who had cared the least for his not altogether ill-natured tempests in days gone by shrank or were restive before him now. He drove all before him or passed through the rooms sullenly. It was plain to see that he was not the man he had been—that he had even lost strength, and was suddenly worn and broken, though neither flesh nor color had failed him.

Among those who had made a lion of him he was more popular than ever. The fact that he had held out against ill luck when so many had gone down, was constantly quoted. The strikes which had kept up an uneven but prolonged struggle had been the ruin of many a manufacturer who had thought he could battle any storm. "Haworth's" had held its own and weathered the worst.

This was what the county potentates were fond of saying upon all occasions,—particularly when they wanted Haworth to dine with them at their houses. He used to accept their invitations and then go and sit at their dinner tables with a sardonic face. His humor, it was remarked with some regret, was often of a sardonic kind. Occasionally he laughed at the wrong time, and his jokes were not always easy to smile under. It was also remarked that Mr. Ffrench scarcely seemed comfortable upon these festive occasions. Of late he had not been in the enjoyment of good health. He explained that he suffered from nervous headaches and depression. His refined, well-molded face had become rather thin and fatigued-looking. He had lost his effusive eloquence. He often sat silent and started

nervously when spoken to, but he did not eschew society at all, always going out upon any state occasion when his partner was to be a feature of the feast. The fact was that once upon such an occasion he had said privately and with some plain-tiveness to Haworth :

"I don't think I can go to-night, my dear fellow. I really don't feel quite equal to it."

"Blast you !" said Haworth, dispensing with social codes. "You'll go whether you're up to it or not. We'll keep it up to the end. It'll be over soon enough."

He evinced interest in the model, in his visits to the work-room, which seemed a little singular to Murdoch. He asked questions about it, and more than once repeated his caution concerning its being "kept close."

"I've got it into my head that you'll finish it some of these days," he said once, "if naught happens to it or you."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FINISHED.

ONE night, Murdoch, on leaving the house, said to Christian :

"Don't expect me until morning. I may not be back until then. I think I shall work all night."

She did not ask him why. For several days she had seen that a singular mood was upon him, that he was restless. Sometimes, when he met her eye unexpectedly, he started and colored and turned away, as if he was a little afraid. She stood upon the step and watched him until he disappeared in the darkness, and then shut the door and went in to his mother.

A quarter of an hour afterward he entered his work-room, and shut himself in and brought out the model.

He sat looking at it a moment, and then stretched forth his

hand to touch it. Suddenly he drew it back and let it fall heavily upon the table. "Good Heavens!" he cried. "Did *he* ever feel so near as *this*, and then fall?" The shock was almost unbearable. "Are there to be two of us?" he said. "Was not one enough?" But he put forth his hand again a minute later, though his heart beat like a trip-hammer. "It rests with me to prove it," he said—"with *me*!"

As he worked, the dead silence about him seemed to become more intense. His own breathing was a distinct sound, light as it was; the accidental dropping of a tool upon the table was a jar upon him; the tolling of the church bell at midnight was unbearable. He even took out his watch and stopped it. But at length he knew neither sound nor stillness; he forgot both.

It had been a dark night, but the morning rose bright and clear. The sun, streaming in at the window, fell upon the model, pushed far back upon the table, and on Murdoch himself, sitting with his forehead resting upon his hands. He had been sitting thus some time—he did not know how long. He had laid his last tool down before the first streak of pink had struck across the gray sky. He was tired and chill with the morning air, but he had not thought of going home yet, or even quite recognized that the night was past. His lantern still burned beside him. He was roused at last by a sound in the outer room. The gates had not been unlocked nor the bell rung, but some one had come in. The next moment Haworth opened the door and stood in the threshold, looking in on him.

"You've been here all night," he said.

"Yes," answered Murdoch. He turned a little and pointed to the model, speaking slowly, as if he were but half awake.

"I think," he said, "that it is complete."

He said it with so little appearance of emotion or exultation that Haworth was dumfounded. He laid a hand on his shoulder and shook him a little.

"Wake up, man!" he said. "You're dazed."

"No," he answered, "not dazed. I've had time to think it over. It has been finished two or three hours." All at once he burst into a laugh. "I did not think," he said "that it would be you who would tell the news to first."

Haworth sat down near him with a dogged face.

"Nay," he replied, "nor me either."

They sat and stared at each other for a moment in silence. Then Murdoch drew a long, wearied breath.

"But it is done," he said, "nevertheless."

After that he got up and began to make his preparations to go home while Haworth sat and watched him.

"I shall want to go away," he said. "When I come back I shall know what the result is to be."

"Start tomorrow morning," said Haworth. "And keep close. By the time you come back——"

He stopped and left his chair, and the bell which called the hands to work began its hurried clanging. At the door he paused.

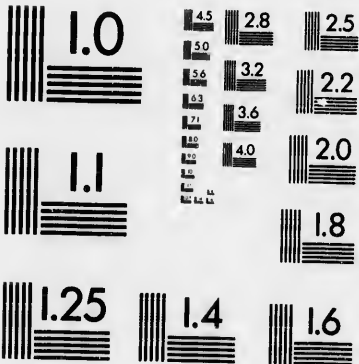
"When shall you take it away?" he asked.

"To-night," Murdoch answered. "After dark."

At home he only told them one thing—that in the morning he was going to London and did not know when he should return. He did not return to the Works during the day, but remained at home trying to rest. But he could not sleep and the day seemed to lag heavily. In the afternoon he left the sofa on which he had lain through the morning and went out. He walked slowly through the town and at last turned down the lane which led to the Briarleys' cottage. He felt as if there would be a sort of relief to the tenseness of his mood in a brief interview with Janey. When he went into the house, Mr. Briarley was seated in Mrs. Dixon's chair unscientifically balancing his latest-born upon his knee. His aspect was grave and absorbed; he was heated and dishevelled with violent exertion; the knot of his blue cotton neckerchief had twisted



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itself under his right ear in a painfully suggestive manner. Under some stress of circumstances he had been suddenly pressed into service, and his mode of placating his off-spring was at once unprofessional and productive of frantic excitement.

But the moment he caught sight of Murdoch an alarming change came upon him. His eyes opened to their fullest extent, his jaw fell and the color died out of his face. He rose hurriedly, dropped the youngest Briarley into his chair and darted out of the house, in such trepidation that his feet slipped from under him when he reached the lower step, where he fell with a loud clatter of wooden clogs, scrambling up again with haste and difficulty and disappearing at once.

Attracted by the disturbance, Janey darted in from the inner room barely in time to rescue the deserted young Briarley.

"Wheer's he gone?" she demanded, signifying her father. "I tow'd her he wur na fit to be trusted! Wheer's he gone?"

"I don't know," Murdoch answered. "I think he ran away because he saw me. What is the trouble?"

"Nay, dunnot ax me! We cannæ mak' him out, neyther mother nor me. He's been settin' i' th' house fur three days, as if he wur feart to stir out—settin' by th' fire an' shakin' his yed, an' cryin' ivvery now and then. An' here's her i' th' back room to wait on. A noice toime this is fur him to pick to go off in. He mowt ha' waited till she wur done wi'."

As conversation naturally could not flourish under these circumstances, after a few minutes Murdoch took his leave.

It seemed that he had not yet done with Mr. Briarley. Passing through the gate, he caught sight of a forlorn figure seated upon the road-side about twenty yards before him, wearing a fustian jacket and a blue neck-cloth knotted under the ear. As he approached, Mr. Briarley looked up, keeping his eyes fixed upon him in a despairing gaze. He did not remove his glance at all, in fact, until Murdoch was within ten feet of him, when, for some entirely inexplicable reason, he rose hurriedly and passed to the other side of the road, and at a

distance of some yards ahead sat down, and stared wildly at him again. This singular course he pursued until they had reached the end of the lane, where he sat and watched Murdoch out of sight.

"I thowt," he said, breathing with extreme shortness, "as he ha' done fur me. It wur a wonder as he did na. If I'd coom nigh him or he'd coom nigh me, they'd ha' swore it wur me as did it an's gone accordin', if luck went ag'in 'em."

Then a sudden panic seemed to seize him. He pulled off his cap, and, holding it in both hands, stared into it as if in desperate protest against fate. A large tear fell into the crown, and then another and another. "I canna help it," he said, in a loud and sepulchral whisper. "Look out! Look out!"

And then, probably feeling that even in this he might be committing himself fatally, he got up, glanced fearfully about him, and scuttled away.

CHAPTER XLIX.

"IF AUGHT'S FOR ME, REMEMBER IT."

BEFORE he left the house at night, Murdoch had a brief interview with his mother.

"I am going to London as *he* went," he said,—"*on the same errand.* The end may be what it was before. I have felt very sure—but he was sure too."

"Yes," the woman answered, "he was very sure."

"I don't ask you to trust it—or me," he said. "He gave a life to it. I have not given a year, and he was the better man, a thousand-fold. I," he said, with a shadow falling on his face, "have not proved myself as he did. He never faltered from the first."

"No," she said. "Would to God he had!"

But when he went, she followed him to the door and said

the words she had refused him when he had first told her he had taken the burden upon his shoulders.

"God speed you!" she said. "I will try to believe."

His plan was to go to his room, pack his case securely, and then carry it with him to the station in time to meet the late train he had decided on taking.

He let himself into the works as usual, and found his way along the passage in the darkness, though he carried his lantern. He knew his way so well that he did not need it there. But when he reached Haworth's room and put out his hand to open the door, he stopped. His touch met no resistance, for the door was wide open. The discovery was so sharp a shock to him that for a few seconds he remained motionless. But he recovered himself in a second or so more. It might have been the result of carelessness, after all; so he turned on his light and went into his cell and began his task. It did not take him long. When he had finished, the wooden case was simply a solid square brown parcel which might have contained anything. He glanced at his watch and sat down a minute or so.

"There is no use in going too early," he said. And so he waited a little, thinking mechanically of the silence inside and the darkness out, and of the journey which lay before him. But at last he got up again and took his burden by the cord he had fastened about it.

"Now," he said, "it is time."

At the very moment the words left his lips there was a sound outside the door, and a rush upon him; he was seized by the throat, flung backward into the chair he had left, and held there. He made no outcry. His first thought when he found himself clutched and overpowered was an incongruous one of Briarley sitting on the road-side and looking up at him in panic-stricken appeal. He understood in a flash what his terror had meant.

The fellow who held him by the collar—there were three of them, and one was Reddy—shook him roughly.

"Wheer is it?" he said. "You know whatten we've coom for, my lad."

Murdoch was conscious of a little chill which passed over him, but otherwise he could only wonder at his own lack of excitement. No better place to finish a man than such a one as this at dead of night, and there was not one of the three who had not evil in his eye; but he spoke without a tremor in his voice,—with the calmness of being utterly without stay or help.

"Yes, I suppose I know," he said. "You came to me for it before. What are you going to do with it?"

"Smash it to h——," said one, concisely, "an' thee too."

It was not a pleasant thing to hear by the half light of a lantern in a place so deadly still. Murdoch felt the little chill again, but he remembered that after all he had one slender chance if he could make them listen.

"You are making a blunder," he began.

Reddy stopped him by addressing his comrades.

"What art tha standin' hearkenin' to him fur? he'demanded.

"Smack him i' th' mouth an' stop him."

Murdoch gave a lurch forward which it gave his captor some trouble to restrain. He turned dangerously white and his eye blazed.

"If you do, you devil," he panted, "I'll murder you."

"Wheer is th' thing we coom fur?" said the first man. And then he caught sight of the package, which had fallen upon the floor.

"Happen it's i' theer," he suggested. "Oppen it, chaps."

Then all at once Murdoch's calmness was gone. He shook in their grasp.

"For God's sake!" he cried, "Don't touch it! Don't do it a harm! It's a mistake. It has nothing to do with your trade. It would be no hurt to you if it were known to the whole world. For God's sake, believe me!"

"We've heerd a different mak' o' tale fro' that," said Reddy, laughing.

"It's a lie—a lie! Who told it?"

"Jem Haworth," he was answered. "Jem Haworth, as it wur made fur."

He began to struggle with all his strength. He cried out aloud and sprang up and broke loose and fought with the force of madness.

"You shall pay for it," he shrieked, and three to one as they were, he held them for a moment at bay.

"Gi' him th' knob-stick!" cried one "At him wi' it!"

It was Reddy who aimed the blow at him,—a blow that would have laid him a dead man among them,—but it never fell, for he sprang forward with a mighty effort and struck the bludgeon upward, and as it fell with a crash at the opposite side of the room, they heard, even above the tumult of their struggle, a rush of heavy feet, a voice every man among them knew, and the sound they most dreaded—the sharp report of a pistol.

"It's Haworth!" they shouted. "Haworth!" And they made a dash at the door in a body, stumbling over one another, striking and cursing, and the scoundrel who first got through and away was counted a lucky man.

Murdoch took a step forward and fell—so close to the model that his helpless hand touched it as it lay.

It was not long before he returned to consciousness. His sudden loss of strength had only been a sort of climax body and mind had reached together. When he opened his eyes again, his first thought was a wonder at himself and a vague effort to comprehend his weakness. He looked up at Haworth, who bent over him.

"Lie still a bit, lad," he heard him say. "Lie and rest thee."

He no sooner heard his voice than he forgot his weak wonder

at himself in a stronger wonder at him. He was ashen pale and a tremor shook him as he spoke.

"Lie still and rest thee," he repeated, and he touched his head with an approach to gentleness.

"They thought there was more than me," he said. "And they're not fond of powder and lead. They're better used to knobsticks and vitrol in the dark."

"They meant to murder me," said Murdoch.

"Aye, make sure o' that. They weren't for play. They've had their mind on this for a month or two. If I'd been a minute later ——"

He did not finish. A queer spasm of the throat stopped him.

He rose the next instant and struck a match and turned the gas on to full blaze.

"Let's have light," he said. "Theer's a look about th' place I can't stand."

His eyes were blood-shot, his face looked gray and deeply lined and his lips were parched. There was a new haggardness upon him and he was conscious of it and tried to bear it down with his old bravado.

"They'll not come back," he said. "They've had enough for to-night. If they'd known I was alone they'd have made a stand for it. They think they were in luck to get off."

He came back and sat down.

"They laid their plans better than I thought," he added. "They got over me for once, devil take 'em. How art thou now, lad?"

Murdoch made the effort to rise and succeeded, though he was not very strong upon his feet, and sank into a chair feeling a little irritated at his own weakness.

"Giddy," he answered, "and a trifle faint. It's a queer business. I went down as if I'd been shot. I have an hour and a half to steady myself before the next train comes in. Let me make the best of it."

"You'll go to-night?" said Haworth.

"There's a stronger reason than ever that I should go," he answered. "Let me get it out of the way and safe, for heaven's sake!"

Haworth squared his arms upon the table and leaned on them.

"Then," he said, "I've got an hour and a half to make a clean breast of it."

He said it almost with a swagger, and yet his voice was hoarse, and his coolness a miserable pretense.

"Ask me," he said, "how I came here!"

And not waiting for a reply even while Murdoch gazed at him bewildered, he answered the question himself.

"I come," he said, "for a good reason,—for the same reason that's brought me here every night you've been at work."

Murdoch repeated his last words mechanically. He was not quite sure the man was himself.

"Every night I've been at work?"

"Aye, every one on 'em! There's not been a night I've not been night you and ready."

A memory flashed across Murdoch's mind with startling force.

"It was you I heard come in?" he cried. "It was not fancy?"

"Aye, it was me."

There was a moment's silence between them in which Murdoch thought with feverish rapidity.

"It was you," he said with some bitterness at last,—"*you* who set the plot on foot?"

"Aye, it was me."

"I could have done the job I wanted to do in a quicker way," he went on, after a second's pause, "but that wasn't my humor. I'd a mind to keep out of it myself, and I knew how to set the chaps on as would do it in their own way."

"What do you mean by 'it'?" cried Murdoch. "Were you devil enough to mean to have my blood?"

"Aye,—while I was in the humor,—that and worse."

Murdoch sprang up and began to pace the room. His strength had come back to him with the fierce sense of repulsion which seized him.

"It's a blacker world than I thought," he said. "We were friends once—friends!"

"So we were," he said, hoarsely. "You were the first chap I ever made friends with, and you'll be the last. It's brought no good to either of us."

"It might," returned Murdoch, "it ——"

"Let me finish my tale," he said, even doggedly. "I said to myself before I came you should hear it. I swore I'd stop at naught, and I kept my word. I sowed a seed here and there, and th' soil was just right for it. They were in the mood to hearken to aught, and they hearkened. But there came a time when I found out that things were worse with you than with me, and had gone harder with you. If you'd won where I lost it would have been different, but you lost most of the two—you'd the most to lose—and I changed my mind."

He stopped a second and looked at Murdoch, who had come back and thrown himself into his chair again.

"I've said many a time that you were a queer chap," he went on, as if half dubious of himself. "You *are* a queer chap. At th' start you got a hold on me, and when I changed my mind you got a hold on me again. I swore I'd undo what I'd done, if I could. I knew if the thing was finished and you got away with it they'd soon find out it was naught they need fret about, so I swore to see you safe through. I gave you the keys to come here to work, and every night I came and waited until you'd done and gone away. I brought my pistols with me and kept a sharp lookout. To-night I was late and they'd laid their plans and got here before me. There's th' beginning and there's th' end."

"You saved my life," said Murdoch. "Let me remember that."

"I changed my mind and swore to undo what I'd done. There's naught for me in that, my lad, and plenty to go agen me."

After a little he pushed his chair back.

"The time's not up," he said. "I've made short work of it. Pick up thy traps and we'll go over th' place together and see that it's safe."

He led the way, carrying the lantern, and Murdoch followed him. They went from one end of the place to the other and found all quiet; the bars of a small lower window had been filed and wrenched out of place, Mr. Reddy and his friends having made their entrance through it.

"They've been on the lookout many a night before they made up their minds," said Haworth. "And they chose the right place to try."

Afterward they went out together, locking the door and the iron gates behind them, and went down in company to the dark little station with its dim, twinkling lights.

Naturally they did not talk very freely. Now and then there was a blank silence of many minutes between them.

But at last the train thundered its way in and stopped, and there was a feeble bustle to and fro among the sleepy officials and an opening and shutting and locking of doors.

When Murdoch got into his empty compartment, Haworth stood at its step. At the very last he spoke in a strange hurry:

"When you come back," he said, "when you come back—perhaps ——"

There was a porter passing with a lantern, which struck upon his face and showed it plainly. He shrank back a moment as if he feared the light; but when it was gone he drew near again and spoke through the window.

"If there's aught in what's gone by that's for me," he said, "remember it."

And with a gesture of farewell, he turned away and was gone.

CHAPTER L.

AN AFTER-DINNER SPEECH.

AT dinner the next evening Mr. Ffrench had a story to tell. It was the rather exciting story of the completion of Murdoch's labor, the night attack and his sudden departure. Exciting as it was, however, Mr. Ffrench did not relate it in his most vivid manner. His nervous ailments had increased of late, and he was not in a condition to be vivacious and dramatic. The incident came from him rather tamely, upon the whole.

"If it is the success he thinks it is," he terminated, "he is a made man—and he is not the fellow to deceive himself. Well," he said, rather drearily, "I have said it would be so."

As Haworth had foreseen, Saint Méran appeared upon the scene again. He was present when the story was told, and was much interested in it as a dramatic incident bringing the peculiarities of the manufacturing class of Broxton into strong play.

"If they had murdered him," he remarked with critical niceness, "it would have been the most tragic of tragedies. On the very eve of his life's success. A tragedy indeed! And it is not bad either that it should have been his master who saved him."

"Why do you say master?" said Miss Ffrench, coldly.

"Pardon me. I thought ——"

Mr. Ffrench interposed in some hurry.

"Oh, he has always been such an uncommon young fellow that we have scarcely thought of him as a servant. He has not been exactly a servant in fact."

"Ah!" replied Saint Méran. "I ask pardon again."

He had been not a little bewildered at the change he found in the household. Mr. Ffrench no longer expounded his views at length with refined vigor. He frequently excused himself from the family circle on the plea of severe indisposition, and

at other times he sat in singular and depressive silence. He was evidently ill; there were lines upon his forehead and circles about his eyes; he held a perturbed air and started without any apparent cause. A change showed itself in Miss Ffrench also,—so subtle as not to be easily described. It was a change which was not pallor nor fragility. It was an alteration which baffled him and yet forced him to recognize its presence constantly, and to endeavor to comprehend it. Ffrench himself had seen it and pondered over it in secret. When he sat in his private room at the Bank, bewildered and terrified even by the mere effort to think and face the future, his burden was not a little increased by his remembrance of his hours at home. More than all the rest he shrank from the day of reckoning with his daughter. He had confronted Haworth and borne the worst of his wrath. The account of himself which he must render to her would be the most scathing ordeal of his life.

"Some women would pity me," he said to himself, "but she will not."

Truth to tell, he looked forward pathetically to the possibility that hereafter their paths might lie apart. Fate had saved him one fearful responsibility, at least. Her private fortune had been beyond his reach and she would still be a rich woman even when the worst came. He could live on very little, he told himself, and there was always some hope for a man of resources. He still believed somewhat, though rather vaguely, in his resources.

A few days after Murdoch's departure there came to Brompton, on a visit of inspection, a dignitary of great magnitude—a political economist, a Member of Parliament. Above all other things he was absorbed in the fortunes of the manufacturing districts. He had done the trades-unions the honor of weighing their cause and reasoning with them; he had parleyed with the strikers and held meetings with the masters. He had

heard of Haworth and his extraordinary stand against the outbreak, and was curious to see him.

He came as the guest of one of the county families, who regarded Haworth and his success a subject worth enlarging upon. He was taken to the works and presented to their master. Haworth met him with little enthusiasm. He showed him over the place, but maintained his taciturnity. He was not even moved to any exhibition of gratitude on being told that he had done wonders.

The *finale* of the visit was a stately dinner given by the county family. Haworth and the member were the features of the festivity, and speeches were made which took a congratulatory and even a laudatory turn.

"I can't go," Ffrench cried, piteously, when Haworth came to his room at the Bank with the news. He turned quite white and sank back into his chair. "It is too much to ask. I—no. I am not strong enough."

He felt himself as good as a dead man when Haworth turned about and strode up to him, livid, and opening and shutting his hands.

"Blast you!" he hissed through his teeth. "You did it! You? And you shall pay for it as long as I'm nigh to make you!"

Saint Méran was among the guests, and Miss Ffrench, whose wonderful beauty attracted the dignitary's eye at once. Years after he remembered and spoke of her. He glanced toward her when he rose to make his after-dinner speech, and caught her eye, and was somewhat confused by it. But he was very eloquent. The master of "Haworth's" was his inspiration and text. His resources, his strength of will, his giant enterprises, his readiness and daring at the moment when all was at hazard—these were matters, indeed, for eloquence.

Haworth sat leaning forward upon the table. He played with his wine glass, turning it round and round and not spilling a drop of the ruby liquid. Sometimes he glanced at the orator

with a smile which no one exactly understood, oftener he kept his eyes fixed upon the full wine-glass.

When at length the speaker sat down with a swift final glance at Rachel Ffrench, there was a silence of several seconds. Everybody felt that a reply was needed. Haworth turned his wine-glass two or three times without raising his eyes, but at last, just as the pause was becoming embarrassing, he looked across the table at Ffrench, who sat opposite.

"I'm not a speech-making chap myself," he said. "My partner is. He'll say my say for me."

He gave Ffrench a nod. That gentleman had been pale and distracted through all the courses; now he became paler than ever. He hesitated, glanced around him, at the waiting guests and at Haworth (who nodded again), and then rose.

It was something unusual that Mr. Ffrench should hang back and show himself unready. He began his speech of thanks in his partner's name falteringly and as if at a loss for the commonest forms of expression; he replied to the member's compliments with hesitation; he spoke of the difficulties they had encountered with a visible strong effort, he touched upon their success and triumph with such singular lack of exultation that those who listened began to exchange looks of questioning; and suddenly, in the midst of his wanderings and struggles at recovering himself, he broke off and begged leave to sit down.

"I am ill," he said. "I have—been—indisposed for some time. I must crave your pardon, and—and my partner's for my inability to say what—what I would wish."

He sat down amid many expressions of sympathy. The plea accounted for his unusual demeanor, it was thought. The member himself sought an interview with him, in which he expressed his regret and his sense of the fact that nothing was more natural than that the result of so long bearing a weight of responsibility should be a strain upon the nervous system and a consequent loss of physical strength.

"You must care for yourself, my dear sir," he added. "Your firm—nay, the country—cannot afford to lose an element like yourself at such a crisis."

On the morning following, the member left Broxton. On his way to the station he was moved to pay a final visit to Haworth at the Works.

"I congratulate you," he said, with much warmth on shaking hands with him. "I congratulate England upon your determination and indomitable courage, and upon your wonderful success."

There was a good deal of talk about Murdoch during his absence. The story of the attack and of Haworth's repulse of the attacking party became a popular incident. Mr. Reddy and his companions disappeared from the scene with promptness. Much interest was manifested in the ultimate success of the model, which had previously been regarded with a mingling of indifference and disfavor as not "loike to coom to owt." The results of its agreeably disappointing people by "coming to owt" were estimated at nothing short of a million per annum.

"Th' chap'll roll i' brass," it was said. Haworth'll be nowhere. Happen th' lad'll coom back and set up a Works agen him. An' he coom here nowt but a workin' chap a few year sin'!"

The two women in the little house in the narrow street heard the story of the attack only through report. They had no letters.

"I won't write," Murdoch had said. "You shall not be troubled by prospects that might end in nothing. You will hear nothing from me till I come and tell you with my own lips that I have won or failed."

In the days of waiting Christian proved her strength. She would not let her belief be beaten or weighed down. She clung to it in spite of what she saw hour by hour in the face of the woman who was her companion.

"I have lived through it before."

It was not put into words, but she read it in her eyes and believed in spite of it.

He had been away two weeks, and he returned as his father had done, at night.

The women were sitting together in the little inner room. They were not talking or working, though each had work in her hands. It was Christian who heard him first. She threw down her work and stood up.

"He is here," she cried. "He is coming up the step."

She was out in the narrow entry and had thrown the door open before he had time to open it with his key.

The light fell upon his dark pale face and showed a strange excitement in it. He was disheveled and travel-worn, but his eyes were bright. His first words were enough.

"It is all right," he said, in an exultant voice. "It is a success. Where is my mother?"

He had taken her hand as if without knowing what he did and fairly dragged her into the room. His mother had risen and stood waiting.

"It is a success," he cried out to her. "It is what he meant it to be—I have finished his work!"

She turned from him to the girl, uttering a low cry of appeal.

"Christian!" she said. "Christian!"

The girl went to her and made her sit down, and knelt before her, clasping her arms about her waist, and uplifting her glowing young face. At the moment her beauty became such a splendor that Murdoch himself saw it with wonder.

"It is finished," she said. "And it is he who has finished it! Is not that enough?"

"Yes," she answered, "but—but ——"

And the words died upon her lips, and she sat looking before her into vacancy, and trembling.

Murdoch threw himself on the sofa and lay there, his hands clasped above his head.

"I shall be a rich man," he said, as if to himself, "a rich man—and it is nothing—but it is done."

CHAPTER LI.

"TH' ON'Y ONE AS IS NA A FOO'!"

THE next day all Broxton knew the story.

"Well, he wur na so soft after aw," more than one excellent matron remarked.

Mr. Ffrench heard the news from his valet in the morning. He had been very unwell for several days. He had eaten nothing and slept very little and had been obliged to call in his physician, who pronounced his case the result of too great mental strain, and prescribed rest. He came down to breakfast with an unwholesome face and trifled with his food without eating it. He glanced furtively at Rachel again and again.

"I shall not go to the Bank to-day," he said timorously at last. "I am worse than ever. I shall remain at home and try to write letters and rest. Are—are you going out?"

"Yes," she answered.

"Oh." Then, after a pause, he said, "I saw Briarley yesterday, and he said Mrs. Dixon was very ill. You sometimes go there, I believe?"

"Yes."

"Suppose—suppose you call this morning to inquire. It looks well to show a—a sort of interest in them. You might take something nourishing with you."

He flinched when she raised her eyes and let them rest a moment upon him. Her look was strongly suggestive of the fact that she could better rely upon the result of her own cal-

culations concerning him than upon the truth of his replies, if she deigned to ask him questions.

"I thought," he faltered, "that it would look well to evince some interest, as the man has been in our employ, and you have had the woman about the house."

"Certainly," she replied, "it would be well enough. I will go."

After breakfast she ordered the carriage and went to her room and made her toilette with some care. Why she did so was best known to herself. Nothing is more certain than that she scarcely expected to produce a great effect upon Granny Dixon. The truth was, she would have made her visit to the Briarley's in any case, and was not in the least moved thereto by her father's unexpected anxiety.

But when she reached the cottage and entered it, she began immediately to repent having come. A neighbor woman sat nursing the youngest Briarley; there was a peculiar hush upon the house and the windows were darkened. She drew back with a feeling of alarm and annoyance.

"What is the matter?" she demanded impatiently of the woman. "Why have you darkened the room?"

"Th' owd lass is deein," was the business-like answer, "an they're ha'in' some trouble wi' her. She conna even dee loike other foak."

She drew back, her annoyance becoming violent repulsion. She turned pale, and her heart began to beat violently. She knew nothing of death, and was not fearless of it. Her inveterate calm failed her in thus being brought near it.

"I will go away," she said.

And she would have gone, but at that moment there arose a sound of voices in the inner room—Mrs. Briarley's and Janey's and above theirs Granny Dixon's, brokenly, and yet with what seemed terrible loudness in the hush of the house.

"Bring her i' here!" she was saying. "Bring her i' here an' mak' her—do it!"

And then out came Mrs. Briarley, looking fagged and harrassed.

"I ax thy pardon, Miss," she said, "but she says she wants thee. She says she wants thee to be a witness to summat."

"I will not go," she replied. "I—I am going away. I—never saw any one before—in that condition."

But the terrible voiced raised itself again, and, despite her terror and anger, held and controlled her.

"I see her!" it cried. "Mak' her coom in. I knowed her gran'feyther—when I wur a lass—seventy year ago!"

"She will na harm thee," said Mrs. Briarley. And partly because of a dread fascination, and partly because the two woman regarded her with such amazement, she found herself forced to give way and enter.

It was a small room, and dark and low. The bed was a huge four-poster which had belonged to Granny Dixon herself in her young days. The large-flowered patterns of its chintz hangings were faded with many washings.

Of the woman lying upon it there was little left but skin and bone. She seemed all eyes and voice—eyes which stared and shone in the gloom, and voice which broke upon the silence with an awesome power.

"She's been speaking almost i' a whisper till to-day," explained Mrs. Briarley, under her breath, "an' aw at onct th' change set in, an' it coom back as loud as ivver."

She lifted her hands, beckoning with crooked fingers.

"Coom tha here," she commanded.

Rachel Ffrench went to her slowly. She had no color left, and all her *hauteur* could not steady her voice.

"What do you want!" she asked, standing close beside the bed.

For a few seconds there was silence, in which the large eyes wandered from the boarder of her rich dress to the crown of her hair. Then Granny Dixon spoke out:

"Wheer'st flower?" she cried. 'Tha'st gotten it on thee again. I con smell it."

It was true that she wore it at her throat as she had done before. A panic of disgust took possession of her as she recollected it. It was as if the two were somehow bound together by it. She caught at it with tremulous fingers, and would have flung it away, but it fell from her uncertain clasp upon the bed, and she would not have touched it for worlds.

"Gi' it to me!" commanded Granny Dixon.

"Pick it up for her," she said turning to Mrs. Briarley, and it was done, and the shrivelled fingers held it and the old eye devoured it.

"He used to wear 'em i' his button-hole," proclaimed the Voice, "an' he wur a han'some chap—seventy year ago."

"Did you send for me to tell me that?" demanded Rachel Ffrench.

Granny Dixon turned on her pile of pillows.

"Nay," she said, "an' I'm forgettin'."

There was a gasp between the two last words, as if suddenly her strength was failing her.

"Get thee a pen—an'—an' write summat," she ordered.

"Get it quickly," said Rachel Ffrench, "and let me humor her and go."

She noticed the little gap between the words herself, and the next instant saw a faint gray pallor spread itself over the old woman's face.

"Get the pen and paper," she repeated, "and call in the woman."

They brought her the pen and paper and called the woman, who came in stolidly, ready for any emergency. Then they waited for commands, but for several seconds there was a dead pause, and Granny Dixon lay back, staring straight before her.

"Quick!" said Rachel Ffrench. "What do you want?"

Granny Dixon rose by a great effort upright from her

pillows. She pointed to Mrs. Briarley with the sharp, bony fore-finger.

"I—leave it—aw—to *her*," she proclaimed, "—ivvery penny! She's th' only one among 'em as is na a foo'!"

And then she fell back, and panted and stared again.

Mrs. Briarley lifted her apron and burst into tears.

"She means th' brass," she wailed. "Eh! Poor owd lass, who'd ha thowt it!"

"Do you mean," asked Rachel French, "that you wish her to have your money?"

A nod was the answer, and Mrs. Briarley shed sympathetic tears again. Here was a reward for her labors indeed.

What she wrote Miss Ffrench scarcely knew. In the end there was her own name signed below, and a black scrawling mark from Granny Dixon's hand. The woman who had come in made her mark also.

"Mak' a black un," said the testatrix. "Let's ha' it plain."

Then, turning to Rachel:

"Does ta want to know wheer th' money come fro'? Fro' Will Ffrench—fro' *him*. He wur one o' th' gentry when aw wur said an' done—an' I wur a han'some lass."

When it was done they all stood and looked at each other. Granny Dixon lay back upon her pillows, drawing sharp breaths. She was looking only at Rachel Ffrench. She seemed to have forgotten all the rest of them, and what she had been doing. All that was left of the Voice was a loud, halting whisper.

"Wheer's th' flower?" she said. "I canno smell it."

It was in her hand.

Rachel Ffrench drew back.

"Let me go," she said to Mrs. Briarley. "I cannot stay here."

"He used to wear 'em i' his button-hole," she heard, "—seventy year ago—an' she's th' very moral on him." And scarcely knowing how, she made her way past the woman, and out of the house and into the fresh air and sunshine.

"Drive home," she said to the coachman, "as quickly as possible."

She leaned back in a corner of the carriage shuddering. Suddenly she burst into wild tears.

But there were no traces of her excitement when she reached home. She descended from the carriage looking quite herself, and after dismissing it went up to her own room.

About half an hour later she came down and went into the library. Her father was not there, and on inquiring as to his whereabouts from a servant passing the open door, she was told that he had gone out.

He had been writing letters, it was evident. His chair stood before his desk, and there was an addressed envelope lying upon it.

She went to the desk and glanced at it without any special motive for doing so. It was addressed to herself. She opened and read it.

"My dear Rachel," it ran. "In all probability we shall not meet again for some time. I find myself utterly unable to remain to meet the blow which must inevitably fall before many days are over. The anxiety of the past year has made me a coward. I ask your forgiveness for what you may call my desertion of you. We have never relied upon each other much, and you at least are not included in my ruin. You will not be called upon to share my poverty. You had better return to Paris at once. With a faint hope that you will at least pity me,

"I remain,

"Your affectionate father,

"GERARD FRENCH."

CHAPTER LII.

"HAWORTH'S IS DONE WITH."

ALMOST at the same moment, Haworth was reading, in his room at the Works, the letter which had been left for himself.

"I have borne as much as I can bear," it ended. "My punishment for my folly is that I am a ruined man and a fugitive. My presence upon the scene, when the climax comes, would be of no benefit to either of us. Pardon me, if you can, for the wrong I have unintentionally done you. My ill-luck was sheerly the result of circumstances. Even yet, I cannot help thinking that there was great possibilities in my plans. But you will not believe this and I will say no more.

"In haste,

"FFRENCH."

When Rachel Ffrench finished reading her note she lighted a taper and held the paper to it until it was reduced to ashes, and afterward turned away merely a shade paler and colder than before. Haworth having finished the reading of Ffrench's letter, sat for a few seconds staring down at it as it lay before him on the table. Then he burst into a brutal laugh.

After that, he sat stupefied—his elbows on the table, his head on his hands. He did not move for half an hour.

The Works saw very little of him during the day. He remained alone in his room, not showing himself, and one of the head clerks, coming in from the Bank on business, went back mystified, and remarked in confidence to a companion that "things had a queer look."

He did not leave the Works until late, and then went home. All through the evening his mother watched him in her old tender way. She tried to interest him with her history of the Briarley's bereavement and unexpected good fortune. She shed tears over her recital.

"So old, my dear," she said. "Old enough to have out-

S.

lived her own,—an' her ways a little hard," wiping her eyes. "I'd like to be grieved for more, Jem—though perhaps it's only nat'ral as it should be so. She hadn't no son to miss her as you'll miss me. I shouldn't like to be the last, Jem."

He had been listening mechanically and he started and turned to her.

"The last?" he said. "Aye, it's a bit hard."

It was as if she had suggested a new thought to him of which he could not rid himself at once. He kept looking at her, his eyes wand'ring over her frail little figure and innocent old face, restlessly.

"But I haven't no fear," she went on, "though we never know what's to come. But you're a strong man, and there's not like to be many more years for me—though I'm so well an' happy."

"You might live a score," he answered in an abstracted way, his eyes still fixed on her.

"Not without you," she returned. "It's you that's life to me—an' strength—an' peace." The innocent tears were in her voice again, and her eyes were bright with them.

He lay down awhile but could not lie still. He got up and came and stood near her and talked and then moved here and there, picking up one thing and another, holding them idly for a few seconds and then setting them aside. At last she was going to bed and came to bid him good-night. He laid his hand on her shoulder caressingly.

"There's never been aught like trouble between us two," he said. "I've been a quiet enough chap, and different somehow—when I've been nigh you. What I've done, I've done for your sake and for the best."

In the morning the Works were closed, the doors of the Bank remained unopened, and the news spread like wild-fire from house to house and from street to street and beyond the limits of the town—until before noon it was known through the

"HAWORTH'S."

whole country side that Ffrench had fled and Jem Haworth was a ruined man.

It reached the public ear in the first instance in the ordinary commonplace manner through the individuals who had suddenly descended upon the place to take possession. A great crowd gathered about the closed gates and murmured and stared and anathematized.

"Theer's been summat up for mony a month," said one sage. "I've seed it. He wur na hissen, wur na Haworth."

"Nay," said another, "that he wur na. 'Th' chap has na been o' a decent spree sin' Ffrench coom."

"Happen," added a third, "*that* wur what started him on th' road downhill. A chap is na good for much as has na reg'lar habits."

"Aye, an' Haworth wur reg'lar enow when he set up. Good Lord! who'd a thowt o' that chap i' bankru'!"

At the outset the feeling manifested was not unamiable to Haworth, but it was not very long before the closing of the Bank dawned upon the public in a new light. It meant loss and ruin. The first man who roused the tumult was a burly farmer who dashed into the town on a sweating horse, spurring it as he rode and wearing a red and furious face. He left his horse at an inn and came down to the Bank, booted and spurred and whip in hand.

"Wheer's Ffrench?" he shouted to the smaller crowd attracted there, and whose views as to the ultimate settlement of things were extremely vague. "Wheer's Ffrench an' wheer's Haworth?"

Half a dozen voices volunteered information regarding Ffrench, but no one knew anything of Haworth. He might be in a dozen places, but no one had yet seen him or heard of his whereabouts. The man began to push his way toward the building, swearing hotly. He mounted the steps and struck violently on the door with his whip.

"I'll mak' him hear if he's shut hissen i' here," he cried.

"Th' shifty villain's got ivvery shillin' o' brass I've been savin' for my little wench for th' last ten year. I'll ha' it back, if it's to be gotten."

"Th' ne'er see it again," shouted a voice in the crowd.
"Tha'dst better ha' stuck to th' owd stockin' lad."

Then the uproar began. One luckless depositor after another was added to the crowd. They might easily be known among the rest by their pale faces. Some of them were stunned into silence, but the greater portion of them were loud and passionate in their outcry. A few women hung on the outskirts, wiping their eyes every now and then with their aprons, and sometimes bursting into audible fits of weeping.

"I've been goin' out charrin' for four year," said one, "to buy silks an' satins for th' gentry. Yo' nivver seed *her* i' owt else."

And all knew whom she meant, and joined in shouts of rage.

Sometimes it was Ffrench against whom their anger was most violent—Ffrench, who had been born among them a gentleman, and who should have been gentleman enough not to plunder and deceive them. And again it was Haworth—Haworth, who had lived as hard as any of them and knew what their poverty was, and should have done fairly by them, if ever man should.

In the course of the afternoon Murdoch, gathering no news of Haworth elsewhere, went to his house. A panic-stricken servant let him in and led him into the great room where he had spent his first evening, long ago. Despite its splendor, it looked empty and lifeless, but when he entered, there rose from a carved and satin upholstered chair in one corner a little old figure in a black dress—Jem Haworth's mother, who came to him with a white but calm face.

"Sir," were her greeting words, "where is he?"

"I came to see him," he answered, "I thought——"

"No," she interrupted, "he is not here. He has not been here since morning."

She began to tremble, but she shed no tears.

"There's been a good many to ask for him," she went on. "Gentlemen, an' them as was rough, an' didn't mind me bein' a woman an' old. They were harder than you'd think, an'—troubled as I've been, I was glad he was not here to see 'em. But I'd be more comfortable if I could rightly understand."

"I can only tell you what I know," he said. "It isn't much. I have only gathered it from people on the streets."

He led her back to her chair, and did not loosen his light grasp on her hand while he told her the story as he had heard it. His own mood was so subdued that it was easier than he had thought to use words which would lighten the first weight of the blow.

She asked no questions after his explanation was over.

"He's a poor man," she said at last,—“a poor man, but—we was poor before.”

Suddenly her tears burst forth.

"They've said hard things to me to-day," she cried. "I don't believe 'em, Jem, my dear—now less than ever."

He comforted her as best he could. He could easily understand what they had told her, how much of the truth and how much of angry falsehood.

"When he comes back," she said, "I shall be here to meet him. Wherever he is, an' however much he's broke down with trouble, he knows that. He'll come here to-night, an' I shall be here."

Before he went away he asked if he might send Christian or his mother to her. But though she thanked him, she refused.

"I know how good they'd be," she said, "an' what a comfort in the lonesomeness, but when he comes he'll want to be alone, an' a unfamiliar face might trouble him."

But he did not come back. The day went on, and the ex-

citement increased and waned by turns. The crowd grew and surged about the Bank and shouted itself hoarse, and would have broken a few windows if it had not been restrained by the police force, who appeared upon the field; and there were yells for Haworth and for Ffrench, but by this time Mr. Ffrench had reached Rotterdam and Haworth was—no one knew where, since he had not been seen at all. And when at length dusk fell upon the town, the crowd had dwindled away and gone home by ones and twos, and in Jem Haworth's house sat his mother, watching and waiting, and straining her ears to catch every passing sound.

She had kept up her courage bravely through the first part of the day, but the strangers who came one after the other, and sometimes even two or three together, to demand her son with loud words and denunciations and even threats, were a sore trial to her. Some of them flung their evil stories at her without remorse, taking it for granted that they were nothing new to her ears, and even those who had some compunction muttered among themselves and hinted angrily at what the others spoke outright. Her strength began to give way, and she quailed and trembled before them, but she never let their words pass without a desperate effort to defend her boy. Then they stared or laughed at her, or went away in sullen silence, and she was left to struggle with her grief and terror alone until some new call was made upon her, and she must bear all again. When the twilight came she was still alone, and sat in the darkened room battling against a dread which had crept slowly upon her. Of all those who had come none had known where he was. They did not know in the town, and he had not come back.

"He might go," she whispered, "but he'd not go without me. He's been true and fond of his mother, let them say what they will. He'd never leave me here alone."

Her thoughts went back over the long years from his birth to the day of his highest success. She remembered how he

had fought with fate, and made his way and refused to be conquered. She thought of the wealth he had won, the power, the popularity, and of his boast that he had never been beaten, and she began to sob in the shadow of her corner.

"He's lost it all," she cried. "An' he won it with his own hands an' worked for it an' bore up agen a world! An' it's gone!"

It was when she came to this point that her terror seized on her as it had never done before. She got up, shaking in every limb.

"I'll go to him myself," she said. "Who should go to him but his mother? Who should find him an' be a help to him if I can't. Jem—Jem, my dear, it's *me* that's comin' to you—*me*!"

He had been sitting in a small back office in the Bank all through the the day when they had been calling and searching for him. He had got in early and locked the door and waited, knowing well enough all that was to come. It was no feeling of fear that made him keep hidden; he had done with fear—if, indeed, he had ever felt it in his life. He knew what he was going to do and he laid his plans coolly. He was to stay here and do the work that lay before him and leave things as straight as he could, and then at night when all was quiet he would make his way out in the dark and go to the Works. It was only a fancy, this, of going to the Works, but he clung to it persistently.

He had never been clearer-headed in his life—only, sometimes as he was making a calculation or writing a letter he would dash down his work and fall to cursing.

"There's not another chap in England that had done it," he would say. "And it's gone!—it's gone!—it's gone!"

Then again he would break into a short laugh, remembering the M. P. and his speech and poor Ffrench's stumbling, overwhelmed reply to it. When he heard the crowd shouting

and hooting at the front, he went into a room facing the street and watched them through a chink in the shutter. He heard the red-faced farmer's anathemas, and swore a little himself, knowing his story was true.

"Tha shalt have all Haworth can give, chaps," he muttered, "an' welcome. He'll take nowt with him."

He laughed again but suddenly stopped, and walked back into the little office silently, and waited there.

At nightfall he went out of a back door and slipped through unfrequented by-ways, feeling his heart beat with heavy thuds as he went. Nothing stood in his way and he got in, as he believed he should. The instant his foot crossed the threshold a change came upon him. He forgot all else but what lay before him. He was less calm, and in some little hurry.

He reached his room and lighted the gas dimly—only so that he could see to move about. Then he went to his desk and opened it and took out one of a pair of pistols, speaking aloud as he did so.

"Here," he said, "is the end of Jem Haworth."

He knew where to aim, the heavy thuds marked the spot for him.

"I'll count three," he said, "and then——"

He began slowly, steadily, but in a voice that fell with a hollow sound upon the dead stillness.

"One," he said. "Two!" and his hand dropped at his side with his weapon in it, for at the door stood his mother. In an instant she had fallen upon her knees and dragged herself toward him and was clinging to his hand.

"No—Jem!" she panted. "No, not that, my dear—God forbid!"

He staggered back though she still clung to him.

"How," he faltered,—"how did you come here?"

"The Lord led me," she sobbed. "He put it into my heart and showed me the way, an' you had forgot the door, Jem—thank God!"

"You—saw—what I was going to do?"

"What you *was* going to do, but what you'll never do, Jem, an' me to live an' suffer when it's done—me as you've been so good an' such a comfort to."

In the dim light she knelt sobbing at his feet.

"Let me sit down," he said. "And sit down nigh me. I've summat to tell you."

But though he sank into the chair she would not get up, but kept her place in spite of him and went on.

"To-day there have been black tales told you?" he said.

"Yes," she cried, "but——"

"They're true," he said, "th' worst on 'em."

"No—no!"

He stopped her by going on monotonously as if she had not spoken.

"Think of the worst you've ever known—you've not known much—and then say to yourself, 'He's worse a hundred times;' think of the blackest you have ever known to be done, and then say to yourself, 'What he's done's blacker yet.' If any chap has told you I've stood at naught until there was next to naught I'd left undone, he spoke true. If there was any one told you I set th' decent ones by the ears and laughed 'em in the face, he spoke true. If any o' 'em said I was a dread and a by-word, they spoke true, too. The night you came there were men and women in th' house that couldn't look you in th' face and that felt shame for th' first time in their lives—mayhap—because you didn't know what they were, an' took 'em to be as innocent as yourself. There's not a sin I haven't tasted, nor a wrong I've not done. I've had murder in my mind an' planned it. I've been mad for a woman not worth even what Jem Haworth had to give her—and I've won all I'd swore I'd win—an' lost it! Now tell me if there's aught else to do but what I've set my mind on?"

She clung to his heavy hand as she had not clung to it before, and laid her withered cheek upon it and kissed it. Bruised

and crushed as she was with the blows he had dealt, she would not let it go free yet. Her words came from her lips a broken cry, with piteous sobs between them. But she had her answer ready.

"That as I've thanked God for all my life," she said, "He'll surely give me in the end. He couldn't hold it back—I've so believed an' been grateful to Him. If there hadn't been in you what would make a good man, my dear, I couldn't have been so deceived an' so happy. No—not deceived—that ain't the word, Jem—the good was there. You've lived two lives, may be,—but one was good, thank God! You've been a good son to me. You've never hurt me, an' it was your love as hid from me the wrong you did. You did love me, Jem—I won't give that up—never. There's nothing you've done as can stand agen that, with her as is your mother. You loved me an' was my own son—my boy as was a comfort an' a pride to me from the first."

He watched her with a stunned look.

"You didn't believe *them*," he said hoarsely, "and you don't believe *me*?"

She put her hand to her heart and almost smiled.

"It hasn't come home to me yet," she said. "I don't think it ever will."

He looked helplessly toward the pistol on the table. He knew it was all over and he should not use it.

"What must I do?" he said in the same hoarse voice.

"Get up," she said, "an' come with me. I'm a old woman but my heart's strong, an' we've been poor before. We'll go away together an' leave it all behind—all the sorrow of it an' the sin an' the shame. The life I *thought* you lived, my dear, is to be lived yet. Theer's places where they won't know us an' where we can begin again. Get up and come with me."

He scarcely grasped what she meant.

"With you!" he repeated. "You want me to go now?"

"Yes," she answered, "for Christ's sake, my dear, now."

He began to see the meaning and possibility of her simple, woman's plan, and got up, ready to follow her. And then he found that the want of food and the long day had worn upon him so that he was weak. She put her arm beneath his and tried to support him.

"Lean on me, my dear," she said. "I'm stronger than you think."

They went out, leaving the empty room and the pistol on the table and the dim light burning. And then they had locked the gate and were outside with the few stars shining above and the great black Works looming up before them.

He stopped a moment to look back and up and remembered the key. Suddenly he raised it in his hand and flung it across the top of the locked gate; they heard it fall inside upon the pavement with a clang.

"They'll wonder how it came there, he said. "They'll take down the name to-morrow. 'Haworth's' is done with!"

He turned to her and said, "Come." His voice was a little stronger. They went down the lane together, and were lost in the darkness.

CHAPTER LIII.

"A BIT O' GOOD BLACK."

GRANNY DIXON was interred with pomp and ceremony, or, at least, with what appeared pomp and ceremony in the eyes of the lower social stratum of Broxton.

Mrs. Briarley's idea concerning the legacy left her had been of the vaguest. Her revered relative had shrewdly kept the amount of her possessions strictly to herself, if indeed, she knew definitely what they were. She had spent but little, discreetly living upon the expectations of her kindred. She had never been known to give anybody anything, and had dealt out the money to be expended upon her own wants with a

close hand. Consequently, the principal, which had been a mystery from the first, had accumulated in an agreeably steady manner.

Between her periodic fits of weeping in her character of sole legatee, Mrs. Briarley speculated with matronly prudence upon the possibility of the interest even amounting to "a matter o' ten or fifteen shillin' a week," and found the pangs of bereavement materially softened thereby. There was a great deal of consolation to be derived from "ten or fifteen shillin' a week."

"I'll ha' a bit o' good black," she said, "an' we'll gi' her a noice buryin'." Only a severe sense of duty to the deceased rescued her from tempering her mournfulness with an air of modest cheer.

The "bit o' good black" was the first investment. There was a gown remarkable for such stiffness of lining and a tendency to crackle upon every movement of the wearer, and there was a shawl of great weight and size, and a bonnet which was a marvel of unmitigated affliction as expressed by floral decorations of black crape and beads.

"Have thee beads i' thy bonnet an' a pair o' black gloves, mother," said Janey, "an' tha'lt be dressed up for onct i' thy loife. Eh! but I'd loike to go i' mournin' myser."

"Aye, and so tha should, Jane Ann, if I could afford it," replied Mrs. Briarley. "Theer's nowt loike a bit o' black fur makin' foak look dressed. There's summat cheerful about it i' a quoiety way. But nivver thee moind, tha'lt get these here things o' moine when I'm done wi' 'em, an' happen tha'lt ha' growed up to fit the bonnet by then."

The occasion of the putting on of the festive garb, was Mrs. Briarley's visit to Manchester to examine into the state of her relative's affairs, and such was the effect produced upon the mind of Mr. Briarley by the air of high life surrounding him that he retired into the late Mrs. Dixon's chair and wept copiously.

"I nivver thowt to see thee dressed up i' so much luxury

Sararann," he said, "an' it sets me back. Tha does na look loike thysen. Tha looks as though tha moight be one o' th' nobility, goin' to th' Duke o' Wellington's funeral to roide behoid th' hearse. I'm not worthy o' thee. I nivver browt thee luck. I'm a misforchnit cha——"

"If tha'd shut thy mouth an' keep it shut till some one axes thee to oppen it, tha'd do well enow," interposed Mrs. Briarley, with a manifest weakening toward the culprit even in the midst of her sternness. "He is na so bad," she used to say, leniently, "if he hadna been born a foo'."

But this recalled to Mr. Briarley such memories as only plunged him into deeper depression.

"Theer is na many as axes me to oppen it i' these days, Sararann," he said, with mournfulness. "It has na oppen't to mich purpose for mony a day. Even th' hospittyblest on 'em gets toired o' a chap as sees nowt but misforchin. I mowt as well turn teetotal an' git th' credit on it. Happen theer's a bit o' pleasure to be gotten out o' staggerin' through th' streets wi' a banner i' th' Whit-week possession. I dunnot know. I've thowt mysen as happen th' tea a chap has to drink when th' excitement's ower, an' th' speeches ud a'most be a drorback even to that. But I mun say I've thowt o' tryin'."

It may be here remarked that since Mrs. Briarley's sudden accession to fortune, Mr. Briarley's manner had been that of an humble and sincere penitent, whose sympathies were slowly but surely verging toward the noble cause of temperance. He had repeatedly deplored his wanderings from the path of sobriety and rectitude with tearful though subdued eloquence, and frequently intimated a mournful inclination to "jine th' teetotals." Though, strange to say, the effect of these sincere manifestations had not been such as to restore in the partner of his joys and sorrows that unlimited confidence which would allow of her confiding to his care the small amount he had once or twice feebly suggested her favoring him with, "to settle wi'"

a violent and not-to-be-pacified creditor of whom he stated he stood in bodily fear.

"I dunnot know as I ivver seed a chap as were as desp'rit ower a little," he remarked. "It is na but eighteen pence, an' he ses he'll ha' it, or—or see about it. He stands at th' street corner—near th' 'Who'd ha' Thowt it,'—an' he will na listen to owt. He says a chap as has coom i' to property can pay eighteen pence. He wunnot believe me," he added weakly, "when I say as it is na me as has gotten th' brass, but yo'. It mak's him worse to try to mak' him understand. He will na believe me, an' he's a chap as would na stand back at owt. Theer wur a man i' Marfort as owed him thrippence as he—he mashed i' to a jelly, Sararann—an' it wur fur thrippence."

"Aye," said Mrs. Briarley, dryly, "n' theer's no knowin' what he'd do fur eighteen pence. Theer's a bad lookout fur *thee*, sure enow!"

Mr. Briarley paused and surveyed her for a few seconds in painful silence. Then he looked at the floor, as if appealing to it for assistance, but even here he met with indifference, and his wounded spirit sought relief in meek protestations.

"Tha has na no confydence in me, Sararann," he said. "Happen th' teetotals would na ha' neyther, happen they wouldn't, an' wheer's th' use o' a chap thinkin' o' jinin' 'em when they mowt ha' no confydence i' him. When a mon's fam'ly mistrusts him, an' has na no belief in what he says, he canna help feelin' as he is na incouraged. Tha is na incouragin', Sararann—theer's wheer it is."

But when, after her visit to Manchester, Mrs. Briarley returned, even Mr. Briarley's spirits rose, though under stress of circumstances and in private. On entering the house Mrs. Briarley sank into a chair, breathless and overawed.

"It's two pound ten a week, Janey!" she announced in a hysterical voice. "An' tha can ha' thy black as soon, as tha wants it." And Mrs. Briarley burst at once into luxurious weeping.

Janey dropped on to a stool, rolled her arms under her apron and sat gasping.

"Two pound ten a week!" she exclaimed. "I dunnot believe it!"

But she was persuaded to believe by means of sound proof and solid argument, and even the proprieties were scarcely sufficient to tone down the prevailing emotion.

"Theer's a good deal to be gotten wi' two pound ten a week," soliloquized Mr. Briarley in his corner. "I've heerd o' heads o' fam'lies as wur 'lowanced. Summat could be done wi' three shillin' a week. Wi' four shillin' a chap could be i' pary-dise."

But this, be it observed, was merely soliloquy, timorously ventured upon in the temporary security afforded by the prevailing excitement.

At the funeral the whole family appeared clothed in new garments of the most sombre description. There were three black coaches and Mrs. Briarley was supported by numerous friends who alternately cheered and condoled with her.

"Tha mun remember," they said, "as she's better off, poor thing."

Mr. Briarley, who had been adorned with a hat-band of appalling width and length, and had been furthermore inserted into a pair of gloves some inches too long in the fingers, overcame his emotion at this juncture sufficiently to make an endeavor to ingratiate himself. He withdrew his handkerchief from his face and addressed Mrs. Briarley.

"Aye," he said, "tha mun bear up, Sararann. She *is* better off—happen—an' so are we."

And he glanced round with a faint smile which, however, faded out with singular rapidity, and le' him looking somewhat aghast.

CHAPTER LIV.

"IT WILL BE TO YOU."

THEY found the key lying within the locked gate, and the dim light burning and the pistol loaded upon the table. The great house stood empty with all its grandeur intact. The servants had been paid their wages a few days before the crash and had gone away. Nothing had been moved, nothing taken. The creditors, who found to their amazement that all was left in their hands to dispose of as they chose, agreed that this was not an orthodox case of absconding. Haworth was a more eccentric fellow than they had thought.

One man alone understood. This was Murdoch, who, amid all the buzz of excited amazement, said nothing even to those in his own house. When he heard the story of the pistol and the key, his first thought was of the silence of the great place at night—the deadness of it and the sense of desolation it brought. It was a terrible thing to remember this and then picture a ruined man standing alone in the midst of it, a pistol in his hand and only the low light burning. "We did not understand each other very well," he said, drearily, "but we were friends in our way." And the man's farewell as he stood at the carriage door in the shadow, came back to him again and again like an echo repeating itself: "If there's ought in what's gone by that's for me—remember it!"

Even before his return home, Murdoch had made up his mind as to what his course for the next few years was to be. His future was assured and he might follow his idlest fancy. But his fancies were not idle. They reached forward to freedom and new labors when the time came. He wanted to be alone for a while, at least, and he was to return to America. His plan was to travel with a purpose in view, and to fill his life with work which would leave him little leisure.

Rachel Ffrench had not yet left her father's house. Saint

Méran had gone away with some suddenness immediately after the dinner party at which the political economist had reigned. Various comments had been made on his departure, but it was not easy to arrive at anything like a definite conclusion. Miss Ffrench was seen no more in the town. Only a few servants remained with her in the house, and these maintained that she was going to Paris to her father's sister, with whom she had lived before her return from abroad. They added that there was no change in her demeanor, that she had dismissed their companions without any explanation. One, it is true, thought she was rather thin—and had "gone off her looks," but this version was not popular and was considered out of accordance with the ideal of her character held in the public mind.

"She does na care," it was said. "*She* is na hurt. *Her* brass is safe enow, an' that's aw as udbe loike to trouble her. Pale i'deed! She's too high an' moighty."

Murdoch made his preparations for departure as rapidly as possible. They were rather for his mother and Christian than for himself. They were to leave Broxton also and he had found a home for them elsewhere. One day, as they sat in the little parlor, he rose hurriedly and went to Christian and took both her hands.

"Try to be happy," he said. "Try to be happy."

He spared no effort to make the future bright for them. He gave no thought to himself, his every hour was spent in thinking for and devising new comfort for them.

But at last all was ready, and there was but one day left to them.

The Works were still closed, and would not be re-opened for some weeks, but he had obtained permission to go down to his room, and remove his possessions if he chose. So on the morning of this last day he let himself into his "den," and shut himself up in it. Once behind the closed doors, he began a strange labor. He emptied drawers and desk, and burnt every scrap of paper to ashes—drawings, letters, all! Then

he destroyed the delicate models and every other remnant of his past labors. There was not so much as an envelope or blotting-pad remaining. When he had done he had made a clean sweep. The room was empty, cold, and bare. He sat down, at last, in the midst of its desolate orderliness.

At that moment a hand was laid upon the door-handle and the door opened; there was a rustle of a woman's dress—and Rachel French stood before him.

"What are you doing here, in Heaven's name?" he said, rising slowly to meet her.

She cast one glance around the bare room.

"It is true! You are going away!"

"Yes," he answered, "I am going. I have done my last work here to-day."

She made a step forward and stood looking at him. She spoke under her breath.

"Every one is going. My father has left me—I ——"

A scarlet spot came out on her cheek, but she did not withdraw her eyes.

"Saint Méran has gone also."

Gradually, as she looked at him, the blood receded from her face and left it like a mask of stone.

"I"—she began, in a sharp whisper, "do you not see? Do you not understand! Ah—my God?"

There was a chair near her and she fell into it, burying her face in the crushed velvet of her mantle as she bowed herself upon the table near.

"Hush!" she cried, "do not speak to me! That it should be I who stooped, and for this—for this! That, having battled against my folly so long, I should have let it drag me to the dust at last!"

Her passionate sobs suffocated her. She could not check or control them. Her slender fingers writhed in their clasp upon each other.

"I never thought of *this*, God knows!" he said, hoarsely,

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"though there have been hours when I could have sworn that you had loved me once. I have thought of all things, but never of this—never that you could repent."

She lifted her head.

"That *I* should repent!" she cried. "Repent. Like this!"

"No," he returned, "I never thought of that, I swear!"

"And it is you," she cried with scorn,—"you who stand there and look at me and tell me that it is all over!"

"Is it *my* fault that it is all over?" he demanded. "Is it?"

"No," she answered, "that is my consolation."

He drew near to her.

"You left me nothing," he said,—nothing. God knows what saved me—I do not. *You* loved me? *You* battled against your love?" He laughed aloud. "I was a madman under your window night after night. Forget it, if you can. I cannot. 'Oh! that I should have stooped for this,' you say. No, it is that I who have loved you should stand here with empty hands!"

She had bowed her face and was sobbing again. But suddenly she rose.

"If I did not know you better," she said, "I should say this was revenge."

"It would be but a poor one," he answered her coldly.

She supported herself with one hand on the chair.

"I have fallen very low," she said, "so low that I was weaker than I thought. And now, as you say, 'it is over.' Your hands are empty! Oh! it was a poor passion, and this is the fitting end for it!"

She moved a little toward the door and stopped.

"Good-bye," she said.

In a moment more all that was left was a subtle breath of flower-like fragrance in the atmosphere of the bare room.

It was an hour before he passed through the iron gates, though there had been nothing left to be done inside.

He came out slowly, and having locked the gate, turned toward the Broxton road.

He was going to the little graveyard. It had been a dull gray day, but by the time he reached the place, the sun had crept through the clouds and brightened them, and noting it he felt some vague comfort. It was a desolate place when there was no sun.

When he reached the mound he stood looking down. Since the night he had lain by it looking up at the sky and had made his resolve, the grass had grown longer and thicker and turned from green to brown.

He spoke aloud, just as he had done before.

"It is done," he said. "Your thought was what you dreamed it would be. I have kept my word."

He stopped as if for an answer. But it was very still—so still that the silence was like a Presence. And the mound at his feet lay golden brown in the sunlight, even its long grass unstirred.

They left Broxton the next day and in a week he set sail. As the ship moved away he stood leaning upon the taffrail watching a figure on the shore. It was a girl in a long cloak of gray almost the color of the mist in which she stood—a slender motionless figure—the dark young face turned seaward.

He watched her until he could see her face no longer, but still she had not stirred.

"When I return," he said, scarcely conscious that he spoke, "when I return—it will be to you."

Then the grayness closed about her and she faded slowly from his sight.

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